


Chapter 10


Women in Leadership in Education: A Critical Overview of the Indian Higher Education Spectrum in Bangalore

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ABSTRACT

Leadership qualities are influenced by various perspectives and viewpoints, including the Great Man Theory and various academic disciplines. The desire for self-assertion and self-accomplishment is a common thread in the evolution of leadership qualities. India's feminist movement, initiated by men and later joined by women, fought against oppressive societal rules and discrimination. The women's movement began as a social reform movement in the 19th century, with women advocating for women's rights and education. However, efforts to improve women's status were thwarted by nationalist movements. The Women's India Association, National Council of Women in India, and All India Women's Conference were formed by women between 1917 and 1927 after World War I. Today, women's presence in the top-notch hierarchy and leadership is less, with women being considered “empowered women” if they can make financial decisions without consulting their husband. The research aims to understand lagging factors in the overall higher education sector in India.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The word 'leadership' itself implies certain qualities or attributes that make one individual stand out from those who fall into the category 'run-of-the mill' population and thus leadership qualities got intertwined with different perspectives or opinionated statement when interpreted from organizational point of view. The Great Man Theory (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002), which focused on the role of uniquely exceptional people and held that leaders are extraordinary people born with natural talents that predestine them for leadership roles, was one of the first viewpoints on leadership. (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Several organizational behavioral approaches to leadership qualities describe it differently and the leadership roles are defined by their own intrinsic quality to perform any task efficiently, flawlessly and with high command over problem solving capacity. Genetically-influenced traits that help leaders solve situational challenges recurrent in their environments are called adaptations., especially physical conditioning affect leadership qualities to a greater extent. (Van Vugt, M., & Von Rueden, C. (2020) However, contradictory those perceptions are, the one common thread that might stitch together and poses as a recurrent motif in the constant evolution of 'leadership qualities' is the desire for self-assertion or self-identity and for self-accomplishment which later will transform into a zeal for bringing in change for a greater cause (Antonakis et al., 2010).

Now, leadership or women leadership in education in India was never considered a priority in the pre-Independent and also in post-Independent India till 60s, rather, liberation from the British Colonial empire was the one and only prerogative of Indian population. Given to this political scenario when India was subjugated to British colonial rulers, the thirst for political freedom acted as a catalyst paving the ground for the leaders to emerge as the messiah of the nation and thus to salvage the country from the British Raj (Gandhi, M., & Sen, K. (2015). The rate of literacy in pre-Independent India and even in the post- Independence era was very low. However, right to education, especially for women, was always regarded as one of the impediments that hindered socio-political and economic growth of the country and most importantly for the eradication of social evils like dogmatic social customs and conventions that did not allow women to come out of the ghettos, the stereotypical barriers between men and women. Therefore, if we look at the history of women's movement, it was initiated by men and later joined by women, began as a social reform movement in the 19th century. Inspired by the western idea of liberty, equality, and fraternity, Indian educated elites propagated the idea that studying English or exposure to Western education was the only route to liberation or emancipation. This western liberalism was later extended to the resistance against oppressive and discriminating social customs, especially meted out for women.

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