

## *Performance of the Institution in an area distinct to its priority and thrust*

### **Women Empowerment**

SNDT Women's University established in 1916 was born out of the transformative energy ushered in by the social movement of the 19th century and the national freedom movement of the early 20th century. The vision of both the movements went beyond the political to the social realm- to create an egalitarian society which is represented in the University's motto, 'Sanskrita Stree Para Shakti', the educated woman is a source of immense strength. Founded by Bharat Ratna Maharshi Dr. Dhondo Keshav Karve in 1916, at a time when women's education was an anathema, the University's long sojourn is wedded to the larger history of the nation's march towards gender equality in all spheres and particularly in creating educational opportunities in the ever expanding sphere of higher education.

Empowering women through education has been the guiding spirit of the University since its inception and this has been manifested in every policy of the University. To begin with all efforts have been made to make the University an inclusive space for all women irrespective of caste, creed, religion, ethnicity and now sexual orientation. The demography of any classroom will reflect this diversity and the student constituency is not monolithic. In this context it should be mentioned that the University is a host to many first generation learners from marginalized sections of the society. Therefore, the medium of instruction includes Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi and Urdu besides English. The thrust by NEP 2020 on teaching in regional languages has long been a tradition of the University. The classroom is not marked by traditional hierarchy; pedagogies move beyond the dominant ones to experimenting with innovative teaching methodologies. Mentoring of students is not confined to their academic life but includes nurturing their mental health as well. The concept of empowerment is thus redefined to be multifarious one.

The goal of women empowerment is to be seen in the introduction and strengthening of professional courses like Nursing, Library Science, Home Science, Engineering, Education Technology, Pharmacy, Management, and many more. The introduction of new courses in Computer Engineering, Data Science along with skill based courses under Bachelor of Vocational Studies (B. Voc.) make the University distinctive. The courses offered by the Polytechnic offer a curriculum, which has integrated National Skill Qualification Framework and National Occupational Standards. The emphasis on Skill Education which NEP 2020 has elaborated upon has been part of the University's vision for women's empowerment. Further, the establishment of the Department of Adult and Continuing Education was an effort to reach out to those women, who could not avail the opportunities of formal education. This not only bridged the gap between the University and the society at large, it also expanded the goal of women's empowerment to the larger Constitutional guarantees of woman's equality, which could be achieved through education. The Post Graduate Department of Human Development has experimental Nursery and the Department of Special Education has an experimental school 'Arushi- The Learning Centre' for children with special needs. Both the centres provide hands-on training to their students in transfer of theory into practice. This makes the University distinct by offering education from pre-school to the doctorate programmes.

The cause of women empowerment through education was further consolidated with the introduction of courses like Post Graduate programme in e-learning by the Department of Education Technology. The Department of Special Education, since its inception has

been striving to provide quality special teachers to train children in special needs, thus, optimizing their potential and paving a way for inclusion in society. NEP 2020 also has emphasized on developing special teachers for special students.

With the aim of making women financially empowered, new openings in the job market were identified and accordingly new courses were introduced.

The establishment of the Dr Avabai and Dr Bomanji Khurshedji Wadia Archive for Women (AWA) at the Research Centre for Women's Studies opened a new chapter in the history of women empowerment, whereby the University space emerged as the repository of new knowledge from the standpoint of women. The archive programme aims to preserve sheaves of women's history and will facilitate research to overcome invisibility of women in documented history.

SNDTWU emphasises on holistic development of students and to achieve this, the students are trained in physical, cognitive, socio-emotional skills and moral values. The concept of women empowerment is being redefined with changing pace of society and emerging challenges in the field of higher education. The University has risen to the occasion by going beyond the conventional role of the Universities and continues with the vision of women empowerment by re-inventing itself in terms of its academic programmes and thus prepare women to emerge as future leaders through excellence in higher education.