

Strategies for increasing the contribution of Women in Nation Building

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Abstract

This study starts with an Indian benchmark method of the Vedic era that was used to ensure equality and women's contribution to nation-building. Subsequently, the existing practices and policies have been reviewed for gaps. The life-cycle of policy formulation is discussed in detail with a case study to give a fair idea of how the entities can be aligned in the national contribution. Digital grids like National Women Health Grid, National Women Learning Grid, National Women Skill Grid, National Women Employment Grid, National Women Contribution Grid, and National Data Grid have been explored to ensure effective monitoring of policies. Also, the recommendations have been made in terms of social security needs, policy formulation, implementation, regulation, feedback, data analysis, and proactive actions to ensure gender balance and lifetime contribution by women in nation-building.

Keywords: National Data Grid, health security, education security, income and job security, gender balance, employment modes, gender reservation.

1. Introduction

No human being is different from the other and everyone was treated equally in the Vedic age. Tyagananda (2020, para 5), stated that in the Vedic age, duties were allocated rationally based on one's stage of life (figure-1) and one's position (figure-2) in the community. The moral, social, and legal duties together were known to be dharma to every individual (Sharma, 2020,

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para 1). The identification of the ability of an individual was based on Vedic philosophy (Gita 4.13) where the material energy was considered as a constituent of three *gunas* (modes): *sattva guna* (mode of goodness), *rajo guna* (mode of passion), and *tamo guna* (mode of ignorance). All jobs were important and assigned based on the competence of an individual. Society used to give recognition to the job holder over his/her position. Parshuram, Durvasa, Kripacharya, Drona, etc. were a few wise men of the Mahabharata era who were known for their intellectual capabilities & skills rather by the positions they held in the society. This pattern of building a contributory society lost its approach to heredity practices (Tyagananda, 2020, para 12). The social fabric got another dimension in the Muslim invasion i.e. division based on religion (Thapar, 2020). The division of society happening in India was first time recognized by Portuguese traders who coined it as 'caste' in 1498 (Tyagananda, 2020, para 23).

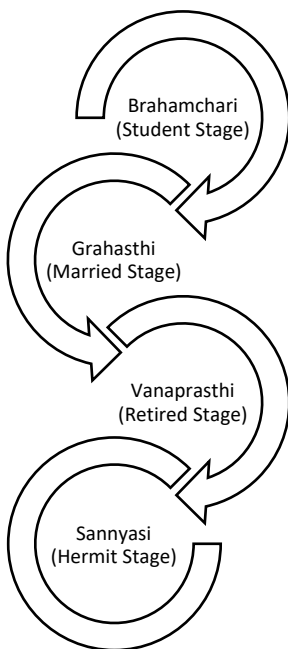


Figure-1: Stages of life

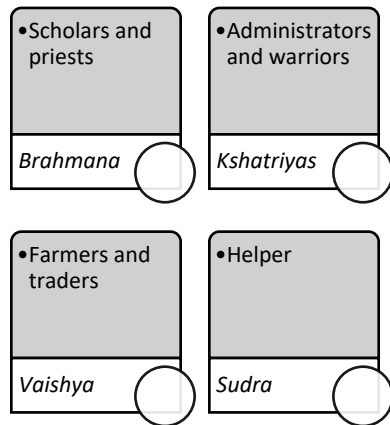


Figure-2: Position of Individual

It was mentioned in the publication of the National Institute of Open Schooling (2020, p. 116) that the Indian caste system became more prevalent

during the British regime. The British gave jobs to only those Indians who knew English thereby compelling many Indians to go in for English education. Thus, the education soon became a monopoly of the rich and the city dwellers. The flourishing India was reduced in a pauper by the biased policies of Britishers and the country lost its self-sustainability (Kumar, n.d., para 2). The reservation policies for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backwards Classes were evolved in the free India to counterbalance the atrocities on these communities for centuries. But, now after 75 years of the existence of legislation, the jury in the Supreme Court of India was found to be divided and doubted the credibility of the legislation in meeting the equality assurance given to every individual by the Constitution of India (Choudhary, 2022, para 2).

