

Skill Development Initiatives for Promoting Women Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

Women entrepreneurship is gaining importance in India in the wake of economic liberalization and globalization. The policy and institutional framework for developing entrepreneurial skills, providing vocational education and training has widened the horizon for economic empowerment of women especially in rural India. Entrepreneurial talents and capabilities are latent in all communities but their translation to innovative action depends on appropriate stimuli and environment and these stimuli can be generated through education and training. Women, in a country like India, are just seen as someone to look after the home and bear children and thus the treatment they get is below par with their male counterparts. In other words, they are treated as second-class citizens. While the men folk are involved in agriculture or unemployment, the women and girls are mostly involved in household chores, does not have any say in the family affairs. Women and girls are not allowed to step out of their houses which lead to lower educational status, low confidence to face the world. Also in view of the financial constraints that a family faces, empowering them through skill-building programs would give them more avenues to earn their living and become in the process self-reliant. Such programs will also help them to raise their voice against the ill treatment accorded to them within the family or outside. This paper aims at studying the role of National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in empowering women in rural India through skill-building programs.

Key Words: Women entrepreneurship, Women empowerment, NSDC, Skill-building programs.

I. Introduction

India is one of the few countries in the world where the working age population will be far in excess of those dependent on them and, as per the World Bank, this will continue almost till 2040. As the proportion of working age group of 15-59 years will be increasing steadily, India has the advantage of „demographic dividend“. Harnessing the demographic dividend through appropriate skill development efforts would provide an opportunity to achieve inclusion and productivity within the country and also a reduction in the global skill shortages. Large scale skill development is thus an imminent imperative. This has increasingly been recognized as a potential source of significant strength for the national economy, provided we are able to equip and continuously upgrade the skills of the population in the working age group which also consist of large number of women. In recognition of this need, the Government of India has adopted skill Development as a national priority. Skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development of any country. The economy becomes more productive, innovative and competitive through the existence of more skilled human potential. The level of employment, its composition and the growth in employment opportunities are the critical indicator of the process of development in any economy. Increasing pace of globalization and technological changes provide both challenges and growing opportunities for economic expansion and job creation. In taking advantage of these opportunities as well as in minimizing the social costs and dislocation, which the transition to a more open economy entails, the level and quality of skills that a nation possess are becoming critical factors. Countries with higher and better levels of skills adjust more effectively to the challenges and opportunities of globalization.

II. Objectives Of Study

1. To study the various characteristics and parameters of Women Empowerment and Women entrepreneurship.
2. To understand the role of NSDC in implementing Skill Development Programmes.
3. To study the challenges faced by NSDC in implementing Skill Development Policies for Women in Rural India.

III. Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary data. Relevant data are availed from various sources of information such as Books and Various websites.

IV. Limitations

The study is undertaken by the use of secondary data collected by other sources which may have some deficiencies.

Women Empowerment in India

‘Empowerment’ 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 aware individuals, 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 Women Conference in 1985 at Nairobi, which defined it as redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, Plans and Programmes have aimed at women’s advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards there has been a marked shift in the approach to women’s issues from welfare to development and then from Eighth Five Year Plan emphasis was shifted from development to empowerment. Gender equality and empowerment of women are goals that are not only intrinsically desirable but are critical for achieving the multi dimensional growth and for the long-term sustainable development of the country.

In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognised as the central issue in determining the status of women. National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. Also, the 1995 UNDP report was devoted to women’s empowerment and it declared that if human development is not engendered it is endangered. The Government of India declared 2001 as the Year of Women’s Empowerment (Swashakti). The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was passed in 2001.

