



Presence of Women in the Administrative Setup of Higher Education Institutions in India

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Abstract

India has emerged out to be one of the largest education systems of the world. The government of India realising that providing equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes to women and girls would accelerate sustainable economies and help societies and humanity at large have laid special emphasis on the education of women. Focus is given to involve women as equal partners in Universities, colleges and various institutes in India. Often only a very few women reach at top levels like Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Registrar and Dean, even though there are a large number of women who choose teaching as their profession. The reason behind this backdrop in women representation as we move up the ladder of the education system is studied in this paper. There are complex and multi-dimensional barriers to women's leadership in higher education, resulting from social, cultural and economic factors of each country, the organisational culture in universities, discrimination in recruitment and selection, and unequal power relations.

Introduction

The last seven decades have seen a phenomenal development in the Education system of India and India has emerged out to be one of the largest education systems of the world. Special emphasis on the education of women was laid by University Education Commission (1948), the first commission in education set up by the government of free India realising that providing equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes to women and girls would accelerate sustainable economies and help societies and humanity at large. Significant strides have indeed been made during the past six

decades in every field of education. The importance of women as a male counterpart and substantial human resource is taken seriously and focus is been given to involve women as equal partners in Universities, colleges and various institutes in India. Girls have entered every field of education and have taken on the challenge of various professions yet only a few are making it to the top in a profession. Social stereotypes and stigma prevent women from getting to the top in the management of institutions of higher education.

India stands as the third largest higher education system in the world next to China and United States. It has a total of 496 universities, out of these 239 are State Universities, 130 deemed universities, 40 Central Universities, 49 Private Universities and 38 institutions of national importance (Universities Handbook, 2010). In these 496 Universities, we find many women in teaching profession. Often only a very few women reach at top levels such as Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Registrar and Dean, even though there are a large number of women who choose teaching as their profession.

Rationale of the Study

Inspite of advances which women have made in many areas of public life in the past two decades, in the area of higher education management they are still a long way from participating on the same footing as men. Women are about fifty percent of all nationalities and a significant part of any nations' work force. As women half of the population, and half of the human resources, if women have to contribute significantly towards the development, they too need to be in higher administrative positions to influence policy and decision-making. In order to have balanced and complete decisions it is necessary to consider women's viewpoint in all activity of decision-making. Without equal access and opportunities for women with higher education, a major section of the work force is underutilized and the achievements of the next generation underdeveloped. Women are equipped with particular skills, knowledge and attitudes that they can be translated into higher education management. The dwindling number of Women Administrators in Indian Universities is a cause of concern.

The study of science or engineering is generally regarded as a traditional male discipline but not administration. Indeed one might think that the research and analytical skills developed through the study of the humanities and social sciences or the nurturing, interpersonal and intuitive skills with which women are supposedly endowed by nature, would be very much in tune with the strategic planning, policy making and staff management responsibilities of senior managers. Top positions in politics as well as private and public sectors world-wide are adorned by increasing numbers of women but top management in higher education is overwhelmingly a male preserve even now.

The investigator wishes to study the reason behind this backdrop in women representation as we move up the ladder of the education system.

Objectives of the study :

1. To find how many Women administrators do the Indian Universities have.
2. To study the reason behind the decrease in number of women administrators in the higher Education system

Methodology

The present study is based on the secondary sources. The investigator has largely depended on the internet resources, journals and research studies and their reports. The data was explored to assess the women presence in the administrative setup of higher education and the reasons for the poor representation.

Findings of the study

A study by Sharma P. (2016) revealed that there are 87,262 male professors and 29,285 women professors. The number of women associate professors 63,965 are only half in number of male associate professors 1,24,631. There are 5,71,828 men and 3,74,349 women assistant professors.

As per the UGC Survey study only 13 universities of the total 431 Indian universities have Women Vice Chancellor which accounts for just 3%. There are 13 women vice-chancellors, of which six are from all-women universities. Out of the 40 central universities only 2 Central University have Women Vice Chancellor.

According to Dyne et al (1993) women hold less than fifty percent of academic and administrative posts in higher education institutions in almost all the nations of the world. They are better represented in lower level academic and middle management positions than at successively higher levels. Representation varies between about ten and twenty percent at middle management level and from zero to ten percent at senior management level. Representation of women in the various committees also follow a similar pattern. Women are more likely to be members of departmental and faculty committees than be members of governing boards or councils.