2. Nation-Building Process

The Department of Sports, Art and Culture, Republic of South Africa has defined nation-building as a process whereby peoples with diverse origins histories, languages, cultures, and religions come together within the boundaries of a sovereign state to pursue their activities under a unified constitutional and legal framework, accepting national public education system, integrated national economy, shared symbols and values, as equals, to work towards eradicating the divisions and injustices of the past; to foster unity; and promote a countrywide conscious sense of being proud and committed to the country and remain open to the continent and the world. Thus, a common thread is required to bind the actions of all entities of a country through shared goals in nation-building. As per past experiences, such common goals are crafted over the visions of a political leader of the country. Then, the executives in the government translate these goals into special policies and allocate the resources to muster the efforts of all functionaries toward the achievement of the identified objectives.

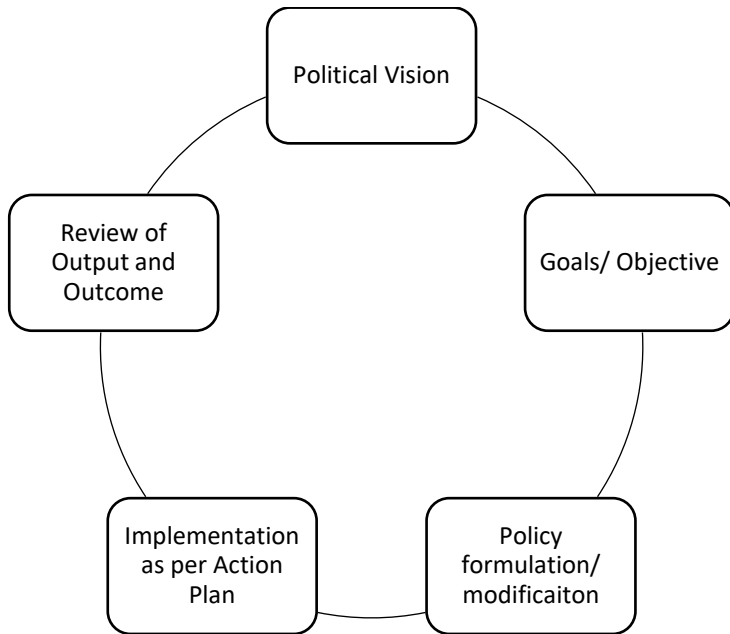


Figure-3: Policy Formulation life-cycle

The best example of a policy formulation life-cycle (figure-3) is the Make in India campaign (MSME Desk, 2022) where the government has decided to strengthen the Micro and Small Enterprises (MSES) sector of the country by ensuring minimum public procurement of up to 25%. The goals are decided by the concerned Ministry in consultation with a high-level committee, the policy is formulated; facilitation is provided by the nodal Department and monitoring is undertaken by administrative Ministries of the concerned Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSES). As per the MSME SAMBANDH portal, this policy has helped in achieving 32% of total annual public procurement from MSEs in the year 2021-22.

3. Policy Gap

Many women in the country, have broken the shackles of gender stereotypes in society and strengthened the motivation of other women who may want to follow in their footsteps to compete. The Government of India has also taken various steps to ensure the empowerment of women through various schematic interventions. However, according to Golla, Malhotra, Nanda, & Mehta (2011), the efforts don't seem adequate and women are found to be in

the majority of the world's poor and unable to contribute efficiently due to gender discrimination. According to their research national economies lose when a substantial part of the population cannot compete equitably or realize its full potential. The following are a few policy gaps identified through the following research:

3.1. Female Literacy

As per Chandra (2019), literacy is one of the most essential indicators of the quality of a country's human capital. She found from the India Data Labs survey in 2017, that India has made significant progress in improving the adult (i.e. aged above 15 years) literacy rate to 73.2 percent but 313 million people are still illiterate and 59 percent of them are women. The challenges are more for women in rural areas that remain very poor. It has been observed that the economic earning of an individual depends on his educational gap and entrenched biases that discourage the aspirants from progressing through discriminatory biases. Thus, the prevalent practices of gender bias in education, employment, and progression in career impact the overall contribution of the marginalized community like women.

