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Article

## Educational Empowerment and Gender Equality: Exploring The Role of Education in Women's Liberation

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### Abstract

The present article aims at revealing the perception of “women “empowerment”” in the framework of such a philosophy. It presents the four kinds of ““empowerment””: “political”, “economic”, “knowledge” as well as “psychological” based on empirical research. The highest probability of success of emancipation through education can be achieved as part of non-formal education for changing gendered norms and practices for corrective actions. Therefore, according to the paper, there is a need to employ both micro and macro level changes in order to create a new gender dissection among labour with the focus on the private sector which, as mentioned above, denies women availability and possibilities of transformative action. Hence, women’s liberation and advancement are highly dependent on the attainment of agency at the individual and group levels. For this to work, women led “non-governmental organizations (NGOs)” need to be involved. Considering the encounters related to policies, the last part of the article is devoted. This particular research also argued that the perceptions of female Chinese school leaders were more pessimistic than those of their male counterparts regarding the prospects of gender equity in modern China. However, most of our participants portrayed a positive attitude on gender relationships in Chinese academic institutions, with many confidently believing that they were striving towards the attainment of gender equity for all of their students. Women’s liberation is still a rich theoretical potential which has been never operationalized and strengthened let alone actualized to the possibility which means that there is a need for critical questioning of the normative meaning of the term and claim that it must be treated as serious theory of transformation in gender relations.

### Keywords

Gender Equality; Women “empowerment”; Education Programs; Non-Formal Education (NFE); Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

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The usage of the concept of women's "empowerment", introduced to the world of gender and development three decades ago, remains considerably more widespread in the women's movement overarching organizations, as well as in the international development community, rather than it is among researchers and academics. If one looks at the sources of the information that has been written within the framework of international development, it becomes apparent that in general the concept of women's capability has been virtually excluded. The three main comparative education journals, namely "Comparative Education Review", "Compare", and "European Journal of Education" produced, in total, only three articles with the word "empowerment" in their title over the last ten years.

"Empowerment" is defined and explained in this article with special reference to theoretical analysis and empirical findings from developing and industrialised countries for women. The first section gives the authors' proposition on what "empowerment" entails; the second section explores the formal education as an empowering factor for the girl child as well as women; working women as agents of change is the focus of the third section; women led non-governmental organizations as catalysts of change is provided in the fourth section; the last section provides concrete examples of empowering women and girls (Aguirre & Ferrari, 2014). Considering this, this analysis seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of empowering organizations in the real world, the strengths and weakness associated with this process.

Many researchers and activists have conceptualized and operationalized this idea of empowering women and girls. While some consider it as the place they want to end up in or be part of in the future, others look at it as the next level. It goes without saying that there is no such thing as the distinction between the use and the purpose. According to Sen (1999), theoretical interest in women's emancipation is one of the most important challenges of development for many countries in the world today. Sen claimed that past processes of national development made women 'mute receivers of well-being improving assistance' given that earlier emphasis was on some signifiers of economic affluence. Instead, he stated that females should be viewed as 'informal initiators of change' while being responsible for building their own destiny (Batliwala, 1994). This can be seen from Sen's move that when women are given the ability to negotiate or agency and voice, society stands to gain (Chioda & Verdú, 2016). Still, he fails to note how the people he is discussing could gain 'agency' in their daily lives or how the 'capabilities' are linked to gender.

For example, the capability approach developed by Sen does not address the liberty to pick out for oneself standard (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993). Considering this, problem lies not in "what you are able to achieve or be instrumental with the goods out there in the market", but in the fact that "your control over products may be limited in the first instance". Apart from that, Nussbaum (2000) backed Sen's work in developing a list of ten specific Constitutive Social Entitlements that offer a decent life to women as well as men. Unlike Nussbaum (2003) does not dwell on these needs of women and offers no suggestions as to how these needs are to be fulfilled. My suggested "theoretical framework" deviates from the competences approach in two crucial aspects: First, it argues that it is not a set of social standards but a combination of facts and enacted situations and places for changing these values in the context of societies; Secondly, it brings into focus the macro-micro structures that need to be created that support and empower the collective as well as individual agency of women (Cohen, 2004).

"Women's "empowerment" theorist Kabeer (1999)" has categorized it as three levels. The first deeper, defies some structural relations like seemingly unrelated "caste", "gender relations" as well as "class". The second, "intermediate," encompasses knowledge of institutions, rules, and resources. The third, "immediate," has to do with one's personal capital as well as power and accomplishment (Connell, 2005). Hence, her proposal is against the grain of the typical approaches to analysing the concept of "empowerment" in superficial terms. Kabeer includes the call to further action in her concept of "empowerment". "empowerment", according to her, is the extent to which people can take strategic decisions in a context that this capacity was negated (Dijkstra & Hanmer, 2000). It is indeed plausible to state that education may take an especially significant role as far as the development of such "talent" is concerned.

