

Women of Education: What do they have in Common?

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ABSTRACT

In making a better-balanced society women play a crucial role from the earlier period of history and educating women can be considered as the most reliable way for improving their entire standard of living. Even the all-round development of a child mostly depends on women because women have a significant contribution in the development of their families as well as the entire society. Equalising women right in society is a very important concern for the development of a country. Gender equality can be considered as a global priority treated by UNESCO also. Women of education have treated education as the most authentic and reliable tool for the overall development of women. The present paper highlights the women of education in special reference to the legendary names Maria Montessori and Mary Wollstonecraft.

Keywords: Women of Education, Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Montessori, Women Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Inequalities always begin at the grassroot level and one of the central causes of this inequality is gender discrimination (Anderson, 2000). Position of women in the society depends on societal attitudes (Abowitz, 2016; Adhikari & Saha, 2021c, 2021g); Collective attitudes are described as individual attitudes that are so strongly shaped by group interactions as to become incredibly standardised and constant within the group (Ansary and Ansary, 2023; Adhikari, 2023). Worldwide, there are some great women of educational field who have

contributed a ton in the establishment of equal rights of women in the society. To understand the broadness and depth of the metamorphosis of social sciences, it is necessary to recognise women and gender activities (Roy, 2023a). From the ancient period of history education is the most important tool to reconstruct and maintain the society as well as the nation (Roy, 2023b; Adhikari & Saha, 2023). Increasing the percentage of women inclusion and participation in all areas of society is one of the most crucial elements of social progression (Roy, 2023c). A true education establishes social equalities which is necessary in changing the orthodoxy of society; it also helps to change the social thoughts and mindset of individuals (Roy et al., 2023). It was a big challenge to make education equally accessible for all the people of the society. But it should always be kept in mind that it is a fundamental right of all the people irrespective of their gender or sex. It is the self-constructed psychological stigma and also a prison that women across the globe fabricated for themselves (Abowitz and Roberts, 2007; Adhikari & Saha, 2021). Education is a fundamental key to empower women and also provides them independence so that they can become more confident and self-reliant. An educated woman is able to make balance in every aspect of her life, family and society (Abowitz, 2017; Adhikari and Saha, 2021h). They can also contribute in the economic development of the nation. Education not only helps in increasing economic stability of women but also makes

their social position higher. Education is the bridge through which women can manage both of their personal and professional lives. In this regard, Maria Montessori and Mary Wollstonecraft – these two names are much highlighted as women educators as well as social reformers in the educational history of the world. Their feminist responses have a lot of contributions in the entire process of women empowerment through quality education. Only education has the power to create an environment of social equality and justice. It helps women to make confident in participating every sphere of society. This widespread education provides women courage and helps them in capability building to secure the development of the entire nation.

Contributions of Maria Montessori

Madam Maria Tecla Artemisia Montessori is a brilliant figure known as Italy's first woman physician as well as a great educationist in the entire education system of the world. Her educational thoughts became a world force in educational setting (Ansary et al, 2023). It is a big question that what makes the nation great and no doubt the answer is economic prosperity which mostly depends on education of the entire people. In the early 1900, Dr. Montessori introduced the Montessori method which is specially a child centric method of education. Montessori spent nearly two decades with her indispensable role as a militant feminist speaker and continued with her managerial activity as director of her own institutions (Adhikari & Saha, 2021a). Worldwide it is acceptable in educational context that a child can learn better if there is option to choose what to learn. She always preferred to create a healthy and beautiful environment where children can direct their own education with the help of meticulously designed teaching/learning aids and the entire focus should be given on the sense training of the children. Children learn in a joyful environment according to their own pace. These sensory based materials particularly provide the

opportunity to the students of enhancing social interaction with others in the educational environment. In this child centric approach, the key role of teacher is to assist and encourage students so that they can be fully developed and nourished according to their own potential. The first Montessori School was opened and inaugurated by Dr. Montessori – “The Casa Dei Bambini” or Children's House which was the milestone of today's education of young children (Saha & Adhikari, 2023c). She had to struggle a lot to break the traditional barriers in education and also in securing a place of women in educational context. She was much more confident in changing the traditional teaching learning environment where education was only theoretical and knowledge based. She strongly focused on individual difference which is the key factor of child psychology. Montessori's aspiration was to unravel the predilection of each and every individual child in education (Adhikari & Saha, 2021b). Children should not be forced anymore in their learning and she thought that teacher should avoid ‘one size fits all’ approach while teaching those children. In Montessori's philosophy learning through interaction with environment is very much necessary through which students' senses are developed.

