

SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMED AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract:- Women participation and empowerment are fundamental women's rights to enabling women to have control over their lives and put forth influence in society. Women often face discrimination and gender inequalities, with some women experiencing multiple discrimination and exclusion because of factors such as background or caste. Women empowerment is one of the biggest tools for 'effective development' of any country. It means freedom of women from the vicious circle of social, political, economic and gender-based discrimination. Making women aware of their rights and developing confidence in them – is a central issue. It is essential for them to be skilled in order to be able to better serve their families at home as well as professionally. Skill development not only creates employment opportunities but also empowers them. The aim of skill development, in case of women, is not just simply preparing them for jobs; but also to boost their performance by improving the quality of work in which they are involved. This paper clearly highlights the impact of skill development on women empowerment.

The basic need for empowering women is to instill the required skills and abilities in order to shape up their overall personality & raise their status within the society

Keywords: IT, Skill Development, ICT and Digital India, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women play an important role in the development of a family and society. From last few decades, they have been actively participating in various economic & social activities, but their efforts remain unrecognized. In this male-dominating society, they are still subjected to discrimination in the social, economic and educational field. Women are not only managing their families but are also playing an important role in the development of entire society. Making women aware of their rights and developing confidence in them – is a central issue. Women Empowerment means giving them freedom or power to live the way they want. It allows them to identify their skills, knowledge & abilities to make their own decisions. It is a dynamic & growth process for women which includes awareness, attainment & actualization of skills. For the socio-economic development of any society, women empowerment is essential. It is important for women to identify themselves with self confidence & esteem. The main aspect of empowerment is to give a sense of internal strength to them – to control their lives. The confident smile on the faces of women is the measurement of their empowerment.

Skills development is a key to success which improves productivity, employability and earning opportunities.

It is the bridge between job and workforce. Today, it is considered as an important and indispensable tool for women empowerment. Indian women face the majority of barriers to accessing skills and productive employment. A large effort is needed to create a skilled workforce for creating an economic prosperity. The aim of skill development, in case of women, is not just simply preparing them for jobs; but also to boost their performance by improving the quality of work in which they are involved. Looking at the importance of the role women play in the development of a nation, one can sense that there is a long way to go in that direction.

2. SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN

Women have shown their ability in community development. Hence, it is important that women be a part of skill development. In India, women are now participating in various areas like – education, art and culture, service sector, sports, politics, media, and science and technology. They form a substantial part of the workforce - but the working percentage rate of women in the total labor force is declining. A large number of them are working in the informal sectors. This represents lack of employment opportunities and skills for women workforce.



Currently, a majority of the female workforce in India is unskilled. They can be motivated to develop their life skills – that will give them high paying jobs with better livelihood & confidence to earn for their family. It will develop their ability & quality to move ahead and be self-dependent. It is observed, that the concept of training and skill development needs to move beyond imparting technical and managerial skills, with more focus on literacy, numeracy, political & life skills.

2.1 Shortfalls in the Education System working against Rural Women

"People seek education for gaining knowledge, building insight, and becoming financially sufficient to fulfil daily needs," says Dabir. In her own words, here is the list of various problems faced by economically backward women which paints a dismal picture of employability:

- The formal education system in India often is geared towards creating learning opportunities for those who have the resources to access it
- Women from economically weaker or marginalised backgrounds grow up experiencing discrimination in access to learning opportunities, economic resources and time
- In a situation where a family's meagre resources need to be prioritised, boys get preference in being supported towards seeking education. Girls grow up accepting their lot in life and make do with whatever learning opportunity is on offer locally and stop at the level up to which it is available, which may be only up to high school in several cases
- The education system has been unable to provide suitable and locally relevant programmes to women from economically weaker backgrounds due to lack of vision on the part of policy makers at the central level and local administration
- Therefore, programmes for skilling women were restricted to tailoring, incense stick making, soap making etc. Finding a market for the products was left to the women. The training did not

include marketing strategies. So, these programmes could not make an impact in the economic empowerment of women

- Some courses offered through the government-run Industrial Training Institutes are rarely accessed by women or girls due to the fact that the trades for which training is offered are mostly traditional male bastions.

3. WOMEN ARE BETTER MANAGERS THAN MEN

"Women are better able to handle managerial positions than men because they are temperamentally calmer, able to multi-task, prioritise and possess better articulation and wider vision," says Dabir, "If they are supported, encouraged and most importantly trained, they can become better managers."

3.1 How vocational courses can benefit these women

"A programme for skilling women has to be geared towards the needs of women in a particular context, keeping in view their local needs, culture and geographic realities," says Dabir.

In order to help rural women make the shift from manual labour to desk-oriented jobs, and "to encourage women for better roles and enhance their skills", Dabir stresses on the importance of imparting both soft skills and technical education.