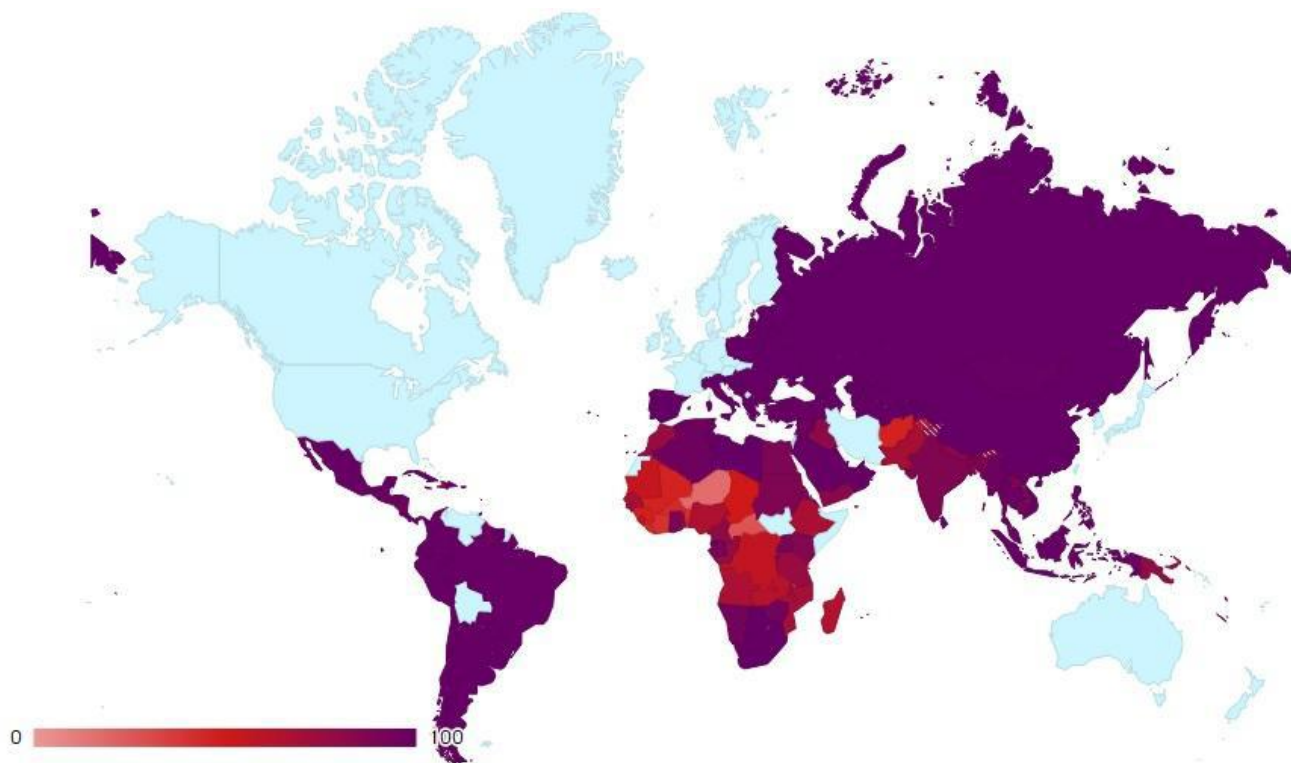
Possessing substantive evidence near sound theory from feminist studies the world over, Women's "empowerment" can certainly be described as a holistic theory. The reader should be able to deduce that education (knowledge) is only one of the factors listed in my needs. Thus, emancipation always leads to behaviour after that, generally on both the population and personal levels. In my view, women's emancipation is not the new domination of female over males; it is a tool, an instrument with which gender parity is built. In a previous approach (Duflo, 2012), this review outlined the four interrelated aspects of "women's "empowerment"" as

follows: The financial aspect refers to the level of economic independence. The political aspect refers to the ability to participate in voting and decision-making processes. The cognitive aspect refers to the recognition of women's abilities and limitations. Lastly, the psychological aspect refers to the emotional well-being of women. This entails recognising the role of self-organisation and also formal systems of support, organisation, and mobilisation at the societal level. In the context of offering definition on “empowerment”, the research subscribes with Srilatha Batliwala’s (1994) “spiral process” incorporating “raising consciousness, defining arenas for intervention, strategizing, mobilizing for change and reflecting on experiences. In terms of proposing the theory of “empowerment”, it should be noted that the one advanced here still values schooling, remains dynamic with the interplay between “Economic, political, and psychological factors” (Eldred, 2013).

One aspect of gender liberty is changing the conventional roles of gender stereotyping. Indeed, to assess the prospects of change in gender relations, a “theory of social change” can focus on transitions between oppressors and the victimized. As a form of human freedom, liberating power, to wit, redressing power imbalances entails the acknowledgement and participation of those normally dominated by power wielding structures/regimes (Freire, 2020; Gramsci, 1973; Houston & Ngculu, 2014; Marx & Engels, 1969). Gender studies as a field of knowledge studies the causes of discrimination of women and men in society and history. And so, it should only be right to extend the struggle for gender equality with that of other sexual orientation type of “sexual identity” (“gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer”).

Since “empowerment” is traced from women movement not from feminist theorist it is possible for this study to conclude that it is an inductively generated “theory of change”. The haves must challenge the haves to level the playing ground and to curb the oppression of the have-nots. This review argues for the necessity of a theory of women’s “empowerment” that recognises both the private and the public domains and the material and ideological structures that underpin and sustain gendered subordination in each. The private sphere includes the many routine tasks concerned with cooking, washing, or tending to children.

The “UNESCO” data which does not contain the “North American” and many of the “Western European” countries illustrate the literacy rates of the females. It is possible to identify a general trend of low literacy starting with “Central America” and proceeding through the “sub-Saharan Africa” (excluding “South Africa”) and the “Indian subcontinent” (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** *Global Female Literacy Rate.*

## Literature Review

Amongst the numerous historic promytes that China has contented is the impact of the intellectual and ethical outlook of “confucianism”. It is for sure that “confucianism” has been influencing the behavior and the interpersonal relationships of Chinese for couple millennia and it has been untold helpful in sustaining Chinese civilization and families. Confucianism presents virtues like “Ren (Kindness)”, “Yi (Integrity)”, “Li (Manner)”, “Zhi (Intelligence)” and “Xin (Trust)” which when practiced will help in minimizing conflict in order to achieve a society that is peaceful. While “confucianism” has numerous encouraging characteristics, it also has a negative one: an embodiment of the harassment of women. In the same “confucianism”, women have to experience three subordinations and should become four virtues. Daughters had to obey their fathers, wives had to obey their husbands and, if they had any, they had to obey their sons as well; this was known as three subordinations.

The “four qualities” mentioned were ethics, discourse, appearance of the women and manual labor or work by the women. Also, ladies include it with the use of binding their feet in a way that they cannot move or socialize frequently. A “Chinese confucian proverb” was ‘A woman with no talent is a blessing’ and girls were less deserving to be educated than the male children before “May Fourth Movement” in 1919 and the establishment of “People Republic of China” in 1949. For example, the “May Fourth Movement” played a significant role in the advancement of the women's libber movement. Ideas about equality and equal rights are easier to accept and develop due to May Fourth ideology (Goulden, Fransch, & Mason, 2009; Schofield, 2022).

Furthermore, it led the Congress, which was dominated by National Party in at the end of 1920s, to pass a perseverance known as ‘the Resolution on the Women’s Movement’ that provided legal safeguard to women’s earning (Didu et al., 2022; Ibrahim, 2006; Norman & Yaacob, 2023). According to the book of Liji which gives details on the Zhou dynasty and the ceremonial and customs; women did not own property or have the freedom to make decisions on property.

The act was certainly a kind of representation of women’s liberation and their ability to change their status in terms of property ownership and rights. This measure is legal, however; its execution in China especially in the rural areas can be a challenge given the growing income inequality disparity within China. In the subsequent paragraph, I will explain how the societal spatial distribution, particularly the rural-urban dichotomy, influences gender rights to “higher education”. There are two programs which have helped China’s “higher education” system to expand and enhance its quality. Originally, from 1949 to 1976 the reform plan known as the “Great Leap Forward” came into existence and by the year 1960, over “1,060 new universities and colleges” were set up (Al Doghan & Sundram, 2023; Hidayat et al., 2022; Iversen, 2003; Schofield, 2022).

