

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH VOCATIONAL TRAINING– CASE STUDY OF CSR INITIATIVES OF A PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKING

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Skill Development of women is one of the components of empowerment of women. It encompasses several mutually reinforcing components but begins with and is supported by economic independence. Skill development of women helps in restructuring of gender relations within both family and society at large, and it is society's recognition of women's equality with men in terms of their worth to society as independent persons. Skill development is also essential to build capacities and confidence for taking decisions about one's own life at an individual and collective level.

The present article is an attempt to understand the relevance of Vocational Training and its impact on women of local area adopted by a public sector undertaking in New Delhi. The article is based on case studies through intensive interview about experiences of women; discussion has been done with resource persons of training centre of Corporate Social Responsibility – Community Development programme. Findings have been critically analyzed regarding major issues of skill development among women. It also reflects upon issues arising out among women after vocational training.

The article also tries to understand the relevance of CSR activities and its role in skill development of women; it tries to understand how CSR efforts through legislative measures are helping to address the issues related to skill development of women in contemporary society, while deliberating on interventions made by Public Sector Undertaking (PSU). The paper argues

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that if women are provided appropriate skill development training they can achieve economic independence which ultimately helps in gender mainstreaming. It has also given many suggestions and recommendations to strengthen the CSR activities for empowerment of women.

Key Words: Skill Development, CSR, Women Empowerment, Vocational Training, Economic Independence.

Vocational Training is a concurrent subject under the Constitution. The Central and State Government share responsibility for effective implementation of vocational training system in the country. There has been an urgent need for adopting a transformational paradigm that goes beyond the confines of the traditional approach of matching the demand and supply of skill development services. Apart from direct efforts, government is also approaching through PSUs and private skill development institutions to increase the aspiration among youth for vocational training and improvement in quality of training. The main challenge for the skill development policy is to create an architecture that harnesses this massive pool of local social entrepreneurship to deliver quality skill development services to the growing demands. A National Policy on Skill Development has been formulated by the Ministry of Labour & Employment. The objective is to create a workforce empowered with improved skills, knowledge and internationally recognized qualifications to gain access to decent employment and ensure India's competitiveness in the dynamic Global Labour market. It aims at increase in productivity of workforce both in the organized and the unorganized sectors, seeking increased participation of youth, women, disabled and other disadvantaged sections and to synergize efforts of various sectors and reform the present system.

The aim and objectives of skill development in the country is to support rapid and inclusive growth through:

- Enhancing individuals' employability (wage/ self employment) and ability to adapt to changing technologies and labour market demands.
- Improving productivity and living standards of the people.
- Strengthening competitiveness of the country.

- Attracting investment in skill development.
- Create opportunities for all to acquire skills throughout life, and especially for youth, women and disadvantaged groups.
- Promote commitment by all stakeholders to own skill development initiatives.
- Develop a high-quality skilled workforce/ entrepreneur relevant to current and emerging employment market needs.
- Enable the establishment of flexible delivery mechanisms that respond to the characteristics of a wide range of needs of stakeholders.
- Enable effective coordination between different ministries, the centre and the states and public and private providers.

UNESCO's Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (1989) adopted the policy to promote the equal access of girls and women to technical and vocational education, the objectives are as follows

1. To enhancing women employability (wage/self-employment) and ability to adapt changing
2. Technologies and labour market demands
3. To Improving productivity and living standards of the women.
4. To Strengthening competitiveness of the country.
5. To develop a high-quality skilled workforce/entrepreneur relevant to current and emerging employment market needs.
6. To create opportunities for all to acquire skills throughout life, and especially for youth, women and disadvantaged groups.

The skill development of women is one of the central issues in the process of development and the imperative of gender partnership in matters of development has been recognized all over the world. Skill development is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. By empowering women through Vocational training we can build their capacity to fight against all forms of violence against women. Capacity building of women tries to bring equality between women and it has both quantitative and qualitative aspect.

Contemporary business philosophy assumes that an organization has to be responsible for its actions and deeds vis-a-vis all the actors in its environment. An organization's achievement of business excellence requires a fully developed Corporate Social Responsibility. The application of the concept of corporate social responsibility is one of the basic prerequisites for the achievement of business excellence on the part of domestic enterprises. Corporate Social Responsibility is an expression used to describe company's obligation to be sensitive to the needs of all the stakeholders in its business operations. A corporate must commit to behave ethically towards its internal and external environment and contribute to improving the socio-economic fabric of society. What lies at the very core of corporate social responsibility is an ethical approach to business and it encompasses areas of concern about how a corporate serves the interest of the people at large. CSR is a company's not only statutory and voluntary actions but over and above its legal requirements with the aim of meeting the ethical needs of its employees, customers, society, locality and environment. Thus, as a corporate citizen, every business must act in a responsive way. With corporate playing increasingly important role in the affairs of the nation, it is today imperative that they should become conscious and responsible for the consequences, their activities and decisions have on society.