In a study by Chitnis S (1992) revealed that from 1981 onwards for five years, the University Grants' Commission was headed by a woman. Data from the annual handbook of the Association of Indian Universities, 1992, indicated that nine (5.77%) out of the 165 university level institutions, which constitute the membership of the Association, have women Vice-Chancellors. Out of the 598 officers, viz. Registrars, Finance Officers, Librarians, Deans, Directors of Student Welfare at these universities, 21 (3.6%) are female. Only 436 (10.82%) of the 4446 heads of Departments and Principals of Constituent Colleges are women. There was no information regarding the affiliated colleges in the country. Further, although it is noteworthy

that the universities headed by women Vice-Chancellors cover the entire spectrum of institutions, viz. the traditional universities, the agricultural universities and the deemed universities, they do not represent the disciplines satisfactorily. Out of the nine universities headed by women, one specialises in Social Science and Social Work, one in Music and one in Home Science. All these three fields of study are largely restricted to women. None of the prestigious Institutes of Technology in the country or the apex institutions of medical sciences have as yet been headed by women. Of the nine universities headed by women 5 are exclusively for women. Only four are co-educational. Three of these nine universities are in Bombay and four in the region south of Bombay and two are in north India. Thus the representation of women in the management of higher education in India is very small and highly skewed, in terms of their discipline-wise distribution, as well as their geographical location.

Factors which interrupt that natural progression for women: There are complex and multi-dimensional barriers to women's leadership in higher education. Social, cultural and economic barriers in each country, the organisational culture in universities, discrimination in recruitment and selection, and unequal power relations are to name just a few:-

- i. **Limited Access to Higher Education:** in spite of increased participation in higher education, women do not have the same access to higher education as men. This is reflected in their underrepresentation amongst academic staff.
- ii. **Discriminatory Appointment and Promotion Practices:** Discriminatory appointment and promotion practices constitute barriers in institutions without equal opportunity policies. Not only does women face difficulty in gaining access to education but women who are well-qualified fail to be selected in senior management or administrative positions.
- iii. **Dual Responsibilities of Traditional and Professional Roles:** Where women have been successful in gaining academic or professional positions they frequently face cultural barriers in the form of their own internalised view of their roles and the expectations which others have of them. Many academic women in India put family responsibilities first and are attracted to an academic career because of its status and convenience in accommodating school holidays. Professional women everywhere suffer great tension in their attempts to reconcile their professional and traditional roles.
- iv. **Attitudes of the Spouse:** For many women a professional career is dependent on the grace and favour of the spouse. Most of the time the child-rearing responsibility is not shared in equal measure with the husband, as a result of which a woman lags behind in career growth.
- v. **Career Interruptions:** Women frequently progress haltingly in their careers because of breaks for childbearing and child-rearing. Lack of adequate child-care facilities has been major barriers to career advancement for women. Our society isn't liberal enough to compensate a

woman for the lost time and opportunity. When it comes to research or scientific pursuits, a woman often ends up sacrificing her career.

vi. **Difficulties in Pursuing Research and Gaining Tenure:** Lack of a strong research record and lack of a tenured position are cited as factors which contribute to the clustering of female academic staff at the lower levels of the academic hierarchy.

vii. **Stereotyping:** Stereotyped notions about women constitute major barriers. Women in some cultures find it difficult to exert authority over males. Advanced industrialised societies as well as societies in the developing world still consider women to be too emotional or too illogical for senior management, and consider them to be best suited to the domestic maintenance aspects of administration.

viii. **Alienation from Male Culture:** One of the barriers facing women is the fact that they are not men! They are not readily accepted into the informal networks which serve to bond males, and though they frequently have their own very effective community-based female networks these are not functional in advancing their professional careers. Women in some cultures find it difficult or impossible to socialise with males in a semi-formal work-related context. Women in all cultures are likely not to feel at home with male communication patterns and male humour.

ix. **Male Resistance to Women in Management Positions:** An intractable problem for any group trying to effect a change in the distribution of power is that those in positions of influence are reluctant to cede their status to others. So women find that it is not good enough to be as good as men, but are pushed to establish their credibility by being better than men. This places women under great pressure to adopt the tactics of high-performing men in a competitive culture; ie to beat men at their own game.

x. **Some internal barriers:** Certain traits like as lack of confidence, lack of competitiveness and fear of failure have also been identified as barriers for women's entry into leadership positions.

Conclusion:

The participation of women in key university committees and decision making process continues to be low, which is one of the major factors leading to underrepresentation of women in management positions. Women have special capabilities and possess "soft" skills" in human resources management which are more needed currently than before in administration. In fact, nowadays what is much accepted is the democratic leadership and sensitivity to the needs of individuals. The reason why women should be in administrative positions in higher educational institutions and universities as in all spheres of activity is for ensuring a just and equitable society. To achieve a better position for women, changes need to come from many directions –

from women themselves, from society at large and its institutions, and the government. As women join more managerial positions, the changed power equations will help to increase the gender perspective and leadership.

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