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Encouraging A Girl Child: Using Vocational Education To Open Up Career Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

India is among the fastest-growing countries in the world. It is getting ready to compete with the rest of the world by modernizing the educational system and introducing vocational education at the school level. Vocational education helps bridge the gap between education and employment by equipping students with practical skills. Girls benefit from it as well in terms of resilience, confidence, self-worth, and self-employment. In addition to helping people feel better about themselves, vocational education for girls also contributes to India's economic development. Understanding the importance of vocational education and the role the government plays in implementing it at the school level to provide young girls the skills they need to compete in the real world is the aim of the current study.

Keywords: Vocational education, employment, girl child, encouraging.

Introduction:

Vocational education holds a significant position within the educational framework of India. The empowerment of female children through vocational education serves as a crucial mechanism for the realization of career prospects and the promotion of sustainable development. When female students are afforded equitable access to educational opportunities that encompass skill development, they exhibit remarkable capabilities and accomplishments. Furthermore, they not only illuminate their own paths but also extend that illumination to others who may benefit from it along their journey. This paradigm fosters self-assurance, enhances decision-making competencies, cultivates problem-solving skills, bolsters self-esteem, encourages self-employment, and fosters resilience, thereby contributing to the overarching advancement of society and the attainment of gender equity. It also provides them with the essential instruments required to maneuver through and excel in diverse vocational trajectories. The amalgamation of skill acquisition with formal education has the potential to substantially augment a girl's capacity to contribute to social and economic advancement, thereby influencing their personal growth, educational achievements, and prospective economic prospects, while diminishing dropout rates and fostering self-sufficiency.

The Skill India Mission, which integrates vocational education into the mainstream educational framework to mitigate the discrepancies between the conventional educational paradigm and the competencies demanded by industries, represents one of the myriad vocational education initiatives that the Indian government has instituted to empower students from a formative age. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which facilitates the introduction of vocational education commencing at the sixth grade and aligns with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), seeks to discern students' interests and aptitudes, thereby enabling them to harness and develop skills that foster self-assured lives. Additional initiatives under the Skill India Mission comprise the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKY), which provides industry-relevant skill training, as well as the Central Board of Secondary Education's (CBSE) skill hub initiative, which offers curricula in disciplines such as drone technology, artificial intelligence, machine learning, information technology, among others. Moreover, these initiatives play a pivotal role in equipping young girls with essential skills and fostering their self-confidence, thus aiding them in achieving economic and social autonomy. Programs that concentrate on entrepreneurship, information and communication technology (ICT), employability, and life skills are particularly efficacious in preparing girls for participation in the workforce of the twenty-first century. In addition to addressing skill deficiencies and fostering sustainable career advancement for female graduates, these initiatives also create a plethora of employment opportunities.

Review of literature:

According to Kumari (Kumari, 2024), the female demographic constitutes approximately 48% of the total populace in India. The initiative for skill development among women in India seeks to improve their economic circumstances and productivity, while simultaneously addressing substantial challenges inherent in a patriarchal society. Facilitating the empowerment of the girl child through vocational training not only opens avenues for career advancement but also promotes gender equality, thereby enabling them to engage as fully-fledged citizens. The authors contend that skill development represents a critical instrument for the empowerment of women in India; however, its efficacy must be bolstered by robust policy frameworks and a transformation in societal norms to surmount prevailing obstacles. This report elucidates the constitutional framework, the challenges encountered by women, the aims and barriers associated with skill development for women, and delineates a research agenda that may inform future initiatives in this domain.

According to Haerani and Sari (2024), the pedagogical integration of life skills education significantly enhances competencies in communication, decision-making, and problem-solving, thereby equipping youth—particularly females—with the necessary tools to excel in academic settings and progress in their professional trajectories, thereby expanding career possibilities and promoting personal growth within the context of India. Furthermore, the authors posited that subsequent to the educational intervention, there is a substantial augmentation in the aforementioned skills related to problem-solving, communication, and decision-making. Ultimately, the authors concluded that there exists a robust correlation between life skills and indicators of personal fulfillment.

According to (Poonam, Kavita Sharma, 2024), In India, vocational education is seen as a crucial component of the nation's overall educational system restructuring. Vocational training, in particular, is seen to foster economic independence and self-respect in girls while also helping them build the possibility of self-employment. The benefits extend beyond empowering individuals; vocational training for women also contributes to improving family financial security, which impacts state and federal GDP. The essay argues that if India is to experience long-term economic prosperity, both men and women must seek professional development in order to make a substantial contribution to the country's economic growth.

Objective of the study:

To understanding the significance of vocational education.

To study about government initiatives in implementing vocational education at school level.