3.2. Access to Education System

According to Taneja (2018), gender discrimination at home, lack of safety at school, early marriage, lack of aspirations, absence of a bridging mechanism for out-of-school, higher fees by privately managed schools are a few reasons for irregular attendance and eventual drop out of 32% girls in secondary education.

Similarly, Aneja (2015) found that gender disparity, lack of domestic mentoring, non-availability of higher education facilities in government institutions, financial constraints in pursuing from private institutions, safety risk, inaccessibility to travel through long connecting roads, especially in rural areas, low aspirations, etc. are found to be the reason for low Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of 17.9% women in tertiary education.

Crawford & Vignotes (2014) have conducted research based on the assumption that once a person has graduated from university, his family background and the school he went to will cease to impact how much he earns, or that the link will at least be reduced. But, it was found that

graduates who attended private schools earn an average of 7% more per year than graduates who went to state schools. Thus, the privatization of education is further impacting the earning capability of women who may not be able to access them due to the high cost of learning in private setups.

3.3. Mobility in Education

As per the report of Paik & Samueltalk (2022), India's unorganized workforce is estimated at over 350 million that move back and forth undertaking a vast array of casual work in the construction. There are three groups of children of such migratory parents – first are those left behind in the villages by parents employed elsewhere, the second group consists of those who migrated with their parents and often engaged in the construction sector, brick kilns, and agricultural sectors, and the third group includes the children who themselves migrate for employment.

National Institute of Open Schooling (2022) was established in 2002 to make education equitable and inclusive for marginalized and disadvantaged groups like girls, women, minorities, differently-abled (physically or mentally challenged), etc. The system has fulfilled the needs of around 14.42 lakh beneficiaries between the year 2018 to 2020. Similarly, Indira Gandhi National Open University (2022), through Open Distance Learning (ODL) mode, has provided access to higher education to 12.89 lakh beneficiaries in the year 2021-22. Though these systems have been in place for quite a while, many of the citizens are not fully aware of them.

Despite this, the Government of India has issued necessary instructions to all Public Sector Companies through the Department of Higher Education (2018) and Department of Public Enterprises (2018) to consider the qualifications acquired in ODL mode at par with those acquired in regular mode, but many CPSEs like Balmer Lawrie and Company Ltd. (2020), REC Ltd. (2022), etc. vehemently violate the government guidelines and openly dissuade candidates having qualifications from ODL mode.

3.4. Social Discrimination

Discrimination is the selective treatment of a person or group of people based on his or her physical characteristics, behavior, attire, age, religion, race, color, or gender. The discrimination starts in the mind and becomes a natural habit when it is repeated. The moment such discrimination is accepted by one or more people from the same or successive generations, it becomes a societal stereotype. In one of the reports in *The Hindu* (2021), the Geena Davis Institute of Gender in Media found that though a majority of advertisements use female characters most of these characters are depicted in stereotyped roles of shopping, cleaning, purchasing, and preparing meals, invariably thin, fairer, marginalized, without career aspiration, etc. Such stereotypical portrayal of women impacts the mindset of people in the society. The stereotypical attitude of society leads to the germination of violent behavior against women like feticides, domestic violence, rape, trafficking, forced prostitution, honor killings, eviction and divorce, sexual harassment at the workplace, etc. Such stereotype practices deteriorate the self-efficacy and self-confidence of the women to compete and thus cause gender imbalance across all levels of society. The problem aggravates in the absence of an adequate policy framework to protect from such discriminatory practices.

4. Policy Intervention

4.1. Health Security

As per the International Labour Organization (n.a.), social security is the protection that society provides to individuals and households to ensure access to health care and guarantee income, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, work injury, maternity or loss of a breadwinner. Thus, taking a cue from the success of the Universal Immunization Programme under the National Health Mission (n.d.), it is proposed to have a scheme known as "National Health Security for Women (NHSW)" covering all females up to their lifetime. The starting point may be rare diseases, nutritional needs, critical illness, multiple recurrences of health issues, etc. that may be based on the broad leadership goals or identified national priorities for women's health.

