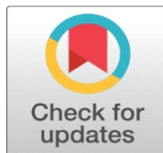
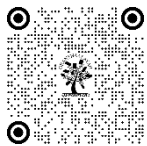


INITIATIVES OF PUNJAB GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE FEMALE EDUCATION: AN EVALUATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Women in Punjab state have to face discrimination not only on grounds of education, but in almost every field of life so much so that they are denied their right to take birth. In such circumstances, importance of female education increases manifold as education among women will make women more aware, independent and empowered. State government is making noteworthy efforts to promote female education and bring about equality in the society. Present study attempts to evaluate initiatives undertaken by the Punjab government to promote female education. The study highlights the achievements and loopholes of the existing schemes and also offers useful suggestions that will set the ground for further policy initiatives.

Keywords: Female Education, Government Schemes, Evaluative Study, Punjab

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern times, every state is a welfare state and it has to perform numerous welfare and development oriented functions. Presence of the government in the education sector is very essential, more so in the case of female education. Our economy is backward and at the same time our society is orthodox too, where women and girls are discriminated against in almost every walk of life. In India, many efforts have been put by the government since independence for promotion of women empowerment and education. No doubt the literacy rates have improved immensely in the country, but the progress isn't uniform across the states. Some states are way ahead than the others, while some have more prominent inequalities than the others.

Literacy rates, overall, male and female, have increased in the state of Punjab since independence, but female literacy rate still lags behind male literacy rate. Though prevalence of patriarchy is the reality of Indian society, its presence is stronger in Punjab. This is one of the major reasons behind the slower growth of female education in the state as compared to male education. The state of Punjab has borne the brunt of reorganisation in 1966 and terrorism in 1980s. These events proved to be severe jolts for the state's economy in general and industry in particular. Economy of the state was unable to sustain the benefits earned during the golden era of green revolution. Fading out of rewards in agricultural sector and under developed industrial sector led the state to losing its top position in growth in per capita income. Being

a border state, Punjab still fails to attract industrial ventures in to the state. Moreover, less and less young people in the state are finding agricultural activities to be a lucrative livelihood. Therefore, it becomes all the more important for the state to concentrate its efforts towards building a high-quality human force which can take up new ventures and professions to take the society and economy of the state towards the path of high growth once again. Also, special attention should be given to develop female work force as female work participation rate of Punjab as on census 2011 is 13.9 per cent, which is significantly low as compare to all India female labour force participation which is 25.51 per cent (Kaur & Nagaich, 2019). Various schemes like, Mahila Samkhya, Mai Bhago Vidya Scheme, *etc.* are being run in the state to spread female education but, serious differences still prevail in male and female education in the state. As per Census 2011, male literacy rate was 80.4 per cent in Punjab while female literacy rate was 70.7 per cent. Also, gap between female literacy rates in urban and rural areas is greater (14.5 per cent) than that in male literacy rates (10.1 per cent). Ignoring the education of women, who make up nearly half of the total population, does not auger well for the growth of any nation. An evaluation of various schemes of Punjab government to promote the cause of female education has been attempted in this paper to generate some useful policy implications in this regard.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As government has assumed the role of a welfare state, need for government spending is constantly increasing, especially in developing countries. In India, after the economic reforms were introduced in 1991, presence of private sector has increased in almost every sphere but, government is nonetheless omnipresent, and rightly so when a huge population lacks basic amenities and achievement of Millennium Development Goals is still at a distance. Government spending on social sector (i.e. education, health, etc.) is important to bring millions of people out of the state of ignorance and deficiency. In case of Punjab, Sethi and Kaur (2014) highlighted the dismal state of affairs with regard to government spending on education, especially in post-reform period. Education expenditure as percentage of GSDP remained very low consistently for 21 years (1984-85 to 2005-06) i.e. 2.5 per cent on average. Also, share of education expenditure as percentage of government budget continuously kept on falling, from 20.3 percent in 1985-86 to 15.9 percent in 1995-96 and further to 13.2 percent in 2005-06. Similar results were drawn by Brahmachari (2016) in a study related to fifteen large states of India, where Punjab was the only state in which ratio of actual expenditure to normative expenditure had decreased in 2007-08 (as compared to an earlier study by Rao et al. (2000) using 1997-98 data) in all the three subsectors, primary, secondary and higher; thereby indicating low importance attached to education sector by the state. There are limited studies done to assess the role of government in promoting female school education in India and specifically in Punjab, thereby making the case for present study strong.