The PSU undertaken in the study has institutionalized community development initiatives by which it contributes to sustainable development of the neighboring villages. The most important initiatives taken up by undertaking has been in the field of Vocational Training for girls and women like Cutting, Tailoring and Dress Making and Beauty Health Care course, Embroidery Fabric Painting course, Jute making course and Computer training programme to improve the skills for employability/self employment by enabling them to start their own ventures/business. The process of skill development is strengthening by educational activities under this initiative and efforts are being made to promote literacy in the peripheral villages. PSU since its inception has helped local schools to realize the mission of providing quality education in this region. Development of such facilities aided in upgrading the existing schools so that local children could gain access to education. The main aim of the programme is that the local children have unrestrained access to schools at primary, middle, secondary and higher secondary education. The activities under this initiative include supply of study material like bags, books, stationary

etc, or granting scholarships for the selected local children for studying in nearby schools and the preference is given to girl children. Undertaking spends maximum of its CSR funds on skill development and infrastructure development through vocational training like toilets in school, community health care clinic, and overhead tanks for improving accessibility to safe drinking water which were considered catalyst for determining growth sustainability in the surrounding.

The present study is undertaken to find out the role of CSR activities in the skill development of women of the peripheral villages to the PSU. The study has tried to cover all the stakeholders related to CSR and its implementation. A conceptual framework for strengthening skill development activities has been discussed in detail.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To understand the nature and process of vocational training for women
- To explore the utilization of competencies by women developed through vocational training in employment/self-employment
- To find out the impact of vocational training on skill development of women

Methodology

The study is based on the case illustration of six women who completed their vocational training for skill development from the centre. Interview guide was prepared and information was elicited from select women. Further, the information was supplemented with the help of interviews with resource persons. In total, 06 Women and 03 resource persons and 02 functionaries of CSR programme were interviewed to understand the impact of vocational training on skill development of women. In present study, descriptive research method has been used to collect detailed factual information regarding policy of CSR, initiatives and type of activities undertaken for empowering women and its impact. Focus Group Discussion was also used to substantiate the information. The primary information was also supplemented with the help of printed and published literature, both online and offline related to the study topic.

Universe & Sampling

Enrolled women for vocational training constituted the universe of the study. Purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of the Women for this study.

Process of Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from in-depth interviews. This method of research is highly favored when qualitative descriptive data is available. The data obtained from in-depth interviews was analyzed by the researcher. The analysis of the data pointed out various prominent and recurrent themes throughout. Such recurrent and prominent codes were finally taken as major themes. One of the themes that emerged was impact of vocational training on skill development of girls/women. The paper explores the theme on role of vocational training on skill development of women for employment/self employment with the help of narrative and thematic analysis.

CSR Services and Skill Development through Vocational Training of Women - Respondent's Narratives

Case1/F/22yrs/Unmarried/Hindu

Case 1 is a 22 year old girl. She belongs to a lower middle class family. She is the eldest of her four siblings. Her father is working as private security guard with very low income; she found it difficult to meet the expenditure of her education. It is at this time she got to know about the tailoring training centre in local village run by PSU. She joined the beautician course and completed the same successfully. After obtaining the diploma certificate she got opportunity to work in Beauty Parlor and she is earning Rs. 5000 per month. She has the dream to open her own Beauty Parlor in the village and serve with pride, she is saving the money for the same.

Case2/F/27yrs/Unmarried/ Hindu

Case 2 belongs to a lower middle class joint family comprising of her parents and younger siblings, two brothers and two sisters. She was facing immense financial pressures how to meet basic financial needs of life and to support her education with the parents' limited income. She got to know about the training centre at PSU Campus. She joined the course and completed the

same successfully and obtained the certificate. She is now working as tailor in the village; she started taking works from the community and began working from her own house. Currently, she earns not less than 4000 to 5000 a month. She has the vision to start her own tailoring business at a large scale and open a training centre for other needy girls in the village.

