

Right to Education, Human Capital and Women's Economic Participation in India: A Constitutional and Developmental Perspective

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Abstract

Education constitutes a fundamental foundation of human development and economic development. In India, the constitutional status of education has undergone a significant transformation, reflecting its importance for human dignity, equality, capability development and meaningful participation in social and economic life. The present paper examines the Right to Education in India from a constitutional and developmental perspective, with particular emphasis on its contribution to human-capital formation and women's economic participation. It specifically analyses the role of education in developing knowledge, skills and productive capabilities and examines its contribution to productivity enhancement, poverty reduction and economic growth. The paper further evaluates the relationship between women's educational attainment and their economic participation, particularly in relation to employment, earnings, financial independence and decision-making. Drawing upon constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, statutory developments and relevant secondary evidence, the study argues that the substantive significance of the Right to Education extends beyond access and enrolment to learning, educational attainment, capability development and the conversion of educational opportunities into meaningful economic participation. The paper concludes that education can serve simultaneously as a constitutional right, an investment in human capital and an important foundation for inclusive economic development, while the economic benefits of women's education depend upon the availability of supportive labour-market and socioeconomic conditions.

Keywords: Right to Education; Human Capital; Human-Capital Development; Women's Economic Participation; Educational Attainment; Female Labour-Force Participation; Productivity; Economic Growth.

1. Introduction

Education occupies a central position in the relationship between human development and economic development. From an economic perspective, education contributes to human-capital formation by developing knowledge and skills embodied in individuals. From a social perspective, it can reduce exclusion by enabling disadvantaged groups to participate more effectively in institutions that determine access to employment, income and public opportunities. From a gender perspective, education can strengthen women's capabilities and economic opportunities and can influence household decisions relating to health, fertility and children's education.

Education is an instrument through which development can be achieved. Its significance extends beyond individual benefits because educational attainment can generate intergenerational and wider social effects. An educated population can contribute to productivity, social mobility, civic participation and the long-term development of human capabilities.

In India, education was initially addressed primarily through the Directive Principles of State Policy. Article 45 directed the State to endeavour to provide free and compulsory education to children until they completed fourteen years of age within ten years of the commencement of the Constitution. Articles 41 and 46 also reflected constitutional concern for education and the advancement of weaker sections. The constitutional promise, however, remained incompletely realised for several decades, consequently educational exclusion was particularly significant for girls, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, children with disabilities, minorities and economically disadvantaged households. The constitutional position subsequently evolved through judicial interpretation and constitutional amendment, culminating in the recognition of education as a Fundamental Right for children between six and fourteen years of age under Article 21A.

The contemporary challenge, however, extends beyond formal legal recognition. Universal enrolment does not necessarily imply universal learning, and gender parity in enrolment does not automatically translate into equality in employment, earnings or economic decision-making. Physical access to schools does not necessarily ensure retention, transition or meaningful learning outcomes. Consequently, the Right to Education needs to be examined not only as a constitutional guarantee but also in relation to human-capital formation, social inclusion and women's economic participation.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of education in human-capital formation, productivity enhancement, poverty reduction and economic growth.
2. To evaluate the relationship between educational attainment and women's economic participation, including employment, earnings, financial independence and decision-making

3. Research Methodology

The study adopts a doctrinal, descriptive and analytical research methodology based primarily on secondary data. The doctrinal component examines constitutional provisions, statutory provisions and judicial decisions relating to the Right to Education. The descriptive component examines available educational and labour-market indicators. The analytical component interprets the relationship between education, human capital, gender equity, social inclusion and economic development. The secondary evidence is analysed through descriptive comparison, trend interpretation and conceptual analysis.

The paper does not claim to establish a causal relationship between education and women's labour-force participation through primary statistical modelling. Rather, it analyses the relationship using available secondary evidence and the broader theoretical and institutional literature.

4. Education as a Human Right and Development Right

The Right to Education is firmly established within the international human-rights framework. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 recognises education as a fundamental human right and emphasises free elementary education. Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social

and Cultural Rights further develops the right to education and recognises its significance for the full development of the human personality and respect for human dignity.

The significance of education extends beyond the formal provision of schooling. Education may facilitate the exercise of other rights by enabling individuals to understand legal rights, access public services, participate in democratic processes and obtain employment. The human-rights and economic perspectives are therefore closely interconnected. A rights-based approach establishes education as an entitlement, while the human-capital approach explains its contribution to productive capability. These perspectives need not be regarded as competing approaches. Education can simultaneously constitute a matter of social justice and an investment in human capability.

