

**EMPOWERING WOMEN WITH SKILL  
DEVELOPMENT**

Manmeet Kaur

Assistant Professor

Department of Home Science

PCM SD College for Women, Jalandhar

Email ID [kaur312manmeet@gmail.com](mailto:kaur312manmeet@gmail.com)

## **Abstract**

Women form a significant proportion of the Indian workforce, but are largely concentrated in the informal sector, engaged in vocations, characterized by low earning, low productivity, poor working conditions and social insecurity. Women are considered secondary income earners and low importance is given to training of girls for employment. The gender roles defined for women leave conditional and limited time devoted to skill training and economic activities. As a consequent, currently, only two percent of the female workforce is formally trained. There are inadequacies in the quality and relevance of TVET (Technical and Vocational Employment Training) in India. One gets to see lack of recognition of prior learning of potential women trainees and also a relatively high opportunity cost of learning involved for the training of women. The number of newly educated youth, especially women, who would like to seek employment in the service sector, is also growing year by year. Hence, a sustainable skill development programme for women needs to come on board. We need to focus on identifying the full range of skill development needs, develop processes with special emphasis on excellent standards and certifications, training of trainers and proper delivery of training of women. Action is demanded in the form of new policies, local level initiatives and building of institutes. Strategies for evaluating the progress and quality of the training provided also need to be made. Both the Public and Private sectors need to join hands. The aim of Skill Development, in case of women, should not be merely preparing them for jobs, but also improving the performance of women workers by enhancing the quality of work in which they are engaged.

## **Introduction**

Women in India consistently lag behind men in terms of access to education, health care and jobs. Apart from economic and social security, women in India are victims of various crimes such as dowry, death, rape, molestation and immoral trafficking. Unless drastic measures are taken for improving female literacy, creating skills and enhancing the capability of women for enabling them to stand on their own feet and making them financially independent, it will be difficult for India to prosper as a nation. Skill and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development for any country. Countries with higher and better levels of skills adjust more efficiently to the challenges and opportunities of the world of work.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2007-2012) has recognized India's massive need to skill millions of formal and informal workers in the next ten years. In response, the government developed an ambitious scheme of increasing the proportion of formal and informal skilled workers in its total workforce from a mere 2% now to 50% by 2022. Thus, creating a 500 million strong resource pool.

Women form a significant proportion of this work force in India however, they are largely concentrated in the informal sector, engaged in vocations characterized by low earning, low productivity, poor working conditions and lack of social protection. Both, women and men, whether urban or rural are majorly unskilled compared to having some skills. There are a higher number of unskilled workers in rural than in urban areas and a higher number of women do not have any skills, compared to men with no skills. It has been recognized that the status of women and their contribution is not only managing their families but also to the economic and social development of the entire society. Hence, it is extremely crucial that women become an integral part of skill development.

The aim of skill development with respect to women is not just preparing them for jobs but also improve the performance of women workers by enhancing the quality of work in which they are engaged. The empowerment practice has to go beyond its focus on women to gender. The concept of gender will also encourage an understanding, and enforce the idea of developing capabilities rather than simply skills. Educating women in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. Educating women not only tends to promote education of the girl child but also can enable them to provide better guidance to their children.

## **Objectives**

Empowering women through skill development has a handful of key objectives.

- By acquiring new skills, women can access a wider range of employment opportunities and contribute to economic growth, which not only benefits women as individuals, but also enhances the economic and financial stability of families and communities, which thereby further contributes in creating a skilled workforce for the country.
- Skill development programmes would come to the aid for bridging the gender gap by providing equal access to education and training to women, thereby promoting gender equality in various sectors and challenging traditional gender roles, and thus breaking social stereotypes.
- Skill development empowers women to be self-reliant, equipped to meet their individual and family needs, and actively participate in decision-making processes, from household decisions to community initiatives.
- Education and skill training enhances a woman's knowledge about health, nutrition and overall well-being, which in turn, positively influences the health of their families and communities.
- Skilled women are more likely to engage in community development activities, influencing social change and become role models, inspiring others to pursue education and skill development.

## **Review of Literature**

The researchers have so far made an extensive review of literature to understand the importance of skill which will give an understanding about the earlier research in the field and research gaps.

- Sowjanya S. Shetty & M, Dr. V. Basil Hans (2019) have opined that if the girls are given quality education and skilled to secure a livelihood that would be the best way to ensure progress of the society and also contribute in development of the Nation.
- Dr. Rajni Arora & Manoj Chhadwani (2019) have stated that the whole process of Skill India campaign needs to be undertaken in an effective manner for Indian Economy to compete with the other developed countries of the world.

- Musharraf Jahan (2019) mentioned that the status of women is improving due to technology and with help of advanced technology women have now access to new jobs, professions & occupations.
- Manjot Kaur, Sukhdeep Kaur Mann & Kanwaljit Kaur (2018) have opined out that the skills & knowledge that a woman acquires, always proves beneficial, sooner or later.
- Anjali Vyas (2018) has stated that as India progress towards knowledge economy it is necessary to focus on advancement of skills which are relevant to the emerging economic environment.
- MSR Krishna Prasada Rao (2018) has remarked that Government of India is promoting Skill India & Stand-up India for upliftment of youth especially women.
- Pitambara & Bishwa Bhaskar Choudhary (2017) have stated that the employment pool can be broadened if the girls & women participate in their local economics.