However, the demise of the initiative might be attributed to the state government's financial constraints, the economic crisis that occurred between 1960 and 1962, and the impact of the Cultural Revolution. During “Mao Zedong's” final years in power, “higher education” in China transitioned to a paradigm where individuals are responsible for paying for their education, and there was a greater emphasis on sectors that prioritize efficiency. Furthermore, in the year 1999, China endeavored to enhance the availability of “higher education” by augmenting tuition fees, advocating for land grants, and utilizing bank loans. The endeavor proved to be productive and enduring. In 2002, “China's gross enrollment rate” in “higher education” reached its highest point at 16%, which was a substantial increase from 1.55% in 1978. In 2020, 54.4% of Chinese individuals were registered in “higher education”, as reported by the “Statistical Bulletin of National Education Development”. This is a significant increase from the 0.26% recorded at the establishment of modern China in 1949. Currently, the number of individuals pursuing “higher education” in China stands at over 27 million. The government acknowledges the efficacy of the initiative and supports efforts to enhance talent acquisition. Increasing the accessibility of “higher education” will provide greater opportunities for a larger number of young individuals to pursue advanced education. Consequently, it is an intriguing intellectual exercise to ponder if China's significant increase in college enrollment rate will contribute to the promotion of gender equality in the country.

Although there has been some limited progress in the status of women in society during the nineteenth century, the prevailing dominance of men has continued to remain till the current time. China exemplifies a nation that has been deeply shaped by confucian philosophy. Confucius is recognized for advocating specific commendable attributes. Furthermore, it diminishes women's rights by erecting obstacles to education and other domains where they require equitable treatment. Following the “May Fourth Revolution” in the 19th century, certain experts observed a decline in Confucius's unfavorable reputation. An essential aspect is the ability to



examine the presence of gender disparity in China from a fresh perspective, owing to the growth of educational institutions (Idan & Badan, 2022; Kelly & Bhabha, 2014; Li, 2024; Wafa' A & Khasawneh, 2024).

The author's analysis of the "Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)" data indicates that there was an upsurge in the presence of females in China's "higher education" systems. This suggests that there has been a significant shift in female participation in "higher education" within growing institutions. Despite the rise of "higher education", the gender gap in China persists, although female students have now reached a significant proportion in this process. (Figure 2).



Figure 2: GER in China.

### Methodology

When evaluating the impact of "higher education" on gender equality, it is important to consider certain factors. Firstly, it is important to note that there exists a significant association between socioeconomic and gender level in the real world. In addition, class inequality is considerably more prevalent than gender difference. Furthermore, gender equality can be assessed from other angles, including industry, educational attainment, and geographical location. Employing gender as a societal construct was demonstrated to be challenging. Female enrollment at colleges has continually outpaced male enrollment, resulting in a higher number of female students relative to their male counterparts. For the first time in 2009, the population of "college-aged women (10.82 million)" exceeded that of boys (10.62 million). The collected survey data ranging from 2011 to 2012 revealed a reduction in the disparity between men and women acceptance rates across all tiers of "higher education", including prestigious universities, non-prestigious institutions, and colleges. In 2012, Yan and colleagues undertook a study to ascertain the presence of a gender disparity in admissions to specific Chinese universities for "higher education". The figures for admission to prestigious colleges did not show any substantial gender disparity, indicating that "Chinese female students" have equal opportunities to pursue "higher education". Yan demonstrated that females from rural areas have a 66% lower probability than rural men of attending prestigious educational institutions (Massolo, 2003; Murphy-Graham, 2012).

Women of color have around an 85% lower likelihood than men of color. Furthermore, Ro and her colleagues observed that there is an imbalance in the enrollment of female students in prestigious universities. Especially, female students from urban areas have a higher tendency to enroll in key universities, which are the 211 Project universities sponsored by China's Ministry of Education and backed by the construction of 100 new universities program. The gender disparity in rural areas may be attributed to the inclination towards having sons and the heightened focus on educating boys. Consequently, parents residing in rural regions of China demonstrate a greater tendency to allocate resources and attention towards their sons rather than their girls (Parpart, Rai, & Staudt, 2003).

Education of children and the prospect of receiving support in the future regarding the financial aspect were interrelated. To be specific, rural females cannot rely on any sort of support and care, and their households do not contribute to scholarships for college. As for the relationship between low income and low status of women in the society there is more evidence of this. However, Hannum advanced his argument and established that in the affluent villages, females benefitted most from education as compared to boys (Nabi, 2014).

Even though gender equality has emerged significantly in Chinese universities, there are cases where women from rural areas feel limited in their ability to pursue education. Even a few recommendations or policies may help towards gender parity in China. These will include; the governmental subsector, the community subsector, and the educational subsector. It is essential to incorporate gender studies in the program of learning in secondary schools and universities. It is good to instill in the minds of children certain notions on gender right from a young age because this precedes curiosity and further investigation. In order to implement more effectively the policies on gender mainstreaming, they may require a more detailed analysis in some schools. Evaluating the possibility of increasing women's employment in STEM occupations, it is possible to suggest that gender inequality can be best mitigated by utilizing the given weighting.

However, there are few male students willing to take courses in 'soft' discipline as psychology, education and languages etc. It implied that males and females are equal in different areas of life. This first step took the form of rural community workers approaching some parents with discussions of their tendencies to have long-standing stereotype content of males. They should implement strategies, for example, by arranging meetings or delivering speeches, that would promote gender equity. Thus, to spread the concept or the implementation of gender equality in the community, some groups should be encouraged to do so. Rural poverty may also mean that women have limited chances to attend school and therefore governments should subsidise education in rural areas. Moreover, they have to involve people within the communities and teachers in how to implement gender equality policies.

## Results

### *Economic "Empowerment"*

This paper established that access to goods and resources remains a fundamental question that needs to be asked when discussing the economic advancement of women on the local as well as the international sphere. As much women employment especially in the lower order stratification levels sought stable and secure jobs, IDAs reliance on macro-level indicators provides a rather skewed and perhaps misleading picture of women's economic enfranchisement.