Method

A descriptive type study has been done to evaluate various schemes initiated by the Punjab government to promote female education. Secondary data has been collected from various government reports and websites.

Results

Punjab government has started some consequential ventures to promote school education and devoted schemes to endorse the mission of girl education. Some of the momentous initiatives by the state government in this relation are summarized below:

Table 1: Various Schemes of the State Government to Promote Female Education

S.N.	Name of the Scheme	Education	Year Started	Objectives	Achievements
1.	Kanya Jagriti Jyoti Scheme	All	1996-97	To uplift the social status of the girls and to reduce the school drop-out rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rs. 5000/- is deposited at the time of birth of girl child with LIC which gives following benefits: From 6th year to 12th year of age Rs.1200/- p.a. scholarship and from 12th year to 18th year of age

					Rs.2400/- p.a. scholarship or Lump sum amount is given at the age of 18 or on 21 years as decided by the family. • Every year there are about 8000 beneficiaries
2.	Mai Bhago Vidya Scheme	Secondary	2011	a) To improve girl education scenario in the state b) To encourage girl child to complete secondary education c) To improve education among BPL girls	Free bicycles are provided to the girls in 9 th to 12 th class. It was initially started for 11 th & 12 th class girls. Later, it was extended to 9 th & 10 th class girls also. 2,00,000 girls' beneficiaries during the year 2018-19. Rs 2200 lacs
3.	Bebe Nanki Ladli Beti Kalyan Scheme	All		a) To improve sex ratio by changing mind set of people b) To educate girl child c) Monetary benefit on the birth of girl child	Parents of girls born after January, 2011 were to be given Rs 61,000 in a phased manner (i.e. after birth, vaccination, enrolment in primary education, enrolment in secondary education, attainment of age of 18 years, & enrolment in 12 th class). The state government will deposit Rs. 20,000/- with L.I.C. per girl/per beneficiary at the time of birth of a girl to BPL families. LIC will disburse total amount of Rs. 61,000/- to the guardian of girl child in small instalments for her education. 26875 beneficiaries during the year 2011-15
4.	Swasth Kanya Yojna		2016	To improve health & educational status of girls	Stationary filled school bags were to be distributed free of cost among all girls studying in government schools. Free 'Kanya Healthcare Kits' were also to be distributed among girls studying in 6 th to 12 th class in government schools to promote hygiene & reduce absenteeism each month. Rs 7000 lacs.
5.	Padho Punjab	All	2017	a) To spread literacy for all,	Government has decided to provide free education to all

	Padhao Punjab Project			<p>increase in gross enrolment ratio and decrease drop out ratio</p> <p>b) To improve performance of weak students & to create equal opportunities for them</p> <p>c) To enhance creativity of brilliant students</p> <p>d) To make them study without fear & burden through activities</p> <p>e) To add new techniques, supplementary material, activities, planning, reforming curriculum</p>	<p>up till class XII. Pre-primary classes have commenced in 12921 government schools across Punjab. 2.50 lakh children have already been enrolled. 1844 toilets constructed in 523 schools in rural areas. 273 Smart schools have been set up covering all 217 Educationally Backward Blocks at a cost Rs 30 crore. 5500 Primary, Middle and High Schools have been transformed into smart schools. State Education Department has prepared e-content under Digital Education for all the subjects from Pre-Primary to Class 10 and circulated it to all schools. Best schools will be rewarded and teachers will be appreciated. 3582 new teachers have been recruited In service training to 90664 teachers, 400 Evaluation centres for quick evaluations within 15 days. Easy processing of verification, name correction & evaluation in Punjab School Education Board. 10 KW Solar plant to be installed in 259 Government Senior Secondary Smart Schools, 212 in its first phase and 621 senior secondary schools will be covered in the next phase. More than 79% students achieved the learning level targets prescribed for students. Improvement of more than 35% in Mathematics in Class 9 & 10, 21% in Social Studies and 24% in Science.</p>
6.	Punjab Mobile Phones to Youth Scheme	Higher Secondary		To access several digital platforms by youth	Free Smartphone distribution scheme to all the students of class 11th & 12th, a budget of 72.19 lakhs in 2018-19 was allocated
7.	Infrastructure			Infrastructure Development in	