Case3/F/35yrs/Housewife/Muslim

Case 3 lives in joint family with her husband who is the only bread winner of the whole family. She joined the training programme and took up the beautician course. She said that it was recommended to her by one of her neighbors who completed this short term training and is earning well. On completion of the beautician course she contacted one of the beauty parlors in locality and started working there. She feels that this training appeared as great boon in her life. Now after working with the beauty parlor, she is able to economically contribute to the income of the family.

Case4/F/23yrs/ Student/ Hindu

Soon after completing her higher education, she wanted to pursue a course that could have got her economically engaged as she believes that her parent could not afford to educate her more. Also to assist father in running the family of 7 people, she thought of taking up some course with greater economic benefit in future. As of now she is part of a tailoring course and wishes to complete it and plans to work with good firms that deals in clothing. She mentions that the training has made her feel empowered and also made her to envision a better career ahead. She is of the opinion that such training programmes provide a lot of needy people with the required facilities to learn and build career out of it.

Case5/F/19yrs/Student/Muslim

As a school student she never received any computer training, not even basics. She after joining the course offered under CSR initiatives received her first training on computer. She feels that today knowledge of computer is key factor in providing a person with job opportunity. She feels that after receiving formal training in computer she would also like to pursue her further studies from reputed college.

Case6/F/25yrs/Unmarried/ Hindu

Case 6 belongs to a lower middle class family comprising of her mother and younger two brothers and one sisters, she has lost her father. She has completed her graduation and urgently need a job to sustain her family and help her younger brothers and sister for their education because only source of income is her mother's engagement as maid. She got to know about computer course at the training centre at PSU Campus. She joined the course and completed the same successfully and has obtained the certificate. She is now looking for a job.

Result and Discussion

By analyzing the data and narratives it could be concluded that undertaking has made significant improvement in lives of women of the surrounding areas and has contributed in improving quality of life in many ways. A good number of women are getting benefited by the CSR-CD programme. The beneficiaries shared that undertaking is making continuous efforts for strengthening policies and practices of CSR to ensure that women are enabled to participate fully in vocational training and skill development through such measures as positive action, education, training and self-employment. The educational facilities in the area have been improved by making the schools more functional with the aid of additional infrastructure, which has made the schools more beneficial to the community and especially for girls. The emphasis is given on promoting full and equal access of women to literacy, education, and training and remove all obstacles to their access in all spheres office to credit and other productive resources.

Narratives of six women were collected and collated who have been enrolled for vocational training. In the study, certain critical issues emerged regarding impact of vocational training on skill development of women; some of them are as follows:

Views of Beneficiaries

➤ As far as the age of beneficiaries is concerned, all the beneficiaries were in the age group of 20-40 years which indicates that they are in the productive age group and can contribute to the family and society to the maximum extent?

- The educational background of the respondents reveals that a maximum of them have passed matriculation whereas there was one candidate who also has graduation degree. There's only one illiterate among the respondents.
- Caste-wise distribution of the respondents shows that half of the respondents were from OBC Category, followed by two SC and one general category.
- Going further, the researcher tried to assess their knowledge of CSR programs. While most of them said they are either well aware or somewhat aware of the CSR activities of undertaking but they all were in the opinion that they have simply benefited from the program.
- When question was asked about the kind of training/services availed by the respondent through the program, majority of them were beneficiaries of cutting and tailoring program only. While a small numbers of them were trained in beautician course and computer course.
- Along with vocational training, they have also received some materials to support their practice of the vocation. Out of the beneficiaries who have been interviewed, majority of them had received some supporting materials as well to practice their profession. While some of them got kit boxes and certificate, some also received scholarship and some got books and certificates too.
- All the respondents told that they got economically benefitted after taking up vocational training, feel socially empowered, started living better life and trying to become self-dependent.
- Enquiring about the market value of the trade they are trained in, all of them said it is of market value which is an encouraging response. A few believed that the programme is good for career and a few were of the opinion of adding new trades in the training process.
- Majority of them said that they are fully satisfied while a very few said that they are not fully satisfied and want the intake capacity and facilities of training centre to be increased.
- Narrations of Women reveal that they have been enormously benefitted by skill development through vocational training programme as they were of the opinion that training programme provides them with opportunity of employment/ self employment.
- When examined the present progress and implementation of the skill development vocational training programme, it is quite apparent that the introduction of training programme is heading towards a positive change in the personality of the Women.
- However, there are some areas that need to be addressed in order to strengthen the proper functioning of training programme and making it more effective.