### **Concept of Women Empowerment**

Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choice and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Empowerment of women means developing them as more aware individuals who are politically active, economically productive and independent and able to make intelligent discussions in matters that affect them.

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNDFN) defines women empowerment as Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the way in which these relations may be changed. Women empowerment as a concept is defined as redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women, including developing a sense of self worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.

### **Women Empowerment in India**

In India, creation of awareness among men could enlist greater support for women participation in the various development programmes. Educating men on the merits and benefits of women empowerment particularly with respect to development of children would lead to enhancement of skills for income generation. Integrated learning programmes for

women are recommended which will not only lay emphasis on literacy but also on empowering women through awareness building. The education and skill development sector has not yet adequately responded to this emerging need, making it imperative to provide development in marketable skills. Such investment in development initiatives will increase self esteem among women, thereby leading to their overall personality development.

For the success of skill development, training needs to be provided towards developing the kind of skill women and men already know. Also, different skill development training programs should be regularly organized to upgrade traditional skills and simultaneously promote new skills - all this would play a pivotal role to empower women.

The Indian constitution not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures in favour of women so that they can improve their livelihood. Declaring 2001 as year of Women's Empowerment Sushakti the Government of India passed the National Policy for women Empowerment whose aim is to bring advancement, development and empowerment of women.

The National mission for empowerment of women was launched by the government to promote all round development of women. One of its key strategies is investment in skill development, vocational training, entrepreneurship and development for economic empowerment of women. This conveys that mere imparting literacy would not be sufficient – the women need practical and hands on vocational training and skills to be able to stand on their feet.

In India women have limited access to education and skills because of cultural norms about their domestic roles. Low social value is attached to girl education and as they are considered secondary income earners, lower importance is given to training of girls for empowerment. Hence, a sustainable skill development program ought to aim to take on board women's concern and experiences. The key strategy for women empowerment and gender equality is to combine policy and institutions at the local level.

The national skill development mission headed by the Prime Minister of India was launched in 2008 with a three tier structure that includes

- Prime Minister Councilor skill development
- Skill Development Coordination Board.
- National Skill Development Corporation – a non-profit company registered under companies Act of 1956.

The role of the corporation is to identify the range of skill development needs, develop processes with special emphasis on excellent standards, training of trainers and proper delivery of training.

NSDC has identified a few of the major challenges, which need to be addressed for building a conducive environment for skill development of women. They are:-

- A large number of women need to be trained since a mere 2% of women are formally trained.
- Inadequacies in the quality and relevance of technical and vocational training in India.
- Inadequate infrastructure and shortage of trained women workers.
- Lack of mechanisms to judge quality.
- Low level of education of women trainees.
- Relatively high opportunity cost of learning involved for training women.

### **Suggestions for Improvement and Conclusion**

There are several suggestions for the overall improvement of skill development program in India with special emphasis on women's skill development that were highlighted at the GEPD forum II. Some of the suggestions were clubbed under the following heads.

- A. Policy level changes
- B. Societal changes
- C. Local level changes
- D. Monitoring and education

#### **A. Policy Level Changes**

- Skill development programs to be run by one ministry which will lead to better coordination between different initiatives.
- Gender sensitive policy implies focus on improvement in access to education and training for girls to encourage women to enroll for education and training.

- Upgradation of the craftsmen training scheme

The aim of industrial training institutes and industrial training centers is to provide skilled workers to the informal sector but both institutes have performed poorly on their mandate.

- Establishment of training institutes and provision of basic infrastructure especially in remote areas, particularly for women.

- Provision of vocational training in schools. It is recommended that vocational education be introduced at the levels of secondary education to attract students who may drop out to skill them and provide them with better livelihood opportunities.
- Making private sector responsible for skill development.

The private sector has to take responsible position in the skill development sector if India has to benefit from the demographic division. As investment is crucial for skill development sector, it is suggested that medium and large industries should tend to contribute to a fund for reinvestment.

#### B. Societal Changes.

- Greater efforts are needed in the form of awareness programs with a view to eliminate existing biases that women in the country face when seeking empowerment.

#### C. Local Level Changes

- Gender sensitive training

There is a need to make the skill development process accommodating and flexible to encourage women to enroll. One method of encouraging participation in skill development is the identification of skills that are already known and upgradation of the same.

- It is crucial to build and fund modern institutes of training which should further be made easily accessible for women by building additional infrastructure.
- One of the main criticisms of skill development and training programs is their inability to match up to the acceptable market standard in service of quality and type of skill required. This may be due to the fact that workers with technical/ vocational qualifications do not have skills that must the demands often because of poor quality of training provided. It is proposed that government ITI's need to be upgraded as centres of excellence NSDC has been trying to collaborate with major corporates to provide training and developing skill of thousands of individuals.
- Providing empowerment opportunities to trainees after the completion of training will go in a long way in assuring suitable livelihood options, NSDC has been able to facilitate empowerment of workers to a large extent.

#### D. Monitoring and Education

It is crucial to evaluate the progress and quality of training provided in order to check discrepancies, as enrolment alone would not be sufficient. A proper evaluation system would ensure the quality of training needed for skill development.



To conclude

- Empowerment of women is necessary for socio-economic development.
- Increasing literacy rate among women help in better development of children.
- Gender equality has to be established in international development.
- Since girls and women represent 50% of the world population, enabling them to participate in their local economics help broaden the empowerment pool.
- When women are able to earn an income they typically reinvest 90% of it back into the families.
- Given the opportunities women can excel themselves in all walks of life.

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