	Developm ent			government schools & opening of Adarsh & Meritorious schools	
8.	Girls' Schools			To strengthen of schools in terms of basic infrastructure facilities & opening of meritorious schools to provide quality education to students from poor families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 121 Government high/senior secondary schools in 144 blocks were strengthened in terms of basic infrastructure, facilities like, girls' toilet. • 7 residential schools with capacity of 6200 students have been opened in districts of Amritsar, Bathinda, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Mohali, Patiala and Hoshiarpur. 3 more (Ferozepur, Gurdaspur and Sangrur) were going to be functional in 2016-17.
9.	Girls' Hostel	Secondar y		Girls' hostel in educationally backward blocks for girls in 9 th to 12 th class in order to promote secondary education in these areas.	

Source: Author's elaboration from various sources

Apart from the numerous schemes initiated and are being run by the state government (as mentioned in the above table), Budget Proposal for 2019-20 announced a new project namely, Women's Health and Menstrual Hygiene in which sanitary napkin vending machines and incinerators were planned to be installed in 3550 government schools with an estimated outlay of Rs. 2343.00 lacs. Also, Career Guidance Programme for Girls were proposed wherein motivational and counselling camps were planned to be organised for girl students under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme so as to boost their self-confidence and convince them to pursue higher educational goals (GOI, 2020). No doubt these efforts have generated good results in terms of augmented female enrolments and literacy rates. While female literacy rate amplified from 50.41 per cent in 1991 to 70.7 per cent in 2011, total female school enrolments swelled by 50 per cent during 1991 and 2016, but the task is yet not completed.

- As per Punjab Appraisal Report 2019-20, there was a decline of 17 per cent and 16 per cent in enrolment at primary and upper primary level respectively in 2017-18. The annual average dropout has increased in 2017-18 from previous year at all levels of school education and therefore, the transition rates have fallen. Also, there are lacunas in the implementation that need to be filled up to uphold the impetus.
- Percentage of total expenditure against anticipated amount for Samagra Shiksha was merely 52.72 per cent.
- According to Kainth (2013), elementary schools in rural Punjab suffer from lack of infrastructure, teaching aids, lack of funds availability and the lack of dedication among the teaching staffs and its shortage. Besides, shortage of non-teaching staff compelled teachers to undertake non-academic work and therefore, they could not fully concentrate on teaching work. Thus, there is a need for rationalisation of school teachers and availability of adequate administrative and clerical staff.

Such glitches need to be addressed with all seriousness because these schemes have immense potential and can work wonders in furthering female education.

3. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The task of cent per cent enrolment and literacy cannot be just achieved by starting various schemes rather untiring efforts and steady vigil are desperately called for so as to achieve cent per cent success. No doubt education for its own sake has an intrinsic value, but education and training that prove valuable in the workplace are also indispensable. Therefore, changes in academic environment, particularly the curriculum, are immensely necessary. Also, inspirational lectures should be organised for the parents and society at large in order to spread awareness regarding significance of women education. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 should be implemented in letter and spirit and severe punishments be conferred upon those who employ children under the age of 14 years. Besides, basic support like, provision of required infrastructure; adequate, trained and dedicated teachers; sufficient non-teaching staff; and making education job oriented will definitely give an impetus to female school education.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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