

Education and Skill Development for Women Empowerment A Case Study of Two NGOs in New Delhi

PRACHI SINHA*
M.C. PAUL**

Abstract

Education is the key to the development of an individual and the society as a whole. It helps in creating a sense of achievement and awareness in an individual's life. Skill training is essential for acquiring new skills as well as improving existing ones. This article presents an empirical case study of two NGOs — Sulabh International and Vidya Foundation, both in New Delhi, with reference to their contribution to education and skill training of women beneficiaries. The objective of the study was to ascertain the significance of education level in skill training and women empowerment. The study showed that the education level of the beneficiaries does affect skill development, in terms of time taken to acquire the skills. The illiterate beneficiaries could also participate in the programme, but it took them a longer time to acquire the skills. The data shows that in Sulabh International and Vidya Foundation, there were illiterate and educated beneficiaries who had joined the skill training and development programme. Beneficiaries from both the NGOs had expressed their opinions on the importance of social and economic empowerment of women. As a result, the skill training programme has changed the outlook of the beneficiaries.

EDUCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE

According to Delors' report (1996), education has a significant contribution to the progress of the

individual as well as the society. It is the key to overcome problems of poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war. It helps in

**Doctoral Research Scholar*, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; sinhaprachi87@gmail.com

***Professor*, Group of Adult Education, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; pauljnu@gmail.com

developing an individual's talents and makes them aware of their responsibilities. Education, in general, and mass literacy, in particular, is a key contributor to Human Resource Development. Education should not only be about acquiring knowledge, rather it should be related to the social and economic aspects of life. It needs to be related to skill learning and development which helps in the social and economic upliftment of the women in our society.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

With an increasing demand-supply gap in global competition, there is a need to ensure adequate supply of skills and their optimal utilisation. It has been noted that the world population is ageing fast, and India is at an advantageous position in this aspect. It has the youngest population in the world and has the potential to meet the skill requirements of other countries, apart from catering to its own demand of skilled manpower (Knowledge Paper 2011, p. 5). However, India needs to update its labour force, as it is largely encumbered with outdated skills that cannot meet the current and expected economic growth of the country. Skill development has been a major programme for the government since the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007–2012). The Government of India has established the National Skill Development Corporation in the public-private partnership mode

to facilitate the setting up of large, high quality, non-profit vocational institutions (Knowledge Paper 2011).

The present government has laid great emphasis upon skill development, and they have named their project 'Make in India'. Through this project, the present government plans to meet the demand of 500 million skilled workers by 2022. Low educational level creates an obstacle for skill training. In India, a large portion of the population has a poor educational background, especially women who are engaged in the unorganised sector. Skill development is important for women as it would enable them to be socially and economically empowered.

Women empowerment is essential for the society as women are seen to be the primary guardians responsible for altering the quality and quantity of human resources available in a country to promote sustainable development in the coming generations. Studies have shown that development cannot take place unless gender inequalities are removed, and women are empowered to choose and decide for their own welfare (Gupta and Yesudian, 2006, p. 365).

As Narayan points out, the term "empowerment" means "expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one's life. It implies the control over resources and decisions" (2005, p. 4). Education, employment, and media exposure are potential sources of women's empowerment that increase

women's access to and control over resources.

ABOUT THE STUDY

The present study was a case study of two NGOs in New Delhi conducted on education and skill development for women's empowerment. The main objective of the study was to determine the significance of education in skill training and women empowerment with reference to two NGOs, namely, Sulabh International and Vidya Foundation, located in New Delhi. These two NGOs were selected as they provide skill training programmes to women residing in slum areas.

For the study, women beneficiaries undergoing skill training, and those who had completed skill training programme provided by the respective NGOs were selected. The sample of the study was restricted to the skill of cutting and tailoring. Hundred beneficiaries each, from two NGOs working in skill training were interviewed. Twenty beneficiaries were enrolled in the programme at the time of the interview, whereas eighty beneficiaries had successfully completed the programme. The time period undertaken for research was ten years, that is, from 2005–2015.

SULABH INTERNATIONAL: A CASE STUDY

Sulabh International Social Service Organisation is a non-profit voluntary social organisation. It was founded by Bindeshwar Pathak in 1970. The NGO has been involved with the slums for 18–20 years. The major

activities undertaken by the NGO are education, empowerment of women and sanitation. The educational qualification of beneficiaries who underwent skill development programme under the period of study are as under.

