

Vocational education

From homemaker to a professional career

Skill development courses must be made available to homemakers for making them job-ready or ready for self-employment

Skilling India is one of the most important national agendas. In addition to its core focus areas, the Skill India initiative must also focus on skilling women for different job roles, if we want to achieve gender equality in economic participation.

Over the past few years, the number of women entering the job market has been consistently growing. An increasing number of women, especially from metro cities, wish to get back to their jobs after maternity leave. Career-centricity among women is at an all-time high. In rural areas too, vocational education initiatives are ensuring women can have a career of their choice.

However, there are a lot of challenges, such as literacy rate. According to 2011 Census, there is wide gender incongruence in literacy rate in India: 82.14% for men and 65.46% for women.

Further, the 2015 McKinsey Global Institute report called 'The Power of Parity' highlighted a strong link between gender parity in society and gender equality at work. Gender disparity at work is a universal phenomenon. But the degree of disparity varies from region to region. According to this report, women are half the world's working-age population, but generate only 37% of the GDP. Indian scenario is quite dismal, as the share of regional output generated by women is only 17%.

There are many reasons for gender inequality in society and, along with other measures, it is imperative to take corrective steps to improve economic participation of women in a big way. Such a change cannot happen overnight. A lot of steps at different levels are necessary to bring about desired changes. While it is important to have proper policies in place to increase women's economic participation, it is also necessary to open up skill development opportunities for women in different sectors to make them job-ready.

One of the root causes for dismal growth in women education is the attitude of parents towards them, along with poverty. However, the good news is that this is changing by the day. As compared to a decade ago, women participation in, say, organised manufacturing labour force has increased. Likewise is the case with women's contribution in small-scale industries. Vocational training in the fields of stitching and other embroidery work has led to the creation of thousands of jobs for women.

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Skill development initiatives at the moment focus more on young women in the age group of 16 to 20 years. This means we are neglecting a large group of women who are homemakers and who may be keen to enter the world of work. They can be brought into active workforce with appropriate skills training

PG diploma and customised courses as per the needs of the industry. In fact, the existing skills training courses of TISS-SVE can be offered or customised courses can be designed if companies decide to promote women's participation and recruit homemakers who are a bit older than the fresh students. It is possible to offer similar work integrated training programmes for them, and the gap between the skills needed and the skills available can be bridged to a large extent. For the companies, one of the advantages of recruiting a little older group of women is that they come with more maturity and life experiences, which may be helpful in job situations. They may also be able to concentrate better on their work since they are over with the critical period of child bearing and childcare. A judicious mix of youngsters along with homemakers in a batch can be beneficial.

The industry partnership with skills training institutes can go a long way in developing skilled manpower in general and in increasing women's economic participation in particular, if we use the right kind of approach to tackle the issue.

*The author is dean,
Tata Institute of Social Sciences
School of Vocational Education*

and who may be keen to enter the world of work. They can be brought into active workforce with appropriate skill training. Many women choose to be homemakers because of the responsibility of taking care of young children. But they cross that stage when children grow up and are relatively independent. At this stage, because they got married at a young age, they are still quite young, may be in the early thirties, and can easily start working. Their need to stay at home decreases substantially. However, at this stage, the confidence to start working is generally low; such women may also lack the skills that are needed in an ever-changing job-market. Depending upon their basic qualification, a variety of skill development courses of appropriate durations can be made available to make them job-ready or ready for self-employment.

The University Grants Commission

(UGC) has launched a degree course in a vocational stream; it is called Bachelor of Vocation. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences School of Vocational Education (TISS-SVE) has designed a work integrated training model to offer a variety of vocational courses. The duration of training varies from course to course. It can be a certificate course of a few months, Bachelor of Vocation course of three years' duration, or a PG diploma of one year duration. The TISS-SVE initiative to offer skill training programmes in different sectors in partnership with industries can serve as a model for companies interested in improving gender parity in workforce.

Depending upon the need of the industry for workforce, and their skilling needs, it is possible to design and offer customised courses. For example, the basket of courses offered by TISS-SVE contains certificate, diploma, degree,