

Caste, Gender and Media

Significant
Sociological
Trends in India

An Open Distance Paradigm

Editors

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OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN INDIA: THE CORNERSTONE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

—Sovik Mukherjee*

ABSTRACT

In the Indian situation, gender inequalities and women empowerment have become a part of the mainstream discussion in the realm of public policy. Academic deliberations and policy research in this field has caught the attention of many stakeholders including academicians, various civil society leaders and the policy makers, since quite some time. In this backdrop, open and distance learning (ODL) programmes have been a huge success for their positive influence on the society. These are increasingly making an avenue for women empowerment. The paradox lies in the fact that only a few studies have meticulously scrutinized this liaison between women empowerment and contributions of ODL in India. This paper introduces a theoretical structure which actually endorses the fact that how open and distance education can help in women empowerment and hence economic growth. The approach of this paper has been to put emphasis on the fact that if ODL programmes targeted for women empowerment are properly executed, these will indeed become the catalyst of change.

Keywords: *ODL programmes, women empowerment, gender responsiveness and public policy.*

In the recent years, lack of gender responsiveness in several fields of public policy has already started to grab the eyeballs in India. Questions relating to this issue of gender responsiveness and women empowerment have been taken up in policy research domain and the resulting insights and deliberations are very rich. The focal point of this paper is to theoretically emphasize the importance of ODL in the context of women empowerment. When conventional approaches fail to meet the requirements, alternative strategies become inevitable. There is a growing consensus that distance education (DE) is one such alternate strategy. Of late, these revolutionary methods have come as a boon to women of all ages in India making them overcome the social

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