To study about strategies for empowering girls through vocational education

To address the Challenges and Limitations of vocational education.

Methodology:

Using a descriptive, qualitative, and conceptual approach, this paper conducts a thorough literature review on the role of vocational education in empowering girls in Indian society in light of the National Education Policy 2020, CBSE skill education. The pertinent data used in this study was obtained from secondary sources, such as credible websites, books, journal articles, and the final draft of the NEP 2020. (Saharia, G. & Mazumdar, S. 2024)

Limitation:

This study is general and focuses only on NEP 2020 and drawn conclusion based on secondary data.

Significance of vocational education for girls:

Vocational education and training offer numerous advantages for girls, contributing to their empowerment, economic independence, and social development. By providing practical skills and knowledge, Vocational education enables girls to participate more effectively in the workforce, start their own businesses, and improve their overall quality of life.

- **Improved Educational Outcomes:** Training in negotiation skills has been shown to significantly enhance educational outcomes for girls, outperforming other interventions like providing information about education returns or mentorship programs. This training helps girls secure better educational investments from their families, leading to higher enrolment in quality schooling and sustained educational benefits. (N. Ashraf et al., 2018)
- **Improved Mental Health:** Vocational education positively impacts mental health, reducing anxiety and improving overall well-being. This education helps girls develop resilience and better manage emotional and social challenges. (Marzieh Kahnooji et al., 2017)
- **Empowerment and Independence:** Vocational education provides girls with the skills needed to become self-reliant and economically independent, reducing their vulnerability to social vices and early marriages. (Onyema et al., 2020)
- **Economic Advancement:** A major factor contributing to the economic empowerment of girls is the education they get in vocational skills. This education enables girls to actively participate in the workforce and improves the economic position of their families. (Supriya, V., & Rani, D. 2024). As a result, it leads to improved revenue and opportunities for livelihood and also boost the productive potential of the Indian economy.
- **Social Development:** Educated girls contribute positively to social development by assuming active roles in their communities, which can lead to broader societal benefits such as reduced crime rates and improved public health. (Onyema et al., 2020)
- **Reduction in Gender Inequality:** Vocational education helps to address gender disparities by providing girls with equal opportunities to acquire skills traditionally reserved for boys, thus promoting gender equality. (Mezie-Okoye, C. 2018)
- **Personal development:** Vocational education is essential for personal development, enhancing communication, decision-making, and problem -solving abilities of girls. (Haerani & Sari, 2024)

- **Face real-world challenges:** Integrating life skills into vocational training prepares girls for real-world challenges, increasing their chances of career success. (Vemula & K., 2024)
- **Entrepreneurship & Employment:** In addition to preparing them for the workforce, vocational education for girls aims to develop their capacity for self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Initiatives by Indian Government to promote vocational education for girls:

In recognition of the critical role vocational education plays in empowering women and promoting gender equality, the Indian government has taken a number of actions to encourage female students to pursue vocational education in schools. The primary government programs will be described, their effectiveness assessed, and areas that require additional attention will be emphasized.

- **Skill India Mission (Koushal Bharat, Kushal Bharat):** The Honourable Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi declared, "The foundation of Atmanirbhar Bharat is the skill development of the new generation, which is a national need." The goal of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship's Skill India mission program is to increase young people's productivity and employability, particularly for girls, through skill development initiatives. It draws attention to state-level initiatives to effectively deliver skill-based training.
- **National Education Policy (NEP 2020):** In India, an enormous skill gap exists between industries demand based on the rapid economic growth and the skills that young people acquire through education and training. It can have a serious impact not only on employers but also on the Indian economy. One of the concerns is the loss of productivity and revenue, as many of the jobs remain vacant due to a lack of skilled workers. NEP 2020 has suggested the integration of vocational education into mainstream education in all educational institutes. This policy includes provisions to develop vocational education at the school level, enabling students to gain practical experience alongside their academic education. The National Education Policy 2020, in association with the NCF and NSQF frameworks, is intended to identify the interests and strengths of the students to lead their lives confidently by utilising and acquiring skills. (Singh, Digvijay, and Mishra, Ravi Shankar. 2023). The NEP 2020 also aims at promoting girls' education, such as providing free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 18, introducing gender-sensitive education, raising awareness about the importance of girls' education, providing scholarships and other financial assistance to girls, and strengthening the infrastructure of schools in rural areas—all of which would encourage girls to continue their education. The NEP 2020 offers hope to address today's challenges and meet 21st-century needs effectively. To increase motivation for education, we should empower girls to believe in themselves and their abilities, provide role models to inspire them, make education relevant to help girls to see how it can help them to achieve their goals, and create a safe and supportive environment for their learning and growth.

