

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Women form a significant proportion of this work force in India. The key strategy for women's empowerment and gender equality is to combine policy and institutions at the local level. The aim of skill development, particularly in case of women, is not merely to prepare them for jobs, but also to improve the performance of women workers by enhancing the quality of work in which they are engaged. There are few major challenges, which need to be addressed for building a conducive ecosystem, of skill development for the women workforce. It is argued that the empowerment practice has to go beyond its focus on women to gender. Women are seriously underrepresented in many occupations, thus, policies are needed to fight exclusions in the labour market by reducing the incidence of discriminatory practices. With this background, it is important to ensure women empowerment through skill development in the development programmes and thereby strive to have a conducive atmosphere for their effective participation.

KEYWORDS: Skill, Women, Empowerment, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Women have shown their capacity to play a major role in community development. Women empowerment refers to increase and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of women so that women has right to make decision of their own for their personal benefits as well as society. Women empowerment is very important as most of the proportion of the world's women population is unemployed and underemployed. They are equally competent, intelligent and talented as men and empowering them will not only benefit her individually but to the whole world at large. Women empowerment will lead to economic benefits and reduction of corruption and domestic violence which will ultimately lead to national development.

There are different Acts passed by Parliament in order to empower women with legal rights. Some of the Acts are Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act-1956, Dowry Prohibition Act-1961, Maternity Benefit Act-1961, Medical termination of Pregnancy Act-1971, Equal Remuneration Act-1976, Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act-1987, Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act-1994, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006, Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Protection and) Act-2013, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill, 2015 etc. In order to bring women empowerment in Indian society to reality there is need to change the old mind set and eliminate the ill practices against women which is prevalent in male dominated system of society.

The aim of skill development in case of women is not only to prepare them for jobs but also to improve the performance of women workers by enhancing the quality of work in which they are engaged. Learning about business

skills as well as health management skills, decision making, self confidence or conflict management among various other things like new products and marketing can make a big difference for many of rural poor particularly women folk. Thus skill development is key to improve household productivity, employability and income earning opportunities for women. It also enhance food security and promotes environmentally sustainable rural development and livelihood.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Women often have different training needs than men linked to domestic work and care responsibilities:

- In male dominated trading system, women make less use of formal and informal apprenticeship system. Women also receive less basic education and training than men because of which they lay behind.
- Due to some social norms, cultural and economic constrains women are restricted for training and economic activities.

Hence there is need of sustainable skill development programme which would aim to take on broad both women's as well as men's concerns and experiences, but the initiative taken can't be assumed to be same for both men and women, as they face very different social and economic circumstances in India. (Ramakrishna and Sudhakar, 2015)

CASE STUDIES

Mohammad Badruzzaman Bhuiyan and Rubab Abdullah (2007) studied women empowerment through entrepreneurship development in Bangladesh and concluded that in to improve skills of women entrepreneurs about one fifth of the investment of all banks and financial institutions should be provided.

Sathiabama (2010), highlighted the empowerment of rural women through entrepreneurship and the advantages of entrepreneurship among the rural women. It was concluded that the economic empowerment of women led to development of family and community and the same is proved by a collective Micro Entrepreneurship in Tamil Nadu.

Esther Duflo (2011) observed that empowering women through skill improvement will lead to economic development, these two are directly correlated.

Palaneeswari and Sasikala (2012) observed society should have positive attitude towards women and should be considered as positive doer and achiever.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

To address the specific needs of both rural women and men different skill development policies should be implemented:

- Targeted gender responsive education and training strategy should be there. Clear objectives should be set and there should be proper collection of sex disaggregated statistics and qualitative data on rural and urban women and men education and skill training to evaluate the progress.
- Gender responsive learning environment should be provided by including safe school facilities and proper separate sanitation facilities. There should be proper time table and curriculum responding to rural realities.
- There should be different scholarships in order to encourage girls to study technical subjects. Employment

opportunities to trainees after the completion of training will attract the women and girls to take training.

- Number of women trainers and agricultural extension workers should be increased so that rural women can access formal and non formal vocational training in better way.
- In the present scenario of digital India, more knowledge about accessing science and technology education and ICTs such as mobile phones, computer, internet facilities should be provided so that they can get quality education and training such as distance learning.
- Efforts on providing combine technical entrepreneurship training in order to support women's self employment. Women should be given knowledge about business, credit or saving programs, product design and they should be guided how to link to new markets especially value chain.

Some of the efforts made for women in skill development both on international and national scale:

- In Burkina Faso, the BRIGHT project (Burkinabé Response to Improve Girls Chances to Succeed) implemented by Plan International in 2005-2008 to increase enrolment, retention and graduation rates among girls through supportive learning environments and child friendly classrooms.
- In Cambodia, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, supported by UNICEF, in the mid 2000s, launched the 'Child-Friendly Schools Initiative' to promote gender equality.
- In Asia and Africa, TREE (Training for Rural Economic Empowerment) which is an ILO community-based training programme is established to provide employment to disadvantaged women by skill development.
- In India Deen Dayal Upadhyay Kaushalya Vikas Yojana (DDU-KVY) concentrates on providing skill development to poor women and making them ready for getting employment in different sectors.
- Another programme called, STEP (Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women) which focusses on women empowerment by providing skill development training and grants during training period. Amongst the states, Manipur received the maximum funding under the scheme, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Assam. A total of 24,037 women beneficiaries have been impacted under the scheme.

CHALLENGES

The aim of skill development, particularly in case of women, is not merely to prepare them for jobs, but also to improve the performance of women workers by enhancing the quality of work in which they are engaged (Nikita and Tauffiqu, 2015). A few of the major challenges, which need to be addressed for building a conducive ecosystem, of skill development for the women workforce are

- The large number of women who need to be trained since currently only 2% of the female workforce is formally trained.
- Inadequacies in the quality and relevance of TVET (technical and vocational employment training in India)
- Inadequate Infrastructure, acute shortage of trained women workers, poor quality of training.
- Lack of mechanisms to judge and certify quality.

- Inequity in access to TVET for women.
- Low level of education of potential women trainees that limits training of women in the formal sector.
- Lack of recognition of prior learning of potential women trainees.
- Relatively high opportunity cost of learning involved for training women.

CONCLUSIONS

Empowerment of women is necessary for socio-economic development. Increasing literacy rate among women helps in better development of children. If women are given the opportunities they can excel themselves. Gender equality has to be established as a crosscutting issue in international development. Many private sector actors have placed working with women as core objective of their business and corporate social responsibilities. Since girls and women represent 50% of the world population, enabling them to participate in their local economics help broaden the employment pool. It is well said by **Bringham Young**, “You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation.”

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