Property is central to the attainment of one's social and economic needs or claims. Economic development benefits women for instance in property rights, accessibility to loans and "elective abortion" (Duflo, 2012). For instance, one writer posited that, "the ownership and control of property by men and not women is the single most overwhelming reason of women's inequity in prosperity, recognition, and authority" (Robeyns, 2003). There is ample evidence suggesting that women stand to gain large benefits from technological improvements occasioned by evolving social and economic factors. Industrialization is beneficial for women because, in addition to spending less time on housekeeping, they can spend their time on extra work that brings home income (Duflo, 2012; Vincent-Lancrin, 2008; World Bank, 2011). Since women are usually at the helm of the poor households and are officially among the struggling groups in society, they stand to benefit most from poverty eradication. Nevertheless, economic development cannot fully address gender disparities.

Due to gender-based abortions and female infanticide, the number of females being born is less than males in many of the world's fastest growing economies like China. This, in my view, serves as an ample evidence of the pathetic state of women in such countries. On this, the United Nations (2008) notes that wage employment outside farm is often employed as a measure of women's economic independency. In addition, social welfare and well as gender equality certainly advances when women control and have access to finances because this places them in a position to be able to do things such as: for instance, they have advocated for an end to domestic abuse (Dijkstra & Hanmer, 2000). However, the picture that emerges in many countries is that while women work, they are clinically underemployed or locked in low wage, no mobility, and indentured jobs. Even if science has more women than men or not, women get less wages than men on average in all the countries of the world. This is so even though women are the dominant source of human capital as worker, in many countries of the developing world. For instance, in the United States, men with high school diploma or equivalent are paid

more than women with the same educational level, but a smaller amount than “men with a two-year college degree (Associate degree)”, males with “bachelor degree” earn equivalent as female’s master degree holders, and sometimes even more than women doctorate degree holders (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

In the micro or household level / women’s economic “empowerment” is where women have control over their earnings and can financially support themselves without relying on their husbands. Despite this, among low-paid maids who are predominantly women, it is evident that paid work also entails multiple pressures and degrading conditions within the home’s division of domestic labour even to the extent of engendering survivalist concerns rather than empowering women to secure promotions in higher forms of employment or to create small-scale micro-employments that are self-controlled. The work done at home is invisible to the operatives in the public policy making arena since the present regime of neoliberal economy has little regard for transactions that do not have the potential of yielding profit. As a result of these factors, this is a significant barrier that needs to be overcome in order for proper economic “empowerment” strategies to be devised and put into practice.

These plots are related to the coefficients of interaction with the dummies of other birth cohorts depicted by the solid line in Equation (1), the OLS regression model, estimates the main effects only, while adding fixed effects for birthplace, year of birth and other exogenous variables. The individuals being born in different years have their birth cohorts, and the youth “aged 19-20 years” in 1999 is deemed as the “reference group”, and hence, it equals zero on the coefficient. The dotted lines in the figure indicate the respective “95% confidence intervals” (Figure 3).

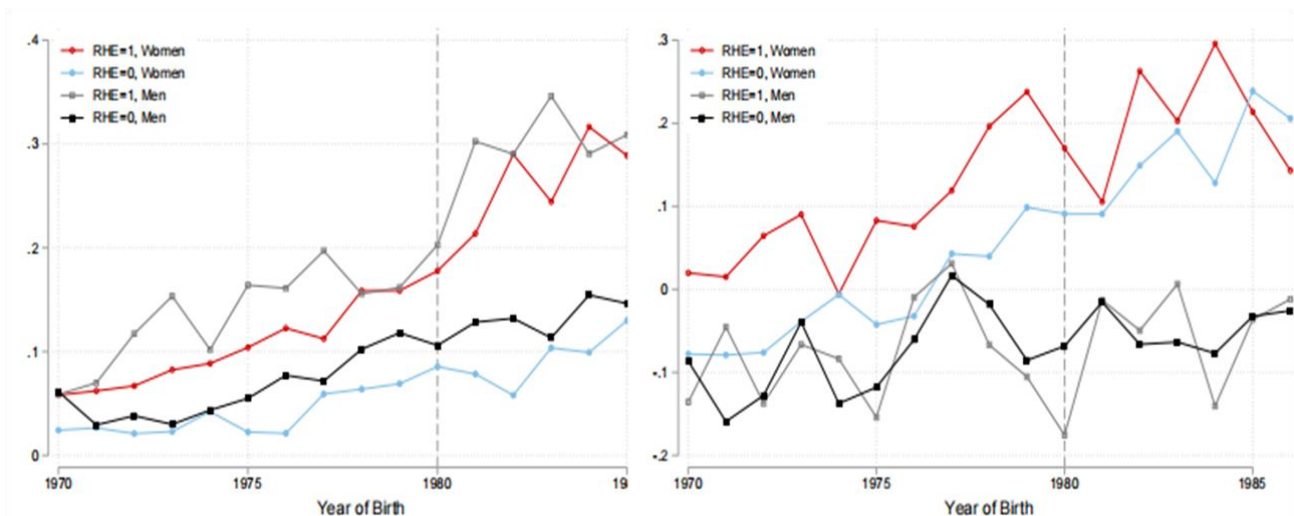


Figure 3: “Higher Educational Attainment by Birth Cohort”.

### Political “Empowerment”

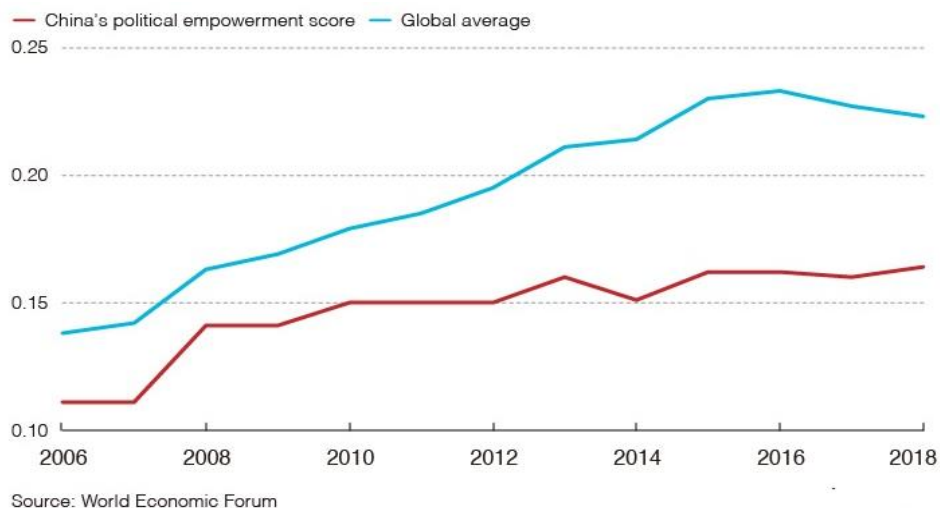
Similar to financial “empowerment”, political “empowerment” of women demands a consideration of the role of the whole picture and the parts therein. To be designated as a politically aware representative at some level is a major achievement for the development of women’s gender rights as well as equality. Another weakness is that the political “empowerment” parameters employed by “IDAs” are usually too generalized.

