

WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF INDIA: OBSTACLES, SUCCESS AND SUSTENANCE!!!

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Abstract

The lack of representation from women in leadership positions has created a gender gap in higher education. Society has presumed that only males can be good leaders; therefore it has sidelined the women's opportunity to take up leadership roles. Women who aspire to be leader face obstacles and give up because they become overwhelmed in dealing with obvious barriers. In recent times there was a commendable development in women empowerment and presence of women in leadership positions at higher education. But the surveys in past suggests that the presence of women in leadership position has not improved significantly. The present article proceeds to identify the obstacles, success and sustenance factors of women who experienced leadership in higher education. The used method is qualitative method, a kind of descriptive approach. In general, the findings of this study showed that women in higher education have been elevated to leadership position but they are underrepresented this needs to get resolved using policy reforms, development plan for women who aspire to be leader and collaborative and encouraging environment.

INTRODUCTION

Women now a day are playing critical role in the smooth functioning of the socio-economic development of the country, in such scenario how we could de-lineate them from key responsibilities and positions in higher education which is shaping the India's future. It is very difficult for the women to achieve key position in higher education institutions, and for this there were several extrinsic as well as intrinsic factors are responsible. It is notable that several studies have revealed that the percentage of women VC (vice-chancellors) in India is shockingly low to the mark of 3% of the total universities. This is happening despite of women participation is increasing in higher education and doing various levels of job in universities (TOI, Dated: June 5 2015).

According to the report of British Council "Women in Higher Education Leadership in South Asia: Rejection, Refusal, Reluctance, Revisioning", the women percentage in teaching staff drops drastically at higher levels. "Women constitute only 1.4% of the professor level, though there are many at other positions like readers, lecturers etc." In recent years it has been apparently noticed that women are making their mark on international platforms, which is a good sign of women leadership. The women leadership is formed under various factors such as their individual abilities, beliefs and responsibilities. Through this paper we would investigate the success and failure aspect of women leadership in higher education in India.

SCENARIO OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

India is considered as the intellectual pool of the world due to the availability to abundantly qualified and educated human resource. This is the reason for the transformation of India into one of the world's fastest growing economy. Post-Independence of India, the country has seen an above average growth of higher educational institutions as compared to population.

Structure of Higher Education in India

	Formal Education	Technical & Professional Education	Skill Development	Vocational Training
Composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutes of national importance Universities Colleges Polytechnics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering colleges Management Schools Law, Medical, Pharmacy etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ITIs ITCs Private Skill Development Centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finishing schools English training Air hostess Academies
Key Regulators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UGC State Government IGNOU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AICTE Bar Council of India Medical Council of India ICAI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DGET in case of ITIs/ITCs Unregulated for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No regulator
Accreditation bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NAAC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NBA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Key Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ITIs/IIMs/IISc Amity University SRCC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MDI Gurgeon K.J. Somaiya College of Engineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ITIs/ITCs Private centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VETA Frankfinn

Source: Deloitte Report – October 2012.



REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

It has been found from various literature and report that all the key regulators such as UGC, AICTE etc. have mentioned various statistics about higher education in India but there is hardly any evidence suggesting the male female composition in different academic as well as administrative capacities. This can be a serious setback while competing and developing ourselves in comparison to western counterparts. Therefore it becomes the onus on regulatory body to make the statistical outlook of women leaders in higher education as compared to male and make the policies considering the promotion of women leadership.

Place of women in Higher Education

It has been found from UNESCO report that from the global picture men outnumber the women in various middle as well as senior management levels. In the light of various positions held by women in administrative and academic are more likely to succeed as lecturers, head of departments and registrars as compared to if they wish to become VC(vice-chancellor). To conclude we can say that women are still a minority at higher level in academic settings.

According to recently published Ministry of HRD report, participation for leadership position and for career advancement opportunities are still remarkably low from women in higher education. According to reports 2% women has participation in higher levels of position in university, 16% as college principals and 10% as department heads and 24% in administration still there were few or not even exists as vice-chancellors even though women comprising 52% of total academic population.

OBSTACLE FOR WOMEN TO ATTAIN LEADERSHIP POSITION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

• Discrimination

Constitutional Privileges

1. *Equality before law for women (Article 14).*
2. *The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i)).*
3. *The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3)).*
4. *Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16).*

There is strong noise on the account of wages that women get as compared to their male counterparts. However, things have changes but still there is a gap which has been illegal to pay a woman less than a man for equal work, women's salaries have still not caught up with men's salaries in higher education.

It has been noticed that men either consciously or subconsciously hold their prestige. Men who have been holding key leadership position have subdued interest in maintaining those positions thereby excluding women from consideration for those leadership positions. As most of the positions in higher education are held by men they chose to hire men to maintain that gender gap in the institution. This sort of behavior is not intended but it does happen and that's why men outnumber the women in academic leadership position in higher education.