It is interesting to observe that 63 per cent of the beneficiaries had completed primary education, followed

Table 1
Educational Qualification of Beneficiaries

Educational Qualification	Per cent
Illiterate	8
Primary Education	63
Secondary Education	25
Graduation	4
Total	100

by 25 per cent who had completed their secondary education. To quote a beneficiary who had completed secondary education, "I was not able to complete my education as my parents did not have money for my education and I had to help them in domestic duties." It is quite conflicting to see that 8 per cent of the beneficiaries were illiterate, whereas, four per cent were graduates. This shows that the need for skill development, both for illiterate and educated women are alike. After observing the educational qualifications of the beneficiaries, the researcher looked into the employment status of the beneficiaries.

It may be noted that 33 per cent of the beneficiaries were employed in

Table 2
Employment Status of Beneficiaries

Employment Status	Per cent
Government Service	1
Private Service	18
Business	33
Unemployed	48
Total	100

business, that is, they had opened their own boutiques or small tailoring shops to cater to the demands of the people. As many as 48 per cent beneficiaries were unemployed, most of them were still undergoing the skill training programme provided by the NGO. This sub-group was inclusive of those who had remained unemployed even after successfully completing the training programme due to some

reason like lack of interest, lack of funds and no family support.

Hence, we can say that a majority (52 per cent) of the beneficiaries were successful in getting employed after successful completion of the skill at-home training programme. Even those who did not venture out in pursuit of extra income were using their skills at home to save money, which otherwise they would have to spend for getting their own and family members clothes tailored. After examining the employment status of the beneficiaries, the researcher studied the family income of the beneficiaries, before and after, the skill training programme.

Tables 3 and 4 compare the family income of the beneficiaries and their employment status before and after joining the skill training

Table 3
Family Income Skill Training Programme vs. Employment Status of Beneficiary (Before)

Before the Skill Training Programme	Employment Status of Beneficiary				Total
	Government Service	Private Service	Business	Unemployed	
Less than 10,000	1 1.0%	10 10.0%	25 25.0%	41 41.0%	77 77.0%
10,000–20,000	0 0.0%	8 8.0%	8 8.0%	5 5.0%	21 21.0%
More than 20,000	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 2.0%	2 2.0%
Total	1 1.0%	18 18.0%	33 33.0%	48 48.0%	100 100.0%

Table 4
Family Income Skill Training Programme vs. Employment Status of Beneficiary (After)

After the Skill Training Programme	Employment Status of Beneficiary				Total
	Government Service	Private Service	Business	Unemployed	
Less than 10,000	1 1.2%	4 5.0%	13 16.2%	20 25.0%	38 47.5%
10,000–20,000	0 0.0%	11 13.8%	19 23.8%	7 8.8%	37 46.2%
More than 20,000	0 0.0%	3 3.8%	1 1.2%	1 1.2%	5 6.2%
Total	1 1.2%	18 22.5%	33 41.2%	28 35.0%	80* 100.0%

**Note: 20 per cent beneficiaries were not taken as they were currently enrolled in the skill training programme*

programme in the NGO. The data is collected from the beneficiaries who have already completed the skill training programme and those who are undergoing the skill training programme. Therefore, a period of 10 years (2005–2015) was taken in the study to see whether the skill training programme has helped them economically. It is a longitudinal study. In Table 4, 20 per cent of the beneficiaries were not taken into consideration as they were undergoing skill training. If we analyse the data, we can see that economically the beneficiaries are earning better when compared to before they joined the skill training programme. Amongst those who are undergoing skill training programme, their economic condition was not good

and they wanted to improve it so they joined the skill training programme.

With reference to the employment status, the tables show that amongst those who have already completed the skill training programme, they are economically well off which provides motivation to others from their area to join the skill training programme. There are less beneficiaries in the lower income group and most of them have improved their economic conditions. This proves that the skill training programme provided by the NGO is empowering the beneficiaries economically.

It may be noticed that 41 per cent of the beneficiaries who were unemployed had a monthly family income of less than ₹ 10,000 (Table 2). It remains to be seen why

the beneficiaries in the first category could not convert their training into job prospects.

After analysing Tables 3 and 4, it can be concluded that the skill training programme did help the beneficiaries financially. Seventy-seven per cent of the beneficiaries came in the monthly family income bracket of less than ₹10,000 before joining the skill training programme, but this figure decreased to around 48 per cent after completion of the programme. Also, there was an increase in the ₹10,000–20,000 monthly family income band before and after the skill training programme. Likewise, there was an increase in the percentage of beneficiaries in the monthly family income band of more than ₹20,000.