Part-time household care that does not pay is still an essential political category. This has been first realized by the feminism and only now economists started paying attention as well (Chioda & Verdú, 2016; Cohen, 2004; Duflo, 2012). Females organize more housekeeping than male counterparts across nearly all regions, and the erosion of the gender gap only increases as girls age. The young people in rural India opine that, the girl child will have done anything from twice as much as the male equivalent to five times as much house chores when she is between 14 and 17 years. In contrast, girls dedicate only a third more time than boys to accomplishment of homework and other school-related tasks (Kelly & Bhabha, 2014). They are correct that women have fewer opportunities to carve out their very own specializations in such circumstances because it is so incredibly challenging to do so. This is a something that is common even in developed countries today (Goulden et al., 2009). One study conducted on male and female scholar at the “leading research university” in the “United States of America” revealed that family or household formation is a the key cause of women’s opt out for the academia between the ages of having PhD and being tenure in science.

Among the most significant roles played in the formation of gender difference in the social and economic realms is the gender base distribution of labour where females undertake majority of the household chores while men take most of the community sector responsibilities (Cohen, 2004). The need for caregivers is imperative in the preservation of the social fabric yet it creates feelings of shame and leads to loneliness (Biesecker et al., 2014). According to Feminist, drastic alterations are called for in the realm of cultural and paid work if women are to achieve greater level of emancipation (Robeyns, 2003). These changes should work to distribute care responsibilities more evenly between male and female partners rather than redefining the concept of care. Vakis, Muoz, & Coello revealed that women in the countries of Central America had higher labour force participation rate after childcare was made available to them (Cohen, 2004). It maintains that employment of women reduces the gender differential in housekeeping for American families.

The “government and IDAs” fail to provide “low-income women” especially adequate financial support for the considerable and repeated time constraints that they experience. The disdain for domestic work stems from people’s ignorance concerning the relationship between domestic work and their existence. There was no consideration for women who worked from home until as recent as 1993 because the term keeping house implies that women are not working but are only engaged in leisure. undefined Cohen (2004) and the World Bank (2011) established that women are solely charged with most caregiving and household duties across the different socioeconomic and industrialised world regions. Findings on people’s time use reveal that Cambodian women dedicate 30% of their time to housework than men whereas Swedish “women spend 70%” more than men while Iraqi males spend “10 times” (Aguirre & Ferrari, 2014; Duflo, 2012). Women continue to be the main caregivers in their homes though most of this work is unpaid and is present even in countries with high gender parity in Europe like Sweden. Moreover, Villamizar García-Herreros (2011), specified that that can be observed in the data of 2008 from Colombia which shows that men with university education provides additional hours weekly in paid work (45 against 40) and few “hours per week” in unpaid work (10 against 25).

In 95 countries, women are dominant in adult literacy programs for a population of people in the lowest “socioeconomic level”, who are unable write or read (Medel-Añonuevo, 2013). The above statistics suggest that women, as a group, have a high level of concern and want for literacy programs, but obstacles at home may be a contributing factor to program noncompletion. In the view of the “United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean”, ‘the segmentation of labour between women and men as well as the unequal distribution of time is a determinant for the economical, social and political subjection of women’. The need-solving “requires political will by government” assertion shifts focus to government action/remedial while leaving out the role of pressure from collective societal groups such as NGOs (NGOs). The home is where the woman is free to make choices and exercise her agency or constrained by traditional gender roles and cultural norms. G Governments may try to attempt to support women’s independence; however, such interventions do more harm than good (Figure 4).



**Figure 4:** Political “Empowerment” Gap.



Feminists have employed the human rights discourse and have received success in presenting gender injustice as a human rights issue, thus, enjoying a universal moral call that cuts across all cultures and borders. To understand human rights activism, one has to take it as a case where people or groups who seek protection from their government against violation of their rights. All the foregoing are achieved through laws, rules, regulations and policies that create or construct gender in the States. In contrast, the evidence points to the fact that the state plays one of the most active roles and far from being an impartial moderator of the “social”, “economic”, and “political” rights with regard to sex. While some countries remain open to discussing the establishment of female’s right and the recognition of social /women organizations (Cliche, Ranaboldo, & Serrano, 2016), the advancement is still very slow. If more legal recognition is given to such features of nations, their true characteristics can be seen at variance with their own legal profiles, but such approaches are not given due attention when initiatives that are claimed to be feminist place exaggerated importance to women’s human rights hardly offering them practical ground.

### ***Knowledge “Empowerment”***

If one knows more, then one is able to apprehend the general perspective and the subtleties of social actions that occur at the same time. In a civilizational clash with oppressive groups and the numerous methods used to enforce conformity, information is crucial. However, this knowledge might be used to combat gender biasness and this is not very popular in public. Ideally, these data should equip us with the necessary knowledge of the causes of women oppression and how to address them. There is information that two primary procedures of acquiring and sharing systematic knowledge exist, namely, schooling, and nonformal education.

Over time, the official stock of knowledge in schools has been useful in the processes that foster the growth and society’s stability. Education empower women financially, but it also helps them in managing their family and work responsibilities. However, concerning this citable knowledge, transformational gender perspective is not being taught in schools. undefined According to one optimistic theory, it occurs when other loyalties dominate; globalisation forces, the new knowledge economy and the supposed school role in producing workers means that schools demand more science and technological than social assistances. Freire (2020) noted that the interest of the oppressors is to change the consciousness of the oppressed but not the reality that is oppressive of them, a more negative perspective of the scenario (Sen, Germain, & Chen, 1994).