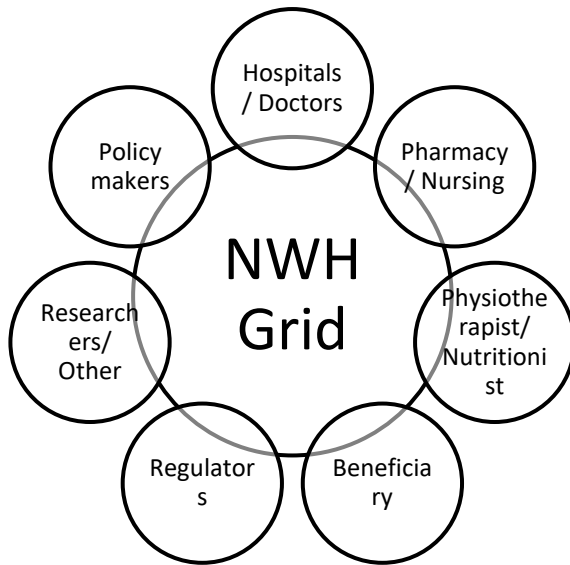


Figure-4: National Women Health Grid

A National Women's Health (NWH) grid may be framed as per the figure-4 above, where data collection points are identified for all stakeholders. NSW may provide the necessary monitoring framework whereas the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare may provide the policy framework to connect all stakeholders to feed the NWH grid. The proposed system shall provide enough data for proactive action, policy design, and health security of women.

4.2. Education Security

Similarly, the Ministry of Education may develop a scheme known as "National Education Security for Women (NESW)" covering all women. The starting point could be the digital mapping of elementary, secondary, and higher education of all females onto a National Women Learning (NWL) grid (Figure 5). The data collection points and the monitoring framework may be provided by NESW whereas the Ministry of Education may provide a policy framework to connect all stakeholders to feed the NWL grid. This facility shall provide enough data for proactive action and policy design and to ensure education

security for all women. Further, the government shall be able to control the undue commercial behavior of private educational institutions.

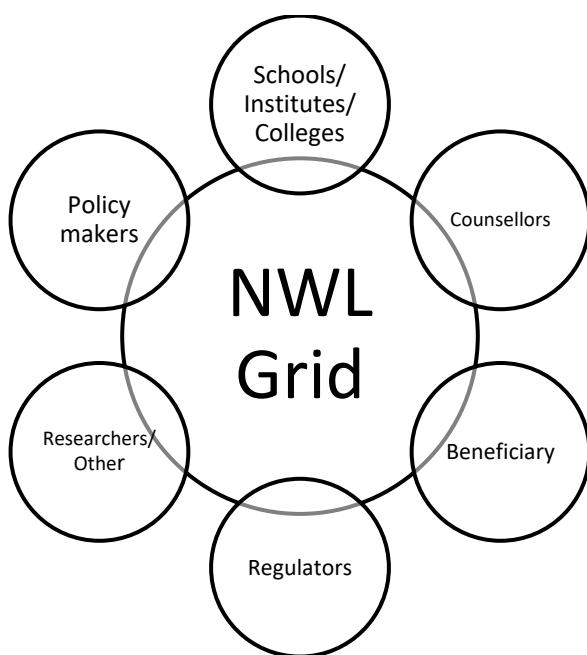


Figure-5: National Women Learning Grid

4.3. Skill-Based Education

The National Education Policy (2020) envisages building a holistic approach to the preparation of professionals, by ensuring broad-based competencies and 21st-century skills, an understanding of the social-human context, and a strong ethical compass, in addition to the highest-quality professional capacities. Further, it has been stated that there is a tremendous shortage of professionals in the country, most particularly in the healthcare sector. It is critical that the need for professionals in various disciplines of higher education is mapped regularly, based on careful data gathering, and adequate capacity is created at educational institutions. Thus, it is proposed that the National Commission for Women Skills (NCWS) be constituted to facilitate the onboarding of all

stakeholders to the National Women Skills (NWS) grid (Figure 6). Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship may provide the policies and adequate data points may identified by NCWS to facilitate feeding to the NWS grid The policy framework should capture the expertise of skills acquired by women through industry feedback. This facility shall strengthen the industry in searching and locating the skilled professional across the country based on their needs and at the same time, the skill inventory of the country shall be optimally utilized.

