

Vocational Training: Hope of Women Empowerment

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Abstract

This paper will focus on the role of Vocational Education & Training (VET) in Women Empowerment through Government and Non-Governmental Organisations initiatives. VET is critical for economic growth and social development. VET is an important drive to address poverty reduction by improving employability, productivity, and helping sustainable development and inclusive growth for women empowerment. It facilitates a cycle of high productivity, increased employment opportunities, income growth and development. On the other hand from a development perspective, investing in the education and training of females has the highest rate of return of any possible investment in developing countries; educated mothers having fewer children, invest more in the health and education of each child thereby raising the productivity of future generations, increasing their income, and generating sustainable growth. VET not only provide self-employment opportunity to the women but also trigger capability to exercise to control over their personal and family life, make choices to improve well beings and take active role in decision making. Women's have access to education and training can have a major impact on their potential to access and benefit from income generating opportunities and improve their overall well-being. There are variety of Vocation Training Programs are run by Government of India and other Non-Governmental Organisations to fulfil the need of Women Empowerment.

Key Words: Vocational, Training, Women Empowerment, Skill Development, Social Development and Economic Development.

Introduction

“To call woman the weaker sex is a liability; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her, man could not be. If nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with woman. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?”

:-M.K. Gandhi (Young India, October. 4, 1930)

Present structure of vocational education & training are of relatively recent origin, but the idea on which they are based is as old as civilization itself. This idea, simply stated that man has learned how he may improve his standard of living by working more efficiently. Programmes and techniques have been developed through the ages to teach man to work more efficiently. More recently, these have been referred to as programmes of vocational education & training. The ways and means of implementing this process of learning to work have grown with the passage of time. This growth has resulted in emergence of differing techniques and practices in the organization and operation of educational programmes of vocational

education & training. These techniques and practices have an important bearing on the degree of efficiency with which the educational programmes operate in teaching individuals to work. The study of such techniques and practices is important not only to the individual but also to the society itself in order that the highest efficiency possible may be attained in the use of these educational techniques and process.

The Federal Board for Vocational Education, U.S.A (1917): “vocational training must be vocational training for the common wage earning employments. It may be given to boys and girls who, having selected a vocation, desire preparation for entering it; to boys and girls who having already taken up a wage earning employment, seek greater efficiency in that employment; or to wage earners established in their trade or occupation, who wish through increase in their efficiency and wage earning capacity to advance to positions of responsibility”.

Hill (1922): “vocational education is a phase of education wherein emphasis is laid on preparation and participation in occupations of social value. Its means are both within and outside the school”.

Keller (1948): “vocational education is not job training, it is not perfection of skill, it is not tricks of the trade, it is not haggling in the market place, wrangling in the law courts, breaking of soil, or binding of wounds. It is all of these, but is much more. It is creative spirit in the mechanic, service rendered by the merchant, justice won by the prosecutor, food raised by the farmer, and life saved by doctor. It is attitudes, emotions, ethics, language and beauty – those attributes that transform jobs into vocations and men and women in to their neighbours, keepers and into citizens of the world. It is to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called”.

The Committee on Research and Publications of the American Vocational Association (1954): “education designed to develop skills, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and appreciations encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. It is integral part of the total educational program and contributes toward the development of good citizens by developing their physical, social, civic, cultural and economic competencies”.

UNESCO (1984): “education designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower levels of qualification for one or a group of occupations, trades or jobs. Vocational education, usually provided at upper secondary level, includes general education, practical training for the development of skills required by the chosen occupation, and related theory. The proportions of these components may vary considerably but the emphasis is usually on practical training”.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (1997): “instruction needed to equip persons for industrial or commercial occupations. It may be obtained either formally in trade schools, technical secondary schools, or in on-the-job training programs or, more informally, by picking up the necessary on the job”.

Garner (1993): “vocational education prepares students for industrial and commercial occupations that do not require a university degree. It includes training in such fields as manufacturing, building, business and

health services, and agriculture. Vocational education programmes are found in public and private secondary schools, community and junior colleges, industry labour unions, penal institutions, adult education courses and the military”.

Moodie (2002): “technical education is more practical as compared to a university education which is more theoretical. Alternatively, technical education is applied in nature as compared to a university education which by implication is more pure. General education is characterized by abstract thought while vocational education is characterized by concrete action. General education is supposed to lead its participants to acquire practical skills, know-how and understanding for employment in particular trades and occupation”.