In the opinion of educationists and other consummate professionals, conventional schooling is incapable of transforming the culture and/or roles of boys/girls. From the article by Ira Shor, an American educator, knowledge can be defined as knowing or comprehending something but may not necessarily imply the capacity for acting on that knowledge. In as much as over 60% of women in Japan have college education, the country is a sad case since more than “32% of Japanese women” do not work in the “labour market” because of cultural practices that confine women to be homemakers and child bearers. Since “Japanese women” cannot work in jobs that are normally considered male domains, female college graduates are paid 48% as much as their male counterparts with the college degree (OECD, 2014). If education is to challenge gender relations, then students should be provided with pro-feminist knowledge and academic experience such as Girls’ self-affirmation and an explanation of how women and men are treated unjustly. In this context, Kabeer (1999) emphasized that it is recommended that curriculums must comprise content that will enhance students of both genders to be better acquainted with Gender and Society in the current society. Many countries around the world offer some form of family life and sex education; nevertheless, few of these curricula cover topics such as sexuality, sexual desire or even gendered societal roles. Elements of “sexuality and contraceptives, construction of masculinity and femininity, wife battering, early and forced marriage especially in Africa and South Asia”, the caring and providing responsibilities of men and women, and the belief in the gendered realities of day-to-day living (patriarchal reality) should form part of gender-sensitive curriculum. International treaties and conventions such as property rights and abortion rights shall be underlined, as well as National legal provisions and their enforcement with particular reference to the convention on the eradication of all kind of “discrimination against women” (1981). First and foremost, the transmission of teaching practices and curricula themselves must not reproduce these prejudices. The interjection of governments to rename stream, modify syllabuses, and sponsor gender education for department leaders and teachers, however, is more profound.

Education aims at the student’s intellect but also affects his or her/their emotions through increased perceived control, mastery, and hope. Results of several research works show that women with “higher

education” levels are able to make more rational decisions in their careers and in their lives in general. The political as well as the economical areas of women’s existence cannot be considered as suitable for the communal context of “secondary” and “elementary” schools. However, it is important to understand that the theoretical comprehension of sex in school still remains their major concern rather than practical issues such as “domestic violence”, “rape”, and the same “rights” as men to own “property, land, or credit”. These young people are the main victims of institutional barriers because they experience the impacts directly. By the time, women get to the university level, they have been able to gain maturity and even make some conclusions about gender. They may prove to be perfect subjects for researches that focus on enhancing individuals’ gender awareness. Namely, women, being in “higher education” institutions, are less likely to select elective courses concerning gender issues and more inclined to concentrate on their programs. undefined As per the available record, while approximately 7 million American women attended “higher education” in 2014, there are fewer than “900 gender studies programs” at the college and university level (Korenman, 2014).

Students do not see such ideas as a threat; rather, they are ready to expand their knowledge about these notions and enhance critical thinking within educational contexts. Unfortunately, it has become a norm for male teachers to sexually harass female pupils in schools and classes especially those in “sub-Saharan Africa” and “Asia”. A recent survey done on five Asian countries indicate that schools are among areas where violence is prevalent (International Center for Research on Women and Plan International, 2015). Scoring the obtained data based on Student reports Based on the responses from the students, both girls and boys were found to use violence, both emotional and physical on the opposite sex. This is why people, watching violence, just turn a blind eye and pretend that they do not see it – and thus, the topic of violence does not appear into the classrooms or in home. Sexual assault on the campuses especially by student continues to rise with survey carried across the United States (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993) and news coverage with special focus on intimate partners increasing. However, policymakers only concentrate on the positive outcomes for girls and young women in traditional schooling contexts (Warner, Stobenau, & Glinski, 2014). Both Dijkstra and Hammer agree with the notion that time use data are not included in today’s female measures of “empowerment”. This is true even though the “Millennium Development Goals” (United Nations, 2008) include female's educational attainment comparative to males as one of three components of “women “empowerment””. The other two claims are the “Women in parliaments” and the “Employment in wage employment among women in the non-agriculture sector”.

Gender equality programmes are therefore in the interest of all women irrespective of the class they belong to. In the non formal “education programmes” for the mature female in the developed nations especially for the poor Literacy is often taken as the initial index of gender sensitization. Literacy is defined by “UNESCO” as a shift Of Paradigm Inclusion And “empowerment” (Medel-Añonuevo, 2013). In conclusion, it must be noted that the “UNESCO” Literacy Initiative for “empowerment” is also referred to as an effort towards women and men’s LIFE 2006-2015. Literacy courses could be beneficial in mitigating some of the gender differences and care work burdens on women if only they were advised on methods of creating an environment that allows asking questions and sharing ideas (Eldred, 2013; Nabi, 2014). NFE courses are ones that affect the cognitive, political and psychological areas of development since these lead to feelings of esteem and inform individuals on how to argue. The literature review also reveals findings indicating that rarely does such programmes address many of the economic factors available.

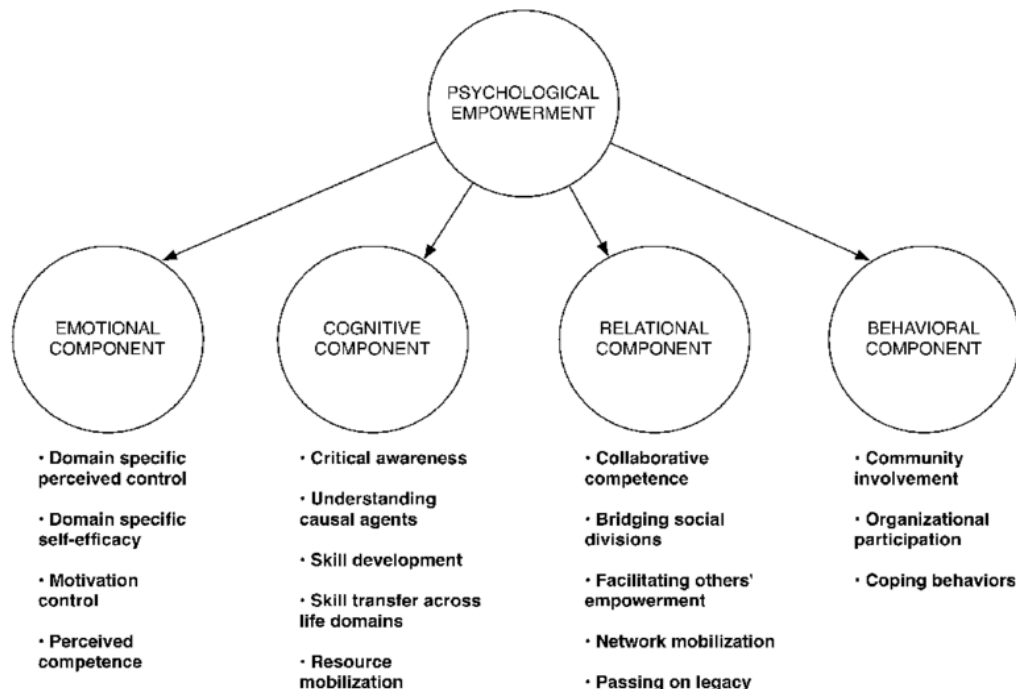
With regard to gender specific, Warner et al. (2014) has identified the programs that enhance participants’ self-sufficiency and boost group cohesiveness, as well as the programs that encourage the climate of open discussant and critical sex and gender roles as being more empowering to women. Being a member of the communal circle and taking part in group conversations enables the involvement of toilsome practices and social networking. Female learners who participate in any action that leads to reading improvement usually have a positive self-image (Stromquist (2007), demonstrating the South American country of Brazil). According to Vakis, Muñoz and Coello (2011), transfer may actually lead to increased interactional dynamics between participants in the programme, members of the community and leaders whereby more information is shared and consequently there are huge changes in behaviour and attitude. Medel-Añonuevo (2013) stated that the “UNESCO” “Institute for Lifelong Learning patronized” conducted an up-to-date research on the literacy programs in nine countries including “Nepal, Indonesia, India, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Brazil, Pakistan, Turkey and Bolivia”. In the context of this study, Eldred has defined “empowerment” as ‘the process of enabling individuals recognize the power dynamics and systems, and understand that fair and equitable distribution of