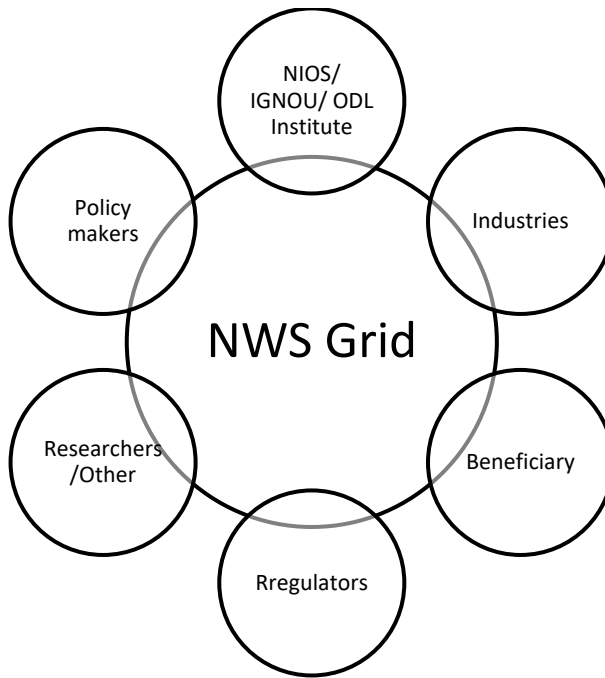


Figure-6: National Women Skill Grid

4.4. Income & Job Security

During the life cycle of women, the economic or financial needs of a female change drastically, and the present form of education provides no guarantee for job or income security. Thus, it is proposed that every job within the geographic boundary of the country is captured at the National Women Employment (NWE) grid (figure-7) and a body like

the National Commission for Women Employment (NCWE) may be constituted. The flow of all jobs both in private and public sectors may be digitally mapped and monitored so that women get adequate income and job security as well as remain protected from any ill practices of the industry or society. Also, the data of gross income of each woman should be monitored to ensure pay protection for the women in their movement from one job to another. Ministry of Labour and Employment may ensure the onboarding of all stakeholders to the grid through policy formulation.

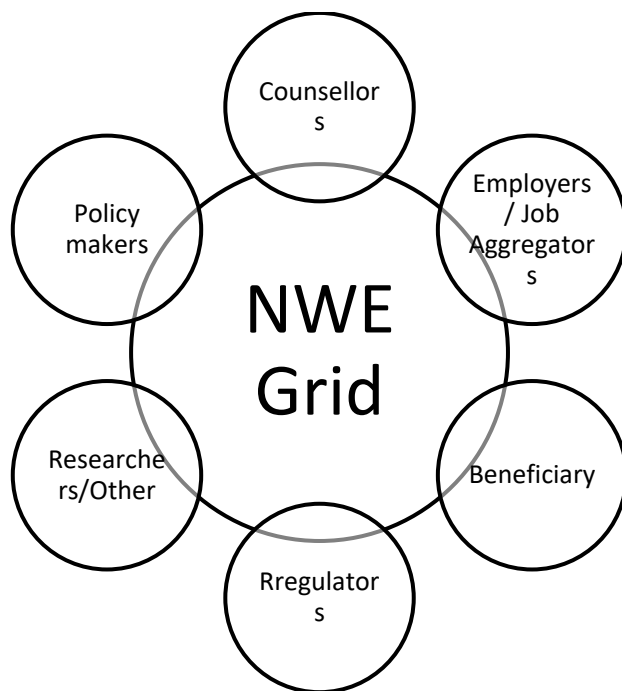


Figure-7: National Women Employment Grid

4.5. Employment Modes

In the LinkedIn Survey on Moonlighting with 2442 networked professionals, Agrawal (2022) found that 56% of respondents stated that

short-time employment will improve work-life balance. Almost all participants equally recommended jobs of 4 hours, 6 hours, and 8 hours of duration per day. It was found by almost 47% of the respondents that short-time employment will improve gender balance across the industries. Thus, short-term jobs are a panacea to provide job security and consistency of income to women. This may be integrated with the NEW grid to ensure real-time monitoring and realization of gender and equity goals.