5. Constitutional Evolution of the Right to Education in India

Thus, the original constitutional scheme approached education through a combination of social policy, welfare obligations and the advancement of disadvantaged sections. However, the non-justiciable character of the Directive Principles meant that the provisions could not, in their original form, be directly enforced by individuals before the courts. The constitutional position subsequently underwent a significant transformation through judicial interpretation of Article 21. The Supreme Court progressively adopted a broader interpretation of the right to life and recognised that the dignity and meaningful development of individuals could not be separated from access to education. In *Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka* (1992), the Court held that the right to education flows from the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 and emphasized that education is essential to the dignified enjoyment of life and the development of the individual. The Court also held that making access to education dependent upon the payment of capitation fees was inconsistent with the constitutional framework. This development was further advanced in *Unni Krishnan, J.P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh* (1993), where the Constitution Bench affirmed that the right to education is implicit in and flows from Article 21, while defining its scope with reference to Articles 41, 45 and 46. The Court held that every child has a fundamental right to free education up to the age of fourteen years, whereas the right to education beyond that age is subject to the economic capacity and development of the State.

These judicial developments provided an important constitutional foundation for the subsequent insertion of Article 21A through the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, which expressly recognized the fundamental right to free and compulsory education for children between six and fourteen years of age in the manner determined by law and introduced a corresponding responsibility under Article 51A(k), requiring parents or guardians to provide opportunities for education to their children or wards between six and fourteen years of age. The constitutional mandate was subsequently operationalised through the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, which sought to give institutional and legal effect to the constitutional guarantee. Consequently, the constitutional development of the Right to Education may be understood as a gradual movement through three broad stages: first, education as a Directive Principle and State responsibility; second, judicial recognition of education as an aspect of the right to life under Article 21; and third, its explicit constitutional recognition as a Fundamental Right through Article 21A and its statutory implementation through the RTE Act, 2009. This evolution demonstrates that the Indian constitutional framework increasingly came to recognise education not merely as a developmental policy instrument but as an essential condition for equality, dignity, social justice, human-capital formation and meaningful participation in social, economic and democratic life.

6. Education, Human Capital and Economic Growth

Education constitutes a critical component of human-capital formation by enhancing the knowledge, skills and productive capabilities of individuals. The human-capital perspective, associated particularly with **Schultz and Becker**, regards education as an investment that can improve productivity, employability, earnings and economic adaptability. Its significance therefore extends beyond individual economic returns to broader processes of technological adaptation, innovation and economic growth.

The contribution of education to economic development also operates through poverty reduction and socioeconomic mobility. Improved educational opportunities can expand access to productive employment, enhance earning potential and strengthen the socioeconomic prospects of individuals and households. At the intergenerational level, the educational attainment of one generation can influence the human-capital formation and educational opportunities of subsequent generations. Education may therefore contribute to breaking persistent cycles of disadvantage and expanding capabilities across generations.

However, the economic returns to education cannot be understood solely in terms of educational access or years of schooling. The quality, relevance and level of education are equally important in determining whether educational attainment is translated into productive capabilities. Skills that correspond to changing labour-market requirements can improve employability and occupational mobility, while inadequate learning outcomes may limit the economic benefits expected from increased educational participation. Consequently, the developmental contribution of education depends on the interaction between access, quality, educational attainment and opportunities for productive economic participation. Education also contributes to productivity enhancement by developing human capabilities that enable individuals to acquire, apply and adapt knowledge. An educated workforce can more effectively respond to technological change, adopt new methods of production and participate in knowledge-intensive economic activities. At the broader level, improvements in human capital can contribute to innovation, productivity growth and the development of a more adaptable workforce.

The relationship between education and economic growth should therefore be understood as multidimensional. At the individual level, education can enhance skills, employment opportunities and earnings. At the household level, it can strengthen economic security and contribute to intergenerational improvements in socioeconomic conditions. At the national level, the accumulation of human capital can support productivity, technological adaptation and long-term economic growth. These effects, however, are influenced by the quality and relevance of education and by the availability of appropriate economic and employment opportunities.