Characteristics of Empowered Women

- Empowered women define their attitude, values and behaviours in relation to their own real interest. They have autonomy because they claim their freedom from existing male hierarchies, whether they live in traditional societies or modern industrial societies.
- Empowered women maintain equal mindedness. They act out roles that challenge male dominance. They respond as equals and co-operate to work towards the common good.
- Empowered women use their talent to live fulfilling lives. They not only survive the harshness of their own subjugation but also transcend their subjugation.
- Empowered women maintain their strength on the face of pressures from the religion and work and contribute towards the empowerment of all women.
- Empowered women define their values and formulate their beliefs themselves, they do not derive their sense of being from male authorities nor do they live vicariously through men.

Parameters of Women Empowerment

Following are the parameters of women empowerment;

- Raising self-esteem and self-confidence of women.
- Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girl child.
- Building and strengthening partnership with civil society particularly women’s organisations.
- Enforcement of constitutional and legal provisions and safeguarding rights of women.
- Building a positive image of women in the society and recognizing their contributions in social, economic and political sphere.
- Developing ability among women to think critically.
- Fostering decision-making and collective action.
- Enabling women to make informed choices.
- Ensuring women’s participation in all walks of life.
- Providing information, knowledge, skills for self-employment.

Role of National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in Skill Development

As the Indian economy continues to transform and mature, large scale sectoral shifts in the working population are inevitable, particularly from agriculture to other sectors of the economy. These sectors, however, require significantly different and often specialist skill sets, which require training and skill development. This skill gap needs to be addressed through comprehensive efforts, at various levels and catering to different needs of the society and industry. In recognition of this need, the Government of India has adopted skill development as a national priority. The Eleventh Five Year Plan detailed a road-map for skill development in India, and favoured the formation of Skill Development Missions, both at the State and National levels. To create such an institutional base for skill development in India at the national level, a “Coordinated Action on Skill Development” with three-tier institutional structure consisting of the Prime Minister’s National Council on Skill Development, the National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB) and the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was created in early 2008. The National Skill Development Policy, 2015 is being formulated, which supercedes the National Skill Development Policy of 2009. It is an integrated outcome based skills development eco-system, which would promote economic, and employment growth and social development through a focused education, skill training and employment services.

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is a Public Private Partnership. The NSDC was formed by leading industry associations and the Government as a Public Private Partnership to catalyze and enhance the role of the corporate and private sector in skill Development. The NSDC funds skill development initiatives, Sector Skill Councils and other activities related to skill development including the setting-up of large scale, for-profit sustainable vocational institutions in the country, by encouraging private sector participation and providing low-cost funding for training capacity. NSDC is also responsible for India’s participation in the World Skills Competition.

Role / Function of NSDC

The aim of skill development, particularly in case of women in rural India, 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. For this purpose the Corporation has constituted Sector Skills Councils with following functions:

- Identification of skill development needs including preparing a catalogue of types of skills, range and depth of skills to facilitate individuals to choose from them.
- Development of a sector skill development plan and maintain skill inventory.
- Determining skills/competency standards and qualifications.
- Standardization of affiliation and accreditation process.
- Participation in Affiliation, accreditation, examination and certification.
- Plan and execute Training of Trainers.
- Promotion of academies of excellence.
- Establishment of a well structured sector specific Labour Market Information System (LMIS) to assist planning and delivery of training.

Challenges faced by NSDC

The NSDC has identified a few of the major challenges, which need to be addressed for building a conducive ecosystem, of skill development for the women workforce. These are as follows,

- 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, especially in rural areas,
- 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.

The major challenges noted here are few in number but represent a complexity of issues involved.

V. Conclusion

Women’s economic empowerment can be achieved by promoting women’s entrepreneurship, through various national support structures, capacity-building, self-help group networks and credit provisioning. Such programs will also help them to raise their voice against the ill treatment accorded to them within the family

or outside. Self Employment through skills-building seem to be one of the effective ways to empower women. It implies that women, with inherent talents and having inner urge to fine-tune them to make them sources of their livelihood, indeed need some encouragement and help from various agencies working for the very cause. This would ensure across the board growth and will have a significant socio-cultural impact, as more women turn into entrepreneurs in rural areas thereby reducing regional disparities.

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