Women Empowerment

Empowerment has been used to represent a wide range of concepts and to describe a proliferation of outcomes. The concept may often be promoted as empowerment of individuals and organisations of women (Sen & Grown 1987; Jahan 1995; Kumar 1993) but vary in the context to which they conceptualize or discuss how to identify it. Empowerment of women may be described as a process which helps people to assert their control over the factors which affect their lives. Empowerment of women means developing them as more individual, who are politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make intelligent discussion in matters that affect them. Women empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International conference in 1985 at Nairobi, which defined it as redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. The United Nation Development Fund for Women (UNDFW) includes the following factors in its definition of women’s empowerment:

- Acquiring knowledge
- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one’s ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one’s life
- Gaining the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power
- Developing the ability to organise and influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, national and internationally.

Women empowerment is an essential element in nation development. Since women constitute half of the population there can be no development unless the needs and interest of women are fully taken into account. In fact, empowered women are a nation’s strength. Since development means improvement in the living conditions of the society, as a whole it is logical to expect that this also mean improved status for women. Accordingly empowerment has become the key solution to many social problems. Empowerment of women is empowerment of family, household and in turn of development of a nation.

Empowerment of women means many things according to Kamla Bhasin (1992):

- It means recognizing women's contribution and women's knowledge.
- It means helping women fight their own fears and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.

- It means women enhancing their self-respect and self-dignity.
- It means women controlling their own bodies.
- It means women becoming economically independent and self-reliant.
- It means women controlling resources like land and property.
- It means reducing women's burden of work, especially at home.
- It means creating and strengthening women's group and organisation.
- It means promoting qualities of nurturing, caring, gentleness.

In developing countries women are treated differently from their male counterparts. These discrimination deprive them of education, job, awareness and political responsibility. In many countries women still do not have legal ownership rights to land and manage property, conduct business or even travel without the consent of the husband. The number of women falling within the poverty cycles is increasing at a faster rate than that of men (Duflo, 2012). In addition, the rise in the number of households supported solely by women is an important factor explaining the increase in poverty among women. Less job opportunities, along with low wages women are discriminatory more so when the general responsibility of running the in households in on women, in response to male migration in search for better work. As the dependency increases, the resources at disposal decrease, further exposing the households to the menace of poverty.

A woman's biological and socially reality has created several distinct roles for her in society, that of wife, mother, daughter, homemaker, worker, citizen etc. These multiple roles of women make several diverse demands on her time and energy. The social system in our country recognizes the roles of wife, mother and homemaker as paramount. A distinct identity and personality to call their own even in this day and age. The discrimination and oppression of Indian women is perpetuated in spite of the spread of education among women and their growing participation in social, economical and political life of the country.

Women participate in development everywhere, but they are not equal participants because very frequently their status prevents them from having equal access to education, training, jobs, land ownership, credit, business opportunities and even to nutritious food and other necessities for survival (Tom Gabriel, 1991).

The process of empowerment is both individual and collective, since it is through involvement in groups that people must often begin to develop their awareness and the ability to organise to take action and bring about change. The process of empowerment involves not just an improvement in physical and social conditions, but also equal participation in decision-making process, control over resources and mechanisms for sustaining these gains (Sushma Sahay, 1998).

Longwe's (1990) classification of the five levels of empowerment, namely; welfare, conscientisation, access, participation and control and the need to move from the level of welfare to control is useful one. When one talks of women's development and women's status, it is important to recognize that interventions at all levels namely; social, cultural, political and economic are required and are possible only if changes take place in the existing system and social structures, which are not all favourable to the women today.

The process of women's empowerment begins in the mind, by changing women's consciousness. Empowerment is an active, multidimensional process, which enables women to realize their full identity and potential in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be transacted nor can it be given away as alms. Power has to be acquired and once acquired, it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved. Women's empowerment can be viewed as a continuum of several inter related and mutually reinforcing components.

Vocational Training for Women Empowerment

Vocational Training is critical for economic growth and social development. Vocational training, is an important drive to address poverty reduction by improving employability, productivity and helping sustainable development and inclusive growth. It facilitates a cycle of high productivity, increased employment opportunities, income growth and development (Krishna, 2009). Vocational training is a good opportunity for women empowerment. Various kind of activities are being organised by various Government Departments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in promoting vocational training among the women, helping in their economic empowerment and societal upliftment. Vocational training helps strengthen women's agency by building women's ability to identify and act on economic opportunities, define, influence and make economic decisions; and challenge and cultural norms. Moreover, it increases women's opportunities by supporting women to secure decent work, successfully establish and grow their business or increase their productivity and earnings.