Public investment in education remains relevant within this broader framework, particularly because socioeconomic inequalities can restrict access to educational opportunities. However, the significance of public educational investment in the present study is considered as part of the broader institutional context of education rather than as a separate analytical objective. The effectiveness of educational investment depends not merely on the volume of expenditure but also on its allocation, implementation, educational quality and capacity to generate meaningful learning and productive capabilities.

Accordingly, education may be understood simultaneously as a **constitutional right, a human-development instrument, an investment in human capital and a foundation for inclusive economic development**. This perspective directly addresses the first objective of the study by examining how education contributes to human-capital formation, productivity enhancement, poverty reduction and economic growth.

The gender dimension of education is also important to the broader developmental argument, but it is examined separately in the subsequent analysis of educational attainment and women's economic participation. This separation enables the study to distinguish clearly between the general contribution of education to human-capital formation and the specific relationship between women's educational attainment and their economic participation.

7. Social Inclusion and Educational Equity

Social inclusion and educational equity are important foundations for ensuring that the Right to Education contributes effectively to human-capital development and equitable economic opportunities. Social inclusion refers to ensuring that all learners, irrespective of caste, tribe, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, disability or geographical location, have meaningful opportunities to access, participate in and benefit from education. It therefore extends beyond formal enrolment to encompass participation, retention, learning achievement, progression and the development of capabilities necessary for further education and economic participation.

Educational inequalities are shaped by intersecting economic, social, geographical, cultural and institutional barriers. Learners from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minority communities, economically disadvantaged households and persons with disabilities may experience poverty, discrimination, geographical isolation, inadequate transport, language barriers, limited learning and digital resources, and inaccessible educational environments. These constraints can adversely affect attendance, participation, retention and learning outcomes and, consequently, limit the acquisition of knowledge and skills required for effective human-capital formation.

Educational equity recognises that learners differ in their socioeconomic circumstances, capabilities and access to educational resources. Hence, equal provision of educational inputs does not necessarily produce equitable educational outcomes. Equity requires need-based and differentiated interventions, including scholarships, financial assistance, nutritional support, residential and transportation facilities, accessible infrastructure, assistive technologies, language support and remedial education. Such measures can reduce structural disadvantages, strengthen educational participation and improve the likelihood that educational opportunities will be translated into meaningful learning, skills and subsequent socioeconomic opportunities.

Social inclusion should consequently be evaluated as a continuum—**Access → Attendance → Participation → Retention → Learning Achievement → Transition → Completion → Higher Education/Employment**. This perspective emphasises that enrolment alone is insufficient to establish educational inclusion. Sustained participation and meaningful learning are necessary for the development of human capabilities and productive skills, which can subsequently influence employability, occupational mobility, income and socioeconomic advancement. Thus, educational equity is relevant not only to social justice but also to the effective accumulation and distribution of human capital.

The gender dimension is particularly important within this framework. Ensuring equitable access to and progression through education can strengthen women's knowledge, skills and qualifications and thereby expand their potential for higher education, employment and economic participation. However, educational equity alone does not guarantee equivalent economic outcomes for women. The conversion of educational attainment into employment, earnings and financial independence may depend on labour-market opportunities, occupational structures, safe mobility, childcare, workplace conditions and the distribution of unpaid care responsibilities. Educational inclusion should therefore be understood as an

important enabling condition for women's economic participation rather than as an automatic determinant of employment or economic independence.

Thus, assessing educational equity requires attention to both equality of opportunity and equity of outcomes, together with the capacity of policies and institutions to identify and address structural barriers. An inclusive education system is one that creates the financial, institutional, pedagogical and social conditions necessary for learners from diverse backgrounds to participate, learn, progress and realise their educational capabilities on equitable terms. In this sense, social inclusion and educational equity support the broader objectives of the study by strengthening the conditions through which education can contribute to **human-capital formation, productivity, poverty reduction and economic development**, while also expanding the educational foundations for **women's employment, earnings, financial independence and economic decision-making**.

8. Empirical Evidence and Analysis

The developmental significance of education can be assessed through evidence relating to educational participation, gender parity, transition, learning outcomes and subsequent socioeconomic opportunities. Recent national evidence indicates substantial progress in educational access and gender parity, while also revealing continuing challenges in secondary-stage participation, learning achievement and the conversion of educational attainment into economic opportunities. These patterns demonstrate that the contribution of education to human-capital development cannot be assessed solely through enrolment. It requires consideration of the continuity and quality of education and the extent to which educational attainment contributes to productive and economically meaningful opportunities. The evidence is therefore examined in relation to the two objectives of the study: the contribution of education to human-capital formation, productivity, poverty reduction and economic growth, and the relationship between educational attainment and women's economic participation.