3.2 Some requisite skills which skilling and training institutes should impart, according to her, are

- Communication skills
- Business etiquettes
- Language development
- Personality development
- Leadership skills
- Management skills
- Entrepreneurship skills
- Basic accounting skills
- Basic computer skills

The programmes designed by the School of Vocational Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, cater to the development of all of these necessary skills. "All these more than adequately equip women with skills to compete in the open market, whether it is for jobs or running their enterprises" says Dabir.

4. VOCATIONAL TRAINING AVAILABLE IN NUMEROUS FIELDS

There are various vocational courses available in numerous universities, colleges and institutes all over India. "Depending upon the area of work chosen by the women and commensurate qualifications required for their skills, women could be trained in several areas which would lead to job opportunities for them," says Dabir. For women coming from rural or economically lower backgrounds, counselling and personal development sessions are also provided at TISS SVE to help student face tough challenges and change the mindsets of their family members.

The various fields in which women can take up training are:

- Banking and financial services
- Geriatric care services
- Dialysis technology
- Hospitality industry
- Electronics
- Healthcare
- Media and entertainment industry
- Information technology enabled services
- Pharmaceuticals
- Travel and tourism
- Telecom industry
- Printing and packaging industry
- Management and entrepreneurship
- Child care

"To cite an example, BVoc in Early Child Development is a skill-based Bachelor's degree programme, which equips students with the knowledge base and practical experience to work as early child educators and/or care providers," says Dabir. "They would be equipped with knowledge and skills to work in pre-primary schools, primary schools, day care centres, crches and so on."

5. IMPORTANCE OF WORK-INTEGRATED TRAINING

Since it is not easy for rural women to get a job, their chosen vocational course has to be work integrated for the maximum skilling and employment opportunities. "TISS-SVE gives that support to rural women by offering skill enhancement vocational programmes, which are work integrated. The BVoc programme under TISS-SVE is designed to give exposure

and first-hand training in the field of one's choice," says Dabir.

"The course is provided in multiple locations across different sectors and industries. Currently, there are 19 industry verticals. Additionally, certification of the said course along with the experience letter from the practical training institute is provided," she adds.

5.1 Features of TSS SVE's Work Integrated Training Programme (WITP)

- In TISS-SVE's Work Integrated Training Programme (WITP), students pick up a particular skill by learning it in the real working space of the related company or industry. Thus, various industries and training partners are directly involved in skilling the students. Students are able to gain workplace-based industry experience as a part of their certification program
- The model ensures that only those courses are developed and those skills learned, which are relevant to the current job platform and have a demand in the industry. Training modules based on industrial needs and demands end in higher employability chances at the end of the course
- By the end of three years, when the students get a BVoc degree, they have already gained a work experience of three years in the field
- All these courses are offered in collaboration with different colleges of Social Work and other NGO partners spread across the country
- The TISS BVoc programme also equips students with the skills required to start their own enterprise
- The additional 'Earn while you Learn' feature of this model enables the trainee to earn a stipend during their on-the-job duration of training period in order to support their simultaneous vocational education
- TISS provides courses that encourage the SKP to provide the stipend to the student; the student pays the fees from the stipend they

receive. Many courses provide the students with a good stipend so that they can pay their fees and meet their daily expenses. Many students leave their paying jobs for a BVoc degree and this feature makes sure that they do not lose out on earning an income, and instead, get a certification and even a stipend during the three-year BVoc course

TISS SVE provides more than 12 BVoc courses and several short term programmes with the help of 20 vertical anchors, more than 100 hub partners and 19 different industry partners who act as skill knowledge providers.

5.2 Problems Faced by Rural Women in Getting a Job Even after Proper Skilling

Even after proper training and skilling has been imparted to rural women, it is not easy for them to get a job. They face numerous problems, as stated by the TISS SVE Dean:

- Too much competition, many trained professionals, gender bias, language problems, family issues, long working hours are some of the issues
- Other problems faced by women include mindset related issues and lack of support from their family
- Since rural women marry off very early, they shoulder family responsibilities from a very early age, leaving them less time to develop an independent standing career
- Even after getting a job, many women are paid much less compared to male counterparts in the same field
- Along with this, women safety is a teething issue which puts many women on a back seat to take a job

6. CONCLUSION

Women are not less than men in any perspective. They compete men in every field of work whether it may be pilot, loco pilots, engineers, doctors, labour, etc. Irrespective of gender discrimination equal opportunities and training is to be provided to women to make them and our country's economy more efficient. Skill

development through vocational training will be very effective to women especially in case of rural women who perform traditional crafts or manual labour work. Government of India has provided effective measures to promote and provide vocational training to women. Skill development through vocational training is must because it enhances the economic empowerment of women. Realizing the process of social development has to take into account the needs, interests and viewpoints of both men & women alike; and looking at the situation of women, gender inequalities and inequities that existed, special gender specific programmes were formulated and organized to mainstream women into economic activities.

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