Vocational training is a key to improving productivity, employability and income earning opportunities, enhancing food security and promoting environmentally sustainable economic development and livelihoods for women in the slum areas. Skill development is not equated with formal technical, vocational and agricultural education and training alone, but is used more generally to refer also to the productive capabilities to meet the changing demands and economy and labour market.

According to Batliwala (1994); 'education and training' for women's empowerment contain five basic components to be comprehensive;

- i. Creating critical consciousness,
- ii. Access to new knowledge and information,
- iii. Developing new skills,
- iv. Collective organisational building and
- v. Alternative educational opportunities especially for women and girls.

To empower women, it is important to develop knowledge and skills and make Women participate in paid employment and in higher-value work. This can be done firstly by increasing access to technical and vocational training, including in non-traditional, higher-value, and emerging sectors; secondly, it is important to build women's life skills, and create links between education and training programs and employment opportunities to facilitate the transition from education to work.

Vocational Training Scheme in India

The Government of India plays a key role in the promotion of vocational education and training. In India vocational training is centralized with Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Ministry of Labour & Employment (MOLE), and the newly created Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). Apart from these, there are around 15 more ministries and department which provide vocational training programmes in India as per the need of the beneficiaries they cater to. The government of India is implementing several schemes on skill development through vocational training.

The following schemes which have a special focus on women's skill development:

National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015

The 'National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015' envisions skill development as a vehicle for women's empowerment. To impart skills to women, the government has taken steps like the Skill Development Initiative Schemes under Directorate General of Employment and Training developing over 10,000 training providers under which 12.6 lakh woman have availed benefits. The National Policy on Skill Development highlights that in order to improve the productivity of the economy, participation of women in the labour force needs to be improved. Below are the major takeaways from the policy. The policy provides a roadmap for skill development, including the setting up of Ministry of Skill Development and convergence of skill development initiatives of other Ministries.

It also outlines various interventions that the government must take up to catalyse skill development for women. Some of the proposed interventions are enlisted below.

- The policy highlights the need to improve access to skill development for women. According to the policy, additional training and apprenticeship seats will be set up exclusively for women. While the skill development infrastructure in India is vast, we need to create facilities dedicated to women. This also includes increasing the pool of women trainers. As per the policy, mechanisms to provide certification to women trainers would be put into place. New institutes for training of women trainers will also be promoted.
- The policy mentions the need for gender mainstreaming of training. Women participation in vocational education and training is low as compared to men. In order to bridge the gap, the policy identifies the need for special delivery mechanisms such as mobile training units, flexible afternoon batches along with on local needs based training. The policy envisions incorporation of women related issues in the guidelines for skill training procedures, such as issues of safe and gender sensitive training environment, employment of women trainers, equity in remuneration, and complaint redressal mechanism.
- While Digital India is gaining momentum, there is need to incorporate ICT for providing skill development solutions as well. The policy announces the promotion of an internet or mobile based platform for women employment. The platform would connect skilled women and employers. It

would focus on women willing to re-enter the workforce after a break and those affected by migration.

Support to Training Employment Programme for Women (STEP)

The Ministry of Women & Child Development Government of India has been administering 'Support to Training Employment Programme for Women (STEP) scheme' since 1986-87 as a 'Central Sector Scheme'. The STEP Scheme aims to provide skills that give employability to women and to provide competencies and skill that enable women to become self-employed. The scheme is intended to benefit women who are in the age group of 16 years and above across the country. The assistance under STEP scheme will be available in any sector for imparting skills related to employability and entrepreneurship, including but not limited to the agriculture, horticulture, food processing, handlooms, tailoring, stitching, embroidery, zari etc., handicrafts, computer & IT enable services along with soft skills for the work place such as spoken English, gems & jewellery, travel & tourism, hospitality.