8.1 Gender Parity in School Education

UDISE+ 2023–24 records a Gender Parity Index (GPI) for Gross Enrolment Ratio of 1.00 at the foundational stage, 1.03 at the preparatory stage, 1.02 at the middle stage and 1.04 at the secondary stage at the all-India level. These figures indicate broad gender parity in school enrolment. Such parity represents an important dimension of educational equality and indicates substantial progress in women's and girls' access to schooling.

However, enrolment parity alone does not establish equality in educational attainment or outcomes. A comprehensive assessment requires attention to retention, transition, learning achievement, completion, subject and stream choices and progression to higher education. These dimensions are particularly important because the economic and developmental benefits of education depend not merely on entry into schooling but on sustained participation and the acquisition of meaningful knowledge and skills.

8.2 Transition to Secondary Education

Although participation remains relatively high at the preparatory and middle stages, UDISE+ 2023–24 reports a decline in Gross Enrolment Ratio from 96.5% at the preparatory stage to 89.5% at the middle stage and 66.5% at the secondary stage. The corresponding transition rates were 98.1% from foundational to preparatory, 88.8% from preparatory to middle and 83.3% from middle to secondary.

The decline in participation and transition at the secondary stage highlights the importance of educational continuity beyond the elementary level. Sustained participation is particularly significant for human-capital formation because higher levels of education can provide individuals with more advanced

knowledge, skills and qualifications. Discontinuity in education may consequently limit the accumulation of human capital and restrict subsequent educational and economic opportunities, particularly among groups experiencing socioeconomic and structural disadvantages.

8.3 Learning Outcomes

Educational development cannot be assessed adequately through enrolment and years of schooling without considering actual learning outcomes. The **Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024**, a large-scale rural household survey assessing children aged 5–16, provides evidence on basic learning levels in reading and arithmetic. At the all-India level, 56.5% of children in Std VIII were able to perform division in 2024, compared with 44.6% in 2022, indicating a substantial improvement in basic arithmetic performance, while also showing that a considerable proportion of children had not yet acquired this competency.

This evidence reinforces the distinction between **schooling participation and effective learning**. From a human-capital perspective, the developmental value of education depends substantially on the knowledge and skills acquired through the educational process. Improvements in enrolment therefore need to be accompanied by improvements in foundational competencies, learning achievement and the quality and relevance of education. Meaningful learning is essential for translating educational participation into productive capabilities, employability and longer-term socioeconomic opportunities. Thus, the expansion of access under the Right to Education needs to be assessed not only in terms of participation but also in terms of the knowledge and skills that education enables individuals to acquire.

8.4 Educational Attainment and Women's Economic Participation

The relationship between educational attainment and women's economic participation provides an important measure of the broader socioeconomic significance of education. Educational attainment can enhance women's knowledge, qualifications, skills and access to employment opportunities. However, the conversion of educational capabilities into economic participation depends on a range of labour-market and social conditions.

According to Periodic Labour Force Survey (**PLFS**) 2025, the labour-force participation rate among persons aged 15 years and above was 40.0% for females and 79.1% for males under the usual-status measure, indicating a substantial gender differential in labour-force participation. The persistence of this differential demonstrates that educational participation alone does not determine women's economic engagement. Labour-market opportunities, wages, occupational structures, safety and mobility, childcare, unpaid domestic responsibilities, workplace conditions and prevailing social norms can influence whether educational attainment is translated into employment and economic participation.

Accordingly, the relationship between education and women's economic participation should be understood as an enabling relationship rather than a simple causal relationship. Education can strengthen women's capabilities and expand their potential economic opportunities, but the realization of these capabilities depends upon the wider institutional, labour-market and social environment.

8.5 Educational Attainment, Economic Independence and Decision-Making

The economic significance of women's education extends beyond labour-force participation. Educational attainment can strengthen women's capacity to obtain employment, improve earnings potential and exercise greater economic independence. It may also contribute to greater participation in household decisions relating to expenditure, children's education, health and other aspects of family welfare.

These outcomes should not, however, be interpreted as automatic consequences of educational attainment. The extent to which education contributes to economic independence and decision-making is shaped by

employment opportunities, income, household structures, social norms and women's control over economic resources. Education therefore represents an important enabling condition for women's economic agency, while the actual realization of that agency depends upon broader socioeconomic circumstances.