• Aspirations

It has been noticed from past literature that men and women have desires to achieve the advance leadership positions in higher education. According to Lepkowski (2009) women do not differ from men while desiring for leadership position in higher education. However, Shultz and Easter (1997) found those women faculties are less likely to desire the presidential or director role than men.

Women in higher education have mentioned that they have other priorities, such as family, research and teaching. It has also been noticed that women differ a lot than men while making career choices as they have various roles to play in their daily life.

• Family Commitments

It has been noticed from past researches that women who are single or delayed their marriages or not having kids were more successful in attaining leadership positions in higher education. Thus it has been seen that women in leadership position in higher education has to handle a challenge of balancing between careers advancement and successful family life thereby having good relationship with spouse and other family members.

• Women in the Talent Acquisition pool

It has been seen that women in higher education are underrepresented as there are hardly any women in chairperson committee or academic council for their representation which creates the disadvantage for them. Harrow argues that men



outnumber women not because they are more effective leaders, but because there are simply more men in the pipeline. Men generally outnumber the women is just because there are more men in leadership position with strong career path with less family obligations.

• Coaching women for leadership

It has been found from past literature that most of the time the leadership responsibilities have been delegated to men than women and thereby excluding women from learning and getting coached and mentored by the superiors in leadership position. As coaching women helps to make transition to leadership position is crucial for the career advancement of women which in India is always a side matter. Women do not have enough coaching options available to them because in higher education most of the leadership positions are dominated by men. It has been seen as women in higher education don't get a proper coach which creates a pressure on them to take the initiative for leadership position. Those women who have attained senior leadership position in higher education feels coaching other are more time consuming and it will put pressure on their work if they fail to do so they can't be seen as idols.

• Stereotypes & Glass Ceiling

It is evident from long time that roles of leaders or heads or managers of any institution are held by men, but only in recent times it has been noticed that women are making their mark on global platform and achieving various leadership and managerial role in global as well as domestic institutions. But still the gap is there and women have to fight for this to come out of these stereotypes that leadership positions are only meant for men. The right of gender and employment equality is helping but still social stigma is conflicting with the constitution itself.

• The Service Record

As seen from previous researches that a good academic track record leads to leadership positions in higher education. For women it is often sometimes difficult to attain these leadership positions as they have to take a break after marriage or children responsibilities or spouse transfer which makes them to take a break or work as visiting or adjunct faculty or part time employment with the institution. Thus such service records prevent the women from attaining those leadership positions in higher education.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITION

To obtain leadership position in higher education is quite challenging. This needs women to think across spectrum of professional development and work practices to overcome barriers and establish themselves as a potential candidate for leadership or sustain the leadership position. According to Morrison(1992)there were four pillar on which the women success is relying:

1. Competent: Women should make sure that they know what responsibilities a leadership position entails. They should develop the required competencies to compete against others at that level to attain that position. They should develop these competencies through formal informal learning and never stay idle in their learning approach.
2. Perceived as Competent: No one should discourage women's abilities and women should show their competencies in their daily routine jobs particularly in those tasks which can lead them to leadership positions. Competencies should be visible and valued by others.
3. Aspiration: Women should be able to identify what they aim and what they want to seek and in the anticipation of that they should balance, prioritize and ease themselves.
4. Support: Women should find out whom they can learn, can seek support even in people from diverse field and take the advantage of it to develop themselves as leaders.

SUSTENANCE STRATEGY FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITION AT HIGHER EDUCATION

Survival to the fittest

1. Develop strategic plan for the advancement of career.
2. Acknowledge competition.
3. Keep moving and develop competencies.
4. Give tough competition with courage to male dominated institution.
5. Delegating strategically
6. Execute managerial tasks effectively with time bound activities.

Adaptation to male dominated organization climate:

1. Develop optimistic approach towards gender based differences.
2. Acknowledge gender gap.



3. Assessing what makes gender biases.
4. Willingness to communicate differently with positive attitude.
5. Assessing differences and adapting to strategy which makes communication effective.

CONCLUSION

It has been noticed from past researches that presence of women in leadership position at higher education is significantly low; however, women are taking every effort and making sure no stone should left unturned and overcome obstacles in attaining leadership positions. Also, the previous research provide evidence that certain improvements is particular areas such as competencies, social interventions, support from family, cooperation from colleagues can help to elevate the ladder of success in higher education. The women who are able to attain those leadership positions in higher education have found a balance between work-life. Moreover we can say that feminism, determination and perseverance of women had made them successful in spite of challenges they have to come through. Final thought indicates that higher education institution should make policy reforms at university and authority level for women empowerment at senior leadership levels thereby creating an equal opportunity platform for both men and women and should not pursued separately but in an integrated manner.

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