The National/Regional Vocational Training Institute for Women

The National/Regional Vocational Training Institute Comes Under Government of India, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Directorate General of Employment (formerly Ministry of Labour & Employment, Directorate General of Employment & Training) women's occupation. Under this institute is providing vocational training in traditional and contemporary courses and certification to women to meet the trained skill workforce to the industry and service sector etc. in the country. These courses help women to achieve their career goals and become independent. The Women Vocational Training Programme is dedicated to planning and implementing long term policies related to women's vocational training in the country. The National/Regional Vocational Training Institutes for women provide (i) Crafts Training Scheme (CTS) & (ii) Crafts Instructors Training Scheme (CITS) under modular pattern training programmes and Short term training courses, who have passed 10th or 12th standard and meet the specified eligibility criteria for various courses. The Crafts Instructors Training Scheme courses are specially designed for ITI instructors. Apart from the regular courses, these institutes also organize short term courses as per the requirements for the industry. Short term courses include training in employable skills, preparation/use of Audio-visual aids etc. for general women, housewives, students and school drop-outs.

In the State sector, vocational training facilities exclusively for women at Craftsmen level are provided through a network of Women Industrial Training Institutes/ITCs and Women wings in general ITIs/ITCs under the administrative control of the State Governments. The Women's Training in Directorate General of Employment is responsible for policy matters, standards, revision of course curricula & implementation of new schemes. As per information furnished by the respective State Governments, there are about 1431 Women ITIs and women wings in general ITI/ITCs having a total of 82,390 training seats (as on December, 2013).

Courses provided by the National/Regional Training Institute are as follows;

- Dress Making
- Beauty Culture & Hair Dressing
- Preservation of Fruit & Vegetables
- Embroidery & Needle Craft
- Electricians
- Stenography
- Secretarial Practice(Hindi)
- Secretarial Practice(English)
- Architecture Draughtsmanship Desk top Publishing
- Architecture Assistantship
- Computer Operator & Programming Assistant
- Instrument Mechanic
- Fashion Technology

Deen Dayal Upadhyay Kaushalya Vikas Yojana (DDU-KVY)

Deen Dayal Upadhyay Kaushal Vikas Yojana, the erstwhile Aajeevika Skills, is the skill training and placement program of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) carried out as part of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). The Deen Dayal Upadhyay Kaushalya Vikas Yojana focuses on providing high quality skill training opportunities through Project Implementing Agencies to rural poor youth, though there is a special focus on women. It has an outcome-based design and the Project Implementing Agencies are required to place a minimum of 75 percent of those who are trained in jobs providing regular monthly wages. Also, there are special programmes for skill development under Deen Dayal Upadhyay Kaushalya Vikas Yojana running in Jammu and Kashmir (Himayat), Left Wing Extremism Affected Districts (Roshni) and 10 percent of the programme funds are dedicated to the North-Eastern states.

The scheme has special focus on women and outlines provision to improve quality of impact amongst women beneficiaries-

- **Improving Coverage-** The scheme mandates that 1/3rd of the seats would be covered by women. Gram Panchayats will have to undertake special efforts to improve participation of women under the programme by conducting special counselling sessions. To enhance coverage, the upper age limit for women has been revised up to 45, as against 35 years.
- **Setting up of Migration Support Centres (MSC)** – Migration Support Centres would be set up to look after the needs of the vulnerable population, especially women. They will be set up both inside the state, as well as outside the state in areas where a large number of Deen Dayal Upadhyay Kaushalya Vikas Yojana trainees have been placed. Funding for this is provided to the State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM) which may take it up on its own.

- **Training of trainers-** The scheme has special focus on establishing training centres with focus on women trainers. This is in line with the National Policy of Skill Development, which aims to increase the number of women trainers. Furthermore, wherever women trainers are being trained, the scheme mandates at least one women manager.
- **Post placement support-** It would be the responsibility of the Project Implementing Agencies to conduct post placement counselling sessions for the candidates, and especially for the women, to help them in adapting to new environment.

Conclusion

The primary aim of vocational training is not only to provide the skills to cope with the written words in everyday life, but to enable them, to gain greater freedom, to make choice to have a better grasp of the real life, to enhance personal liberty and to have other sources of knowledge. Women empowerment through vocational training programmes has been seen as a great weapon to curtailing illiteracy, poverty, discrimination and over dependency on men which rubs women of decision making in the family and in the society at large. This will not only change the personality of individual woman, but qualifies them to fulfil certain economic, political and cultural functions, and at the same time, improves on their socio-economic status.

“There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved.

It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.”

-Swami Vivekanand

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