By Montessori education, a tremendous change has taken place in the world education system (Block, 2015). The Montessori method of teaching is based on the thought that education should support rather than undermine a child's natural abilities (Saha and Adhikari, 2023b). This early childhood education provokes children to think who they are. Children should be free to learn in her educational thoughts. It prepares children for practical life and helps them to explore independently there all types of possibilities. This kind of education insists the youngest children in their participation in daily activities. Senses are given strong importance in her educational methodology so that children can be self-activated. Attempts should be made by

teachers so that the children can be free from the boundaries which keep them isolated in the life of artificially. Her educational approach is completely based on co-operative as well as non-competitive activities where children can fly freely with the wings of high confidence and self-image. Montessori education always tries to make children problem solvers with having high level of competencies by which they can develop the abilities to face several challenges with optimism in the practical life situation. Through scientific observation, the teachers of Montessori educational setting guide each student according to their own interests, capabilities, attitude, maturity levels etc. with the motto of fulfilling their pre-decided aims and objectives. It was the belief of Montessori that children can learn best in a constructivist setting where they can take care of themselves (Roy and Saha, 2021). The learning environment should always be learner centric where children have the chances to explore themselves (Saha & Adhikari, 2023a). Education should be arranged in such a way that can touch Children's heart and mind so that learning can occur as per their own interest and curiosity. Educational setting is prepared with appropriate materials which are concrete representations of the contents because at the stage of receiving Montessori education concrete learning is required more in compare to the abstract learning. In this educational setting self-correction apparatus i.e., Didactic Apparatus is used to regulate self-learning among children (Haines, 1995). She always focused on carefully planned, aesthetically pleasant, bright, colourful and attractive surroundings and objects (Saha & Adhikari, 2023d). Each child should be treated as an individual youngster and an encouraged to be an active knowledge searcher and thus, the traditional concept of child education has revolutionized with the hands of Dr. Maria Montessori.

Efforts made by Mary Wollstonecraft

The name Mary Wollstonecraft holds a legendary ground in philosophy of feminism, literature and polity. She can be considered as the founder of modern European feminism (Abbey, 1999). Her tireless effort is seen throughout the life for the liberation of education of women. Mary pens this feminist manifesto to denounce the numerous wrongs that are generally done to women (Adhikari et al., 2023). Looking the pages of her philosophy, it is seen that she strongly opposed and rejected the education in dependency that was previously advocated by Rousseau. It is the basic difference between the thoughts and ideals of Wollstonecraft and Rousseau regarding the importance of women in society. Rousseau did not put emphasis on the importance of women but Mary argued that women must be intelligent and conscious in their own rights. Rousseau opined about respecting men but Mary extended it to women of the society also. Mary did not think women as an ornament to design a marriage (Abbey et al, 2017). Definitely they should be benefited with the fundamental rights like men. Mary has laid emphasis on educating women to make their status equal to men in the social circumstances. She always favoured mixed sex school or co-educational day school to establish equal women right in the society. Securing women's place in co-educational setting is the basic step of women empowerment according to her thoughts. Through this process a woman can expose her thoughts and ideas and play the roles as a wife, citizen, mother and a contributor in the family as well as in the whole society in a better way. Even though everyone is aware about the importance of women in a society but no one is ready to take action according to the fact. Mary never supports the discrimination between men and women in the society. She always fought to make women free from all the fetters and social evils and also to make them multi-skilled. Mary Wollstonecraft had a unique position with her interest in women rights; she is an

ideal figure popular as a modern philosopher, religious thinker, political activist and feminist (Adhikari & Saha, 2022). In the process of empowering women, Mary not only argued about the challenging role of women but also put emphasis on some changes between men. She thought that a father should act like a friend while guiding his children rather than a tyrant. An ideal family is formed based on the environment where children are nourished by an intelligent mother. It is for better than sending the child to a nurse or in a boarding school for nurturing. She has dreamt a society where women can play diversified role to make it better balanced. Mary greatly inspired and infuriated her contemporaries with her groundbreaking thoughts and ideas on female education and its close connection to women's social, political and home inferiority (Adhikari & Saha, 2021). She never contradicts the role of an empowered woman as a mother or carer. In her educational philosophy, rationality of woman is celebrated in her tremendous creation- 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman'. As an educational reformer and thinker, it is a great political as well as educational treatise. In this creation, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman', she regularly utilised the first-person plural to identify herself as a member of the larger community of women who experience patriarchal injustice in the society (Adhikari & Saha, 2022). It also celebrates a strong opposition of Rousseau's thoughts regarding women. Being a feminist, Wollstonecraft was a strong proponent of women's rights and the main motive was the upliftment of women to make the society free from gender bias or discrimination (Gayen, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The process of empowering women is actually a gateway to strengthen women's hidden capabilities through the acquisition of knowledge power and experience (Mohanta, 2023). Women should be equal to man in all parameters of their lives

including their social, educational, political and economic status. An empowered woman can think and take action in an autonomous way that shows their liberation from any kind of social bondage. Lack of education may cause deprivation for the women where they have to face powerlessness, ignorance and vulnerability. Education is the strongest weapon which makes woman conscious about their rights and power that are needed for healthy and happy survival. An educated woman contributes in her family for the children to grow up in the competitive world. The whole generation can be benefited by these empowered women of the society. A true education moves women from the darkness of their lives and awakes them towards light of life. Equalising women's status is a fundamental part of establishing a Sustainable Society, it enhances the process of sustainable development in all countries. If women are deprived, the all dimensions of sustainable development that are society, environment and economy will be affected. The path of women progression was not easy and smooth; eminent women themselves played a vital role in not only establishing themselves but also in promoting women's education, health, shelter homes, care for the orphans etc. (Adhikari & Saha, 2021). Commonly, the above discussed women educators had put milestone in the process of emancipating women throughout the life.

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