➤ Beyond doubt, the skill development through vocational training programme initiated by PSU has appeared to have tremendous potential in generating the critical push for desirable changes in socio-economic status of women. It has been instrumental in achieving the laid down objectives of women empowerment and as outcome of the overall professional learning.

Views of the Resource Persons

The resource persons were of the opinion that women's growth and skill development is crucial because absence of it can create hurdle in social and economic development of women.

➤ The response of the women towards skill development vocational training programme was quite impressive; this attitude may be attributed to the employment/ self employment opportunities available for their socio-economic development.

➤ The resource person opined that the skill development vocational training programme motivated the women to participate and learn new skills and utilize them for their development. Women were very cooperative during training programme and helped each other in facilitation.

➤ It was found in the analysis that resource person with high level of competence created more conducive skill development environment through training programme.

➤ The resource persons while conducting the sessions found difficulty related to arrangement of resource due to financial crunch and they opined that the resources for the training and compensation should be increased for better training and learning process.

➤ The resource person also attempted to create awareness about opportunities available after completion of training programme.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The analysis of findings suggests that PSU has made significant improvement in lives of the girls/ women. Based on analysis, some of the specific recommendations and suggestions are as follows:

- Periodic awareness and employment drive camp should be organized so that women can utilize properly their skills and competencies.
- PSU should take special initiatives to help diverse women group, more vocational training initiatives should be provided to build competencies among women according to their

ability and individual requirements because learners are not homogenous in terms of academic ability, personality attributes, motivation or attitude and backgrounds.

- The identification and selection of the women for vocational training programme should be done carefully and after each batch, feedback should be taken from the women about issues and problems associated with the training programme.
- The vocational training programme should not only focus on skill development but also give support in finding employment/self employment. A strong working alliance is important for establishing a strong foundation among women on which efficient vocational training can take place and skill development related issues can be properly addressed.
- Employment opportunity should be created for those women who are getting trained from vocational training centres in different trades. Most of the beneficiaries, who got trained in vocational centres, could not get a job as there is no job placement cell in the institute.
- Financial assistance/ subsidized loan scheme for women should be initiated so that after getting training women can start their own ventures or business. The women can be linked with central government's schemes for financial assistance and other related aid.
- Career guidance and remedial coaching classes for the girls/women passed from Higher Secondary schools and other professional courses may be initiated using local resources on trial basis
- In some of the vocational training centres, the maintenance and timely repairing/replacing of sewing machines, insufficient number of teachers/ instructors was found obstructing optimum benefit from the centre concerned, there was urgent need of maintenance/repair/replacement services and establishment of basic facilities like a cooler, provision for drinking water and clean toilet for girls. PSU may take immediate steps to rectify this so that its overall success may not get underestimated by these small lapses, which can be addressed with minimal efforts.
- There is need to establishment of more vocational training centre in each target village for girls/women as most of the girls/women want to do vocational courses to make better earnings and become economically independent.
- It was observed that the sewing machines were distributed to the deserving candidates from the community. However, there are more deserving candidates who were left out in the process because of the limited number of machines.

- New innovative trades may be explored in the market, and the women candidates may be trained in the latest trends, so that it is easier for them to compete in the market. More vocational training programs should be introduced with latest trends in the field, courses like Computer training, Fashion designing, Interior decorator for girls/women must be started after literacy campaign.
- The capacity of existing training centre in some villages needs to be increased to accommodate more candidates at a time. There is less number of resource person and staff which cannot cater the need of the community.
- Periodical organization of camps should be done for women to provide family life education to create awareness regarding problems in life style, family welfare and population issues. Services of expert and health development functionaries should be utilized.
- In the adopted villages, Self Help Groups of women should be formed to cope up with their financial and employment/self-employment related issues.
- Networking with various stakeholders such as government departments, civil society members, voluntary organizations and local administration espousing the common concerns and pursuing the common cause. Establishment of contacts with policy makers and planners to apprise them about issues and problems of women in general and vocationally trained women in particular to bring about necessary modifications in the existing social policies and laws.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that the new Companies Bill with specific recommendations for spending on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has made it mandatory for companies to undertake CSR activities. The approach may focus on collaboration and partnership rather than simply funding the programs. It is important to provide training and support to the women to set up their own individual ventures. However, it is equally important to have regular follow up mechanism as well to ensure the sustainability of the programme to maximize its benefit and for better mutual relations between Public Sector Undertaking and neighboring community.

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