8.6 Overall Empirical Implications

The empirical evidence indicates that India's educational development has progressed substantially in terms of access and gender parity, but important challenges remain in sustaining educational participation, ensuring learning quality and translating educational attainment into wider socioeconomic opportunities. The evidence on gender parity demonstrates considerable progress in access, while the decline in secondary-stage participation and continuing learning gaps indicate that enrolment alone cannot capture the effectiveness of educational development.

From the perspective of the first objective, the evidence suggests that education contributes to human-capital formation most effectively when access is accompanied by sustained participation, meaningful learning, appropriate educational progression and the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills. These dimensions provide the foundation through which education can contribute to productivity, employability, poverty reduction and longer-term economic development.

From the perspective of the second objective, the evidence indicates that educational attainment can strengthen women's capabilities and potential economic opportunities, but gender parity in enrolment does not automatically produce equality in employment or economic participation. The continuing gender differential in labour-force participation demonstrates the importance of labour-market conditions, care responsibilities, mobility, safety, wages and social norms in determining whether educational capabilities are converted into economic opportunities.

Overall, the empirical evidence supports a broader educational-development continuum:

Access → Participation → Retention → Learning → Completion → Higher Educational Progression → Economic Opportunity. This continuum provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding whether the expansion of education is being translated into substantive human-capital development and equitable economic participation.

9. Education, Gender Equity and the Labour Market

Gender parity in educational participation does not necessarily result in equivalent labour-market participation. Education contributes to women's human capital, capabilities and employment potential; however, the conversion of educational attainment into economic participation is mediated by labour-market structures and sociocultural conditions. Occupational segregation, gender wage differentials, workplace safety, limited childcare provision, mobility constraints and the unequal distribution of unpaid care work can influence women's transition from education to paid employment.

Consequently, the economic returns to women's education depend not only on educational attainment but also on the availability of productive, remunerative and decent work opportunities. Strengthening the education–employment linkage through vocational and digital skills, career guidance, internships, entrepreneurship and labour-market-oriented training can facilitate this transition. The substantive significance of the Right to Education therefore extends beyond educational participation to the development of capabilities that enhance women's economic agency and opportunities for productive employment.

From the perspective of the Right to Education, the significance of educational access consequently extends beyond enrolment and completion. Education can provide women with capabilities that contribute to **employment opportunities, earnings, financial independence and participation in household and socioeconomic decision-making**. Thus, educational attainment represents an important foundation for women's economic participation, although its outcomes are mediated by broader institutional, labour-market and sociocultural conditions.

10. Educational Inequality and Income Inequality

Educational inequality and income inequality are closely interconnected dimensions of socioeconomic disadvantage. Household income and socioeconomic conditions can influence children's access to educational resources, including learning materials, digital technologies, supplementary learning support and conducive learning environments. Such differences may affect educational participation, continuity, learning achievement, attainment and progression to higher levels of education. Consequently, unequal educational opportunities can contribute to unequal development of knowledge, skills and productive capabilities.

From a human-capital perspective, the relationship between education and income inequality is particularly significant. Education can enhance individual capabilities, employability and productivity and thereby expand opportunities for productive employment and higher earnings. However, where access to quality education is strongly influenced by household socioeconomic circumstances, disadvantaged groups may have fewer opportunities to acquire the skills required for improved employment and income prospects. Educational inequality can therefore reinforce existing patterns of economic disadvantage, while equitable educational opportunities can contribute to greater socioeconomic mobility.

The relationship may be analytically represented as:

Household Socioeconomic Conditions → Educational Opportunities → Skills and Capabilities → Employment and Productivity → Income and Socioeconomic Mobility

This relationship also has important implications for **poverty reduction**. Access to quality education can strengthen human-capital formation by enabling individuals, particularly those from economically disadvantaged households, to acquire knowledge and skills that improve their prospects for productive employment and sustainable earnings. Increased educational attainment may consequently contribute to improved household economic security and reduce the likelihood of the intergenerational transmission of poverty. However, these benefits depend upon the quality and relevance of education and the availability of appropriate employment opportunities.

Equitable public education is therefore important not only from the perspective of social justice but also for strengthening the developmental contribution of human capital. Targeted support for disadvantaged learners, including financial assistance, learning resources, digital access, inclusive infrastructure and remedial support, can help reduce inequalities in educational opportunity. Such interventions can improve participation, learning and educational attainment and thereby strengthen the capacity of education to contribute to productivity, employment, income generation and poverty reduction.