power leads to richer relations' (p. 13). Eldred also noted that the literacy experiences are empowering if not in a more direct manner and that valuing 'women's expatriate experience, discussion in circles, and sex equality all led to women's "empowerment". The findings of Pathways of Women's "empowerment" which uses data from 55 programmes working on gender problems in 15 different countries are as follows (León, 1997), and the authors found that the capability of organizing and learning from experience was one of the best determinants of women's "empowerment". Women's organizations were also pointed out as "important in developing gender justice constituency" (p. 9). A study on post secondary education institution carried out in the United Kingdom found out that women who attend adult "education programmes" are the ones who are most likely to leave a partner who abuses them (Schuller et al., 2004).

The government still will not accord adequate credence to the emancipatory role of literacy. According to the "UNESCO" findings that were carried out about 2013 less than a quarter of the 129 countries that were sampled were reported to have adopted an "empowerment"/autonomy approach in literacy post-adult education policy intervention. Similarly, in the same study, emphasis on particular policy purposes and goals inclines towards 'a functionalist worldview with emphasis on the work sector and employment readiness' (Medel-Añonuevo, 2013). Nevertheless, in practice, government support of emancipation through literacy is negligible, with initiatives for adult literacy programming typically receiving fewer than 1 percent of national budgets (United Nations Educational & Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2012). Many governments and international organizations have placed the question of enhancement of literacy as one of their priorities but the latter requires concrete outcomes within the shortest possible time. Despite this, findings in research conducted in many countries of the long-term benefits of literacy cannot be refuted. Women now hold more power within the house and even bargain with men, in-laws and even the stranger (Nabi, 2014).

**Psychological "Empowerment"**

There seems to be no need for a specific investigation of psychological agency because it overlies many other factors, but this, in fact, is not so. The women of today must be self confident, self assured and assertive if they are to challenge change and feel at ease to take an active part in public life. What is important in the present context is for women to bear these characteristics in order to disrupt core power dynamics. How do women get to be such of high moral standards? They can only be formed as a result of a collaboration on a project and a practical observation of how it can be completed and accomplished. This (Figure 5) aptly demonstrates the reliance on one's immediate environment on the mental preparedness of a person.



**Figure 5: Psychological "Empowerment".**

Social geographers who have studied the topic for a while have come to the conclusion that the level at which newly integrated social players may have the most influence is the local one. Because of the practical advantages of having events close to home, this is particularly true for women. Agendas at local events are also becoming more participatory (Cliche et al., 2016; Massolo, 2003). Women-led NGOs in the community will have a better chance to launch and thrive as a consequence of grassroots initiatives. Women's challenges may be articulated outside of partisan politics and administration thanks to the work of such organizations, which also provide invaluable learning experiences via NFE (Oxaal & Baden, 1997).

## Discussion

Consequently, empowering women is a multidimensional endeavour that requires action on several fronts to achieve meaningful and enduring results. It requires extensive planning and execution. Involvement from organizations with a proven history of promoting women's "empowerment" is crucial for this joint effort to result in concrete policy changes. Institutional change, as well as changes in everyday life and human behaviour, benefit greatly from organisational engagement (Connell, 2005; Ibrahim, 2014).

Notwithstanding their differences, women-led NGOs and feminist organizations are essential to "empowerment" initiatives and provide a counterbalance to inadequate official responses (Sen & Grown, 1987). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are well-known for their work on both a global and a national/local level. On a local, national, or international basis, many individuals are struggling financially. "empowerment" comes from a variety of places, and that's why there are so many different resources out there. Amartya Sen's beliefs on development as human freedom and the vital role of capabilities have contributed to the recognition of the fundamental importance of agency. Yet he doesn't consider the possibility that society's collective agency emerges from the sum of its members' individual abilities (Ibrahim, 2006; Parpart et al., 2003).

As NGO employees are not democratically elected, many individuals think they have no authority to speak on behalf of the people they claim to represent. In response to this critique, Ballón and Valderrama (2004) (p. 22, quoting Chiriboga) suggest that representation may come from one of two sources: (1) a political mandate, or (2) a dedication to promoting and defending a specific public good. Legitimacy is gained for such representation because it speaks for those who cannot and because the organization's special characteristics help influence public policy, even if it is not earned via the democratic process. Of course, just as with every voting system, there is always a risk of misuse with any kind of representation. The second kind of representation is useful for underrepresented groups, and here is where women-led NGOs come in. Despite the vital role they play in advancing women's equality, IDAs only provide these groups with a small sum of money. Just US\$504 million (or 2.1% of US\$23,495 million) was contributed in favour of gender equality and women's "empowerment" in 2011. This is true even for donor countries that have historically funded women's organizations. The Netherlands, a major contributor to women's organizations, allocates just 10.5% of its budget to "gender equality and women's "empowerment"." (OECD, 2007). However, much of this aid is spent on low-budget, quickly-completed projects that do not allow for the development and consolidation of institutions, and this is especially true for countries in sub-Saharan Africa, which receives the lion's share of foreign aid (justly so since this is the region with the greatest need for help). Yet, the women's movement in the global South would not exist without assistance from elsewhere. When nations work together to address an issue, it can no longer be ignored or disregarded. An educator with years of experience in organising for change, Shor (1992) stresses the significance of civil rights movements in the struggle against oppression and for a more fair and democratic society.

Many campaigns have focused on education with explicit feminist aims. This article focuses on three of the most representative cases.