To implement vocational education from an early age, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), India's largest national board with 30,634 affiliated schools, has undertaken significant initiatives. In the middle grades (VI-VIII), CBSE has introduced 12–15-hour skill modules on 33 subjects like coding, data science, design thinking, and mass media. At the secondary and senior secondary grades (IX-XII), a skill subject can be opted into from a list of 42 subjects as the 6th elective. These subjects are mapped to specific National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) levels for future career benefits and the employability of students. States/UTs can now opt from 88 job roles in 22 sectors as per the skill gap analysis of the state/UT. Assistance to develop state-of-the-art vocational and skill labs in schools and DIETs is also supported. Employability Skills consisting of communication skills, self-management skills, information and communication technology skills, entrepreneurship skills, and green skills have been made a mandatory part of the vocational courses. A policy update on 10 January 2025 allows students to replace the marks of an academic subject with the skill subject, should they fail in any elective subject, offering greater flexibility in their academic journey.

According to NEP 2020, every child is supposed to learn at least one skill subject. Beginning with vocational exposure at early ages in middle and secondary school, quality vocational education will be integrated smoothly into higher education. It will ensure that every child learns at least one vocation and is exposed to several more. It will foster not only some vocational skills but also enterprise skills for preparing them as entrepreneurs.

Strategies for empowering girls through vocational education:

- **Innovative vocational educational programs:** Innovative educational initiatives can significantly impact girls' empowerment by equipping them with 21st century skills. These initiatives show the benefits of integrated, participatory approaches to skill development. It ensures that females acquire employable skills by providing them with hands-on, practical training in fields like healthcare, technology, entrepreneurship, and agriculture.
- **Provide Mentorship and promoting role models:** Mentoring program can offer guidance and support to girls facing challenges, including academic difficulties, family pressure, gender stereotypes or societal barriers. Showcase successful women in various fields to inspire girls and demonstrate the possibilities of education and career advancement.
- **Ensure Accessibility and Affordability:** Girls' schedules and learning preferences can be accommodated by offering online learning modules, evening or weekend programs, and other flexible options. To assist females in paying for their living expenses and training fees, provide stipends, scholarships, and other forms of financial aid.
- **Engage Community and Stakeholders:** Working together with NGOs, community groups, and commercial enterprises aids in educating the girl child. Discussing girls' educational and professional goals with parents and relatives relieves any worries or opposition to the child. Involving the community in the creation and execution of skill-building initiatives guarantees their applicability and sustainability.
- **Monitor and Evaluate:** Keeping track of girls' involvement, skill development, and employment rates in order to assess the results of skill development initiatives. Seek feedback from girls and other stakeholders to identify areas for improvement and ensure programs are meeting their needs. Highlight the positive impact of vocational development programs, showcasing the achievements of girls and their contributions to their communities.

Challenges and Limitations:

Despite the significant benefits of vocational education for girls in India, there are several challenges and limitations that need to be addressed:

- **Access and Equity:** Ensuring equitable access to vocational training programs for girls from all socio-economic backgrounds and regions remains a challenge. Stephanie Psaki et al. highlight that gender disparities in education continue to undermine girls' opportunities in low- and middle-income countries (Stephanie Psaki et al. 2022)
- **Social Norms and Cultural Barriers:** Social norms and cultural barriers often limit girls' access to education and employment opportunities, hindering the effectiveness of vocational training programs.
- **Lack of Awareness and Information:** Many girls and their families are unaware of the benefits of vocational education and the opportunities it can create. Schools heavily focuses on academic subjects. Parents and students may not fully appreciate the value in vocational education, and schools may allocate insufficient time for such initiatives unwilling to relent under the competitive pressure of board exam in secondary classes.
- **Inadequate infrastructure and resources:** Insufficient school infrastructure and a lack of resources further hinder girls' education. Many schools lack basic facilities, such as clean water and sanitation, making it difficult for girls to attend and stay in school. (Ahmed, Kaltun Osman. 2024). Inadequate educational materials and a shortage of trained teachers also compromise the quality of education.

(Obeagu, E.. 2024). Addressing these challenges requires investment in infrastructure development, provision of adequate resources, and training of teachers to deliver quality education.

Conclusion:

The study emphasises that vocational education for girls is an effective tool that improves their ability to communicate and make decisions, solve problems, and raise their earning potential. It also encourages self-employment, which opens up more career choices and personal development in India. With the help of this educational strategy, girls will be better able to navigate social norms, raise their socioeconomic status, enhance their overall well-being. Girls' empowerment and employability are greatly improved by ongoing attempts to combine vocational education with formal education, government programs, and community involvement. Without targeted interventions like proper training, vocational education awareness, sufficient resources, vocational education could deepen existing inequalities in school education instead of bridging them.

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