Accordingly, the effectiveness of the Right to Education should not be assessed solely through aggregate enrolment indicators. It should also be examined in terms of equitable access, continuity, learning, completion and educational progression, particularly among socially and economically disadvantaged groups. In this sense, reducing educational inequality is an important enabling condition through which the Right to Education can contribute to **human-capital formation, productivity enhancement and**

poverty reduction. The issue of income inequality is therefore considered in this study as a broader socioeconomic dimension through which the developmental returns of education can be understood, rather than as a separate analytical objective.

11. Education, Equity and Sustainable Development

Education is an important foundation of sustainable development because it contributes to the development of knowledge, skills and human capabilities. This significance is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. From the perspective of the present study, the relevance of SDG 4 lies particularly in the capacity of education to strengthen human capital and expand equitable opportunities for economic participation.

Equitable access to quality education can contribute to human-capital formation, productivity, employment opportunities and poverty reduction. As discussed in the preceding sections, educational opportunities influence the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which can subsequently affect employability, earnings and socioeconomic mobility. Ensuring that these opportunities are accessible to disadvantaged groups is therefore important for reducing educational inequalities and strengthening the developmental returns of investment in education.

Education also has particular significance for women's economic participation. Improvements in women's educational attainment can enhance their knowledge, skills and qualifications and thereby expand their potential for employment, earnings and financial independence. However, as emphasised earlier, educational attainment does not automatically result in economic participation; its conversion into employment and economic outcomes is influenced by labour-market opportunities, social norms, mobility, childcare and other institutional conditions.

Thus, the Right to Education contributes to sustainable development not merely by expanding educational access but by creating the conditions for the development and effective utilisation of human capabilities. Its broader significance can be understood through the progression from educational opportunity → learning and skills → human-capital formation → productive employment and income, together with the corresponding pathway for women from educational attainment → skills and capabilities → economic participation → earnings and financial independence. In this sense, sustainable development provides a broader framework within which the study's two central concerns—human-capital development and women's economic participation—can be understood.

12. Major Challenges in Realising the Right to Education

The preceding analysis indicates that the challenges associated with the Right to Education extend beyond access and enrolment to quality, skills, continuity, equity and socioeconomic outcomes. Persistent learning deficits, differences in educational quality, discontinuation during secondary and higher education, inadequate infrastructure and teacher capacity, and socioeconomic and digital inequalities can restrict the development of knowledge, skills and capabilities. These limitations may weaken the contribution of education to **human-capital formation, productivity enhancement, poverty reduction and economic growth.** Further, educational attainment does not automatically translate into productive employment, particularly where there is a mismatch between educational qualifications and labour-market requirements.

A significant challenge concerns the **conversion of women's educational attainment into economic participation**. Household responsibilities, unpaid care work, mobility constraints, safety concerns, social norms, occupational segregation and gender wage differentials can restrict women's transition from education to paid employment. Consequently, the economic returns to women's education may remain limited unless educational attainment is accompanied by relevant skills, access to productive and decent employment, equitable wages and supportive institutional conditions. These factors can affect women's **employment, earnings, financial independence and participation in decision-making**.

Another important challenge is the persistence of **socioeconomic and educational inequalities**. Differences in household income, access to learning resources, digital technologies and educational support can influence educational attainment and subsequent employment and income opportunities. Unequal public resources and variations in institutional capacity may further reinforce these disparities. Effective public investment, therefore, needs to address both educational quality and equitable access, particularly for economically and socially disadvantaged groups.

Overall, the major challenge is to move from **formal educational entitlement to meaningful learning and developmental outcomes**. The effective realisation of the Right to Education requires greater attention to learning quality, skill development, educational continuity, equitable public investment and the education–employment transition. For women in particular, educational opportunities need to be supported by conditions that enable the conversion of educational attainment into employment, earnings, financial independence and decision-making. Thus, the central challenge is to ensure that education functions not merely as a constitutional entitlement but as an effective foundation for human-capital development, economic opportunity and gender-equitable participation.