### *Efforts to Foster "Empowerment" in Women through Education*

Several initiatives have been launched to improve the school environment and curriculum in the hopes of making female students feel more confident and comfortable. Women run and concentrate on education in 16 different African countries via the Forum for African Women Educationalists (Forum for African Women Educationalists, 2000), a regional African Organization. FAWE has long sponsored an after-school programme called Tuseme Clubs (Swahili for "Let's speak up"). Tuseme is an initiative that partners with schools to provide students with opportunities to develop their interpersonal and communicative abilities via activities like as seminars, festivals, dance, theatre, and



the creation of a school newspaper. School-based action plans are developed in collaboration with programmed facilitators and teachers (World Economic Forum, 2014). The "theatre for development" programme at FAWE is crucial because it gives students the opportunity to analyse community issues and then participate in a post-show debriefing in which the audience discusses the play's impact on them (Mlama et al., 2005). Tuseme clubs have been effective in educating young women about gender roles and protecting them from harmful cultural norms, but their expansion has been impeded by governments' unwillingness to support them.

There has been a rise in the number of successful non-formal education (NFE) programmes that aim to develop individual agency. An important intervention for empowering NFEs has been CARE's leadership model, which has been trialled in 28 countries since 2009. Individual agency (one's objectives, methods, abilities, attitudes, and achievements), institutional frameworks (rules and laws), and interpersonal interactions are the three pillars of this notion (power relations). The concept establishes a secure setting where girls may learn and practise leadership and decision-making abilities with the support of caring adults. Via after-school programmes and other community-based activities, CARE has tested its leadership approach in eight countries (Bangladesh, Egypt, Honduras, India, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, and Yemen), reaching a total of 190,000 girls and 136,000 boys. Researchers in these eight countries compared the model to a control group and analysed self-reported data from girls after two years of project participation to determine the impact of the model on issues such as adolescent pregnancy and the prevalence of sexual abuse and rape among students and members of the local community. Women and men should have the same rights, and the proportion of girls who agree with this statement is far greater among those who took part. The girls' inclination for postponing marriage also changed (Janoch, Kintz, & Moll, 2015).

Another overview of "empowerment" programmes is provided by Warner et al. (2014), who conducted case studies of four major NFE projects in Egypt, Ethiopia, India, and Bangladesh. The programmes mostly focused on preventing young girls from getting married. These efforts took numerous forms, including programmes designed to improve girls' economic and sexual health, open up more channels of contact, and re-enroll them in school. In general, the workshops helped girls become more aware of the risks associated with early marriage and reduced their likelihood of entering into such unions before the age of 18. The most promising tactics found in the studies were gaining knowledge, receiving instruction, and connecting with others (Stromquist, 1995, 2003).

The third NFE programme, the Tutorial Learning System (Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial, SAT) was pioneered in Colombia by the non-governmental organisation FUNDAEC. Some nations in Africa and South America have begun using the SAT. The SAT curriculum offers an alternative to the standard high school exit exam by placing a focus on critical thinking, class discussions, and debates, and addressing the issue of gender head-on (Murphy-Graham, 2012). Qualitative testing of ten women who had been attending SAT for at least three years found that they had become better at things like critical thinking and communicating with their partners. Women's independence was measured by factors such as when they started working or started their own businesses, or when they were able to successfully negotiate their marriages (Murphy-Graham, 2012).

The implementation of "empowerment" has clearly been one-sided, with a focus on the acquisition of emancipatory knowledge, often limited to influencing girls' choices and actions in opposition to child marriage. This teaching should not be minimised, but it is doubtful that the girls would be able to change the pattern once they become adults, get married, have children, etc. if they do not have access to the other components of "empowerment".

## Conclusion

This paper concluded that when compared to their male counterparts, female Chinese school leaders were more pessimistic about the progress towards gender parity in contemporary China. Despite this, many of our participants painted an optimistic picture of gender relations in Chinese schools, with many assuming they were working towards achieving gender parity for all of their pupils. Their expectations and perspectives run counter to much gloomier evidence, and they have helped us strengthen our theory that gender equality is conceptualised and modelled distinctively in China, such that it includes difference and division. Our male and female Chinese school leaders will hopefully continue to instil in the next generation of Chinese students a belief in and commitment to "gender equality with Chinese characteristics,"

A "theory of social change" predicated on the concept of "empowerment" may be used to work towards an emancipatory gender outcome. For this reason, social action necessitates taking into account four fundamental components of "empowerment", dimensions which interact with one another and have synergistic outcomes. In this

conception of social change known as emancipation, women play a pivotal role as protagonists. Cohesion among members of a group and the ability to take collective action are also crucial to achieving “empowerment”. Although recognising the importance of individual agency and group action, women's “empowerment” also pays attention to structural restrictions that operate as hurdles to the transformation of gender relations. Given the multifaceted nature of “empowerment” theory, governments and IDAs seldom promote cross-sectoral collaboration.

Education plays a crucial role in empowering women. Information that prepares women not just for the labour market but also for analysing and addressing their social surroundings is what women need, as has been argued elsewhere in this article. The revolutionary potential of formal education has not yet been fully used. Apart from the students' tender years, many constraints persist in redirecting education away from gender consciousness initiatives, particularly in the modern era, when academic success is narrowly linked to reading, mathematics, and science—and away from life skills, among which gender-sensitive learning and teaching. NFE has been shown to be more successful in training students to question and even subvert traditional gender norms. While NFE has the potential to greatly aid in the advancement of women's rights, it is currently underfunded. Knowledge is essential, but the economic, political, and psychological aspects of social life should not be ignored.

To boost women's emancipatory engagement, external aid is required. The efforts of women-led organizations at the grassroots, national, and transnational levels have greatly boosted people's individual and collective agency. These groups have paved the road for women to have access to education that gives them more agency and to collaborate in nontraditional settings beyond the home. Important non-governmental organizations should be led by women. Women's emancipation activity requires foreign assistance to take on meaningful and long-lasting gender action since national governments in undeveloped nations are reticent to offer support. Just by existing, global gender policies help raise consciousness about gender inequality and garner support from supporters willing to assist in funding its elimination.

From a feminist perspective, the value of knowledge lies in its ability to inspire people to take action. Gender-specific data and nurturing classrooms that encourage non-traditional gender roles are essential for making progress. Women's “empowerment” remains a promising theoretical premise that has not received concomitant operationalization and support to reach its full range of possibilities, so there is a need to challenge its normative meaning and demand that it be taken seriously as a theory of change in gender relations.

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