4.6. Gender Balance

The tenure of each permanent job, irrespective of public or private industry, may be fixed to 10 years or 20 years based on critical needs and objectives to ensure that the annual contribution of every job is captured in the National Women Contribution (NWC) grid (figure-8) in terms of identified skills. The proposed action shall ensure that more jobs are available and equally distributed to women.

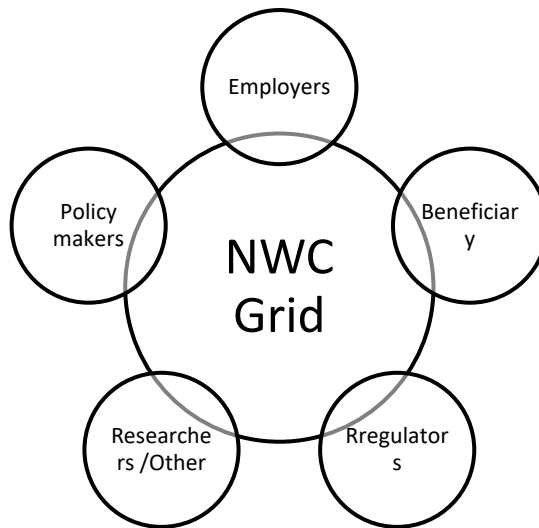


Figure-8: National Women Contribution Grid

4.7. Gender Reservation

No reservation is required rather there should be an inclusive policy for all women to provide, security of health, education, and income. Rapid Action Teams (RAT) should be deployed at the Grid motoring level so that adequate facilitation in time time-bound manner is provided to every woman. All requests of women should have a feedback loop so that there is no procedural leakage.

5. National Data Grid

The Government of India is required to develop a National Data Grit (figure-9) approach where all local grids of the ministries are integrated. The policies may be built around these grids to ensure that all entities participating in economic activities report specific data points as per the social security needs of the country.

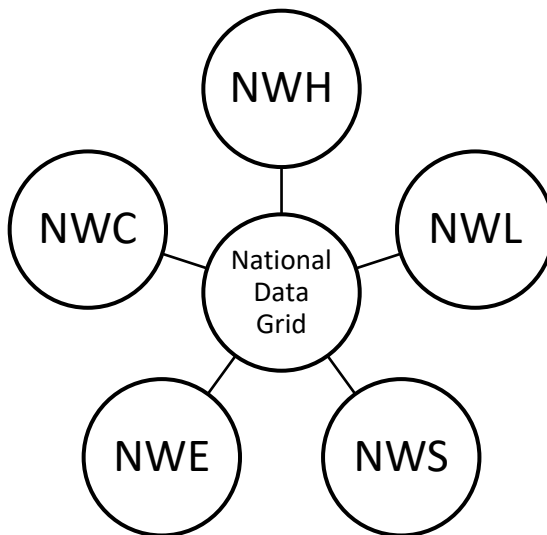


Figure-9: National Data Grid

6. Limitation of Study & Future Research

Many conclusions have been drawn based on conceptual, analytical, and applied research frameworks. However, the real outcome of the policy recommended may solely depend upon the broad coverage taken, the intention of the implementers, and the outcome desired. During the study, overlaps were found in the scope among women, the distressed class of the society, and the complete population of the country. The parameters like education, health, income, skill, employment modes, etc. were taken as the basis of research whereas there could be more factors that can influence the research. In this study, limited parameters have been identified to develop the Data Grids of the line ministries whereas detailed research can be undertaken to finalize the required parameter as per the broad vision of the line ministries. The policy gaps in education, employment, and income need further introspection to dig out more challenging tasks required to be undertaken by the policymakers.

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