13. Policy Implications and Recommendations

The analysis suggests that the effective realisation of the Right to Education requires a shift from an emphasis on enrolment towards quality learning, skill development, equitable opportunities and meaningful socioeconomic outcomes. Educational policy should give greater priority to foundational literacy and numeracy, critical thinking, digital and employability skills, teacher quality, appropriate infrastructure and effective learning environments. Educational progress should be assessed not merely through enrolment and years of schooling but also through learning outcomes, completion and transition. Improving the quality and relevance of education is essential for strengthening **human-capital formation and future productivity**.

Public investment in education should be increased and effectively utilised, with particular attention to economically weaker households and educationally disadvantaged regions and groups. Resources should be directed towards foundational learning, teacher development, infrastructure, digital access and skill development, while improving expenditure efficiency, implementation capacity and institutional accountability. Equitable and effective public investment can strengthen the capacity of education to contribute to **human-capital development, productivity enhancement, poverty reduction and inclusive economic development**.

Greater emphasis should also be placed on strengthening the **education–employment linkage**. Vocational, technical, digital and employability skills should be integrated appropriately with formal education, supported by career guidance, internships, experiential learning and entrepreneurship opportunities. Stronger coordination between educational institutions and labour-market requirements can facilitate the transition from education to productive and remunerative employment. Such measures can

improve the economic returns to educational attainment and strengthen the contribution of education to income generation, poverty reduction and economic growth.

Gender-responsive educational and employment policies are particularly important for ensuring that women can convert educational attainment into economic participation. Measures addressing safe mobility, childcare, workplace conditions, digital access, retention and transition to higher education should be strengthened. At the same time, women should have greater access to vocational and digital skills, career guidance, entrepreneurship and decent employment opportunities. Policies addressing occupational segregation, gender wage differentials and the unequal distribution of unpaid care work can further strengthen the relationship between women's education and employment, earnings and financial independence.

Education policy should also recognise the role of education in strengthening women's agency and participation in decision-making. Improving access to information, financial knowledge, employment opportunities and supportive institutional environments can help women convert educational capabilities into greater economic autonomy and participation in household and socioeconomic decision-making. Therefore, the benefits of women's education should be assessed not only through educational attainment but also through its contribution to their broader economic opportunities and agency.

Finally, reliable and disaggregated educational data and effective monitoring should support policy formulation and evaluation. Data on learning, educational attainment, transition, completion, employment and women's economic participation should be examined across relevant socioeconomic and demographic groups. Overall, policy should adopt an integrated approach linking quality education, equitable public investment, skill development, employment opportunities and gender-responsive support. Such an approach can help transform the Right to Education from a formal educational entitlement into a substantive foundation for human-capital development, poverty reduction, productivity, economic growth and women's employment, earnings, financial independence and decision-making.

14. Conclusion

The analysis indicates that the developmental value of the Right to Education lies less in the formal expansion of schooling than in the extent to which education produces **usable human capabilities**. The evidence considered in this study suggests that access and participation provide the necessary foundation, but their economic significance depends on whether learners acquire meaningful knowledge and skills and are able to convert them into productive opportunities. Education therefore has the potential to strengthen human capital, productivity and socioeconomic mobility and, through these pathways, contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth. The principal implication is that educational progress should increasingly be judged by the quality and economic relevance of learning rather than by enrolment alone. The analysis further indicates that **women's educational attainment is an important enabling condition for economic participation, but not a sufficient condition for it**. Education can expand women's skills, qualifications and economic capabilities, yet the extent to which these capabilities result in employment, higher earnings, financial independence and decision-making depends substantially on the institutional and labour-market environment. The persistence of barriers beyond the education system therefore helps explain why improvements in educational participation and gender parity do not necessarily produce proportional gains in women's economic participation.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the principal policy challenge is not simply to expand educational access, but to strengthen the **conversion of education into capabilities and capabilities into**

economic opportunity. This requires closer alignment between educational quality, skill formation and labour-market opportunities, while addressing the structural constraints that affect women's participation in economic life. The study consequently contributes to the understanding of the Right to Education by locating its significance at the point where a constitutional entitlement is translated into **human-capital accumulation and economically meaningful capabilities.**

The conclusions should, however, be interpreted within the scope of the study's secondary-data and doctrinal-analytical methodology. The evidence establishes important relationships and developmental pathways but does not by itself demonstrate a direct causal effect of educational attainment on individual employment, earnings or decision-making. Future research using longitudinal or micro-level empirical data could therefore examine these pathways more rigorously, particularly across differences in socioeconomic background, educational attainment, gender and labour-market conditions.

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