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**EMPOWERING  
WOMEN  
THROUGH  
EDUCATION**

UNLOCKING  
POTENTIAL, CREATING  
OPPORTUNITIES

## The Indispensable Value of Education for Women



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As an educator with over three decades of experience, I am deeply invested in discussing the crucial role of education in empowering women.

Historically, men have been seen as the primary breadwinners in families. However, the landscape has changed dramatically, with women becoming indispensable in the workforce, contributing significantly to family incomes and the economy at large. According to the international Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, 50% of women worldwide are in the workforce. This is the documented statistic. There are many more women who are not documented as being in the workforce but do work and earn for their family behind the scenes. This shift is not merely out of necessity but also reflects a strong desire among women to improve themselves, acquire new skills, and navigate the challenges of the economic environment.

Throughout my 30-year career in education, I've had the privilege of encountering numerous resilient women. Some could have achieved even more had they been

afforded educational opportunities, while others, against all odds, persevered and attained their goals through education.

### **The Unsung Matriarchs: A Personal Tribute**

Let me share the stories of the unsung matriarchs in my life—my mother and grandmother. Lacking formal education, they depended on me as their bridge to the literate world from their confined existence as housewives. Nevertheless, their tenacity and decision-making prowess were unmistakable. My grandmother, in particular, was the epitome of a leader and entrepreneur. Without formal education or fluency in English, she transformed our home into a profitable rooming house, managing tenants, finances, and property maintenance with remarkable acumen. Her efforts, supported by my literacy and English communication skills, enabled us to achieve financial stability. Their entrepreneurial spirit flourished despite their educational limitations, leading me to wonder about the heights they could have reached with access to education.

### **Empowering Women Through Education**

My career has been dedicated to providing educational opportunities to women similar to my grandmother and mother. I've worked with immigrant women arriving in Canada with minimal literacy skills in any language as well as highly trained professionals seeking to rebuild their careers. [https://pressbooks.openeducationalberta.ca/settlement/chapter/the-relationship-between-first-language-literacy-and-the-settlement-and-integration-challenges-of-immigrant-women/\(openeducationalberta.ca\)](https://pressbooks.openeducationalberta.ca/settlement/chapter/the-relationship-between-first-language-literacy-and-the-settlement-and-integration-challenges-of-immigrant-women/(openeducationalberta.ca)).

These experiences underscore the transformative power of education. For instance, the story of Sara, an immigrant mother of five (soon to be six), stands out. Facing the prospect of raising her children on government support, Sara chose instead to seize the educational opportunities available in Canada. Her determination saw her through her English program, even as she balanced the demands of motherhood and pregnancy. Eventually, she secured employment, achieving financial independence and a brighter future for her family.

### **A Tribute to All Women**

Every year we celebrate International Women's Day during which we take a moment to honour women in every role they assume. While they may not always be the visible architects of the economy or the explicit moral guides of society, women are the foundation supporting those in leadership. Their contributions, often underestimated, are indeed the backbone of our world.

When we talk about women and leadership let's recognize the indispensable role of education in empowering women to break barriers and achieve their fullest potential. The stories of women like my grandmother, mother, and Sara are testaments to the strength, resilience, and indomitable spirit of women everywhere and the educational opportunities that move women forward.

#educationmatters #postsecondaryeducation #leadership  
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