The skill training programme benefitted the beneficiaries in terms of employment. It can be observed that 48 per cent beneficiaries were unemployed before the skill training programme. However, after completing the skill training programme, only 35 per cent remained unemployed. This may be due to the interaction between the beneficiaries who had

previously completed the programme and given a positive feedback to the others. To quote a beneficiary who started her own business after the skill training programme, “I was unemployed before joining this skill training programme. During the skill training programme, I got in touch with some of the ladies from the previous batch, who gave me the idea to do my own business after this skill training programme. I have opened my own shop and I am earning well.” Among those that remained unemployed, reasons other than those relevant to this study were, for instance, work pressure at home, discouragement from family members, and lack of personal interest. Thus, we may conclude that the skill training programme did indeed benefit the beneficiaries in securing a job and financially uplifting them. After examining the employment status of the beneficiaries and their family income, there was a need to study the educational qualification of the beneficiaries and their status before and after the skill training programme.

Table 5
Educational Qualification vs. Status Skill Training (Before)

Educational Qualification	Status before Joining the Skill Training Programme			Total
	<i>Wasting time at home</i>	<i>No thoughts</i>	<i>Because of my children</i>	
Illiterate	4 4.0%	3 3.0%	1 1.0%	8 8.1%
Primary Education	25 25.3%	27 27.3%	10 10.1%	62 62.6%

Secondary Education	12 12.1%	8 8.1%	5 5.1%	25 25.3%
Graduation	1 1.0%	0 0.0%	3 3.0%	4 4.0%
Total	42 42.4%	38 38.4%	19 19.2%	99* 100.0%

Table 6
Educational Qualification vs. Status Skill Training (After)

Educational Qualification	Status after Joining the Skill Training Programme			Total
	<i>Became confident</i>	<i>Improved economic conditions</i>	<i>Want to study and work</i>	
Illiterate	0 0.0%	4 4.0%	4 4.0%	8 8.1%
Primary Education	14 14.1%	34 34.3%	14 14.1%	62 62.6%
Secondary Education	5 5.1%	11 11.1%	9 9.1%	25 25.3%
Graduation	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	1 1.0%	4 4.0%
Total	20 20.2%	51 51.5%	28 28.3%	99* 100.0%

**Note: A sample of 100 was taken of which one beneficiary did not give any opinion.*

It can be noticed in Table 5 that only 4 per cent of the illiterate beneficiaries were not involved in any paid work and they were performing their household chores before they joined the skill training programme. One per cent beneficiaries wanted to utilise their time as their children were still young. To quote a beneficiary, "I wanted to join the skill training programme because I wanted to uplift myself in this society. People often look down upon you when you are not educated or working. This may help

in some improvement of my status in my society."

In the primary school educated beneficiaries, about 25 per cent were of the view that they were wasting their time at home and this training could come in handy in the future. There were still about 10 per cent beneficiaries who wanted to do something to add to their family income as they had children, whom they wanted to bring up in an economically better environment Table 5.

Likewise, amongst the secondary school educated, there were about 12 per cent beneficiaries who were of the view that they were doing unpaid work at home. To quote a beneficiary, "Education is the foundation for any job. I wanted to do something which will help in my social and economic upliftment in the society." They were followed by about 8 per cent beneficiaries who did not have any particular reason to join the skill training programme.

Significantly, amongst those who had done graduation, there were 3 per cent of the beneficiaries who wanted to be financially better as they had young children.

Among the illiterate beneficiaries (Table 6), an equal percentage came to improve their economic conditions and had the desire to study and work. It can be seen that the education level of the beneficiaries does affect skill development, in terms of time taken to acquire the skills. The illiterate beneficiaries could also participate in the programme, but it took them a longer time to acquire the skills. To quote a beneficiary, "Having a good social and economic standing would be really good. But, I am taking longer to complete this skill programme. This is a very good medium through which women like us can actually uplift themselves. Education should not be an obstacle."

Hence, by the above tables, we can state that there were about 19 per cent who wanted to give better standard of living to their children

who had joined the skill training programme. But after the programme, about 52 per cent wanted to improve their economic condition and about 28 per cent who wanted to study and work. There were about 20 per cent who became confident during their skill training. As a result, the skill training programme has changed the outlook of the beneficiaries.

VIDYA FOUNDATION: A CASE STUDY

Vidya Foundation was founded by Rashmi Misra in 1985. The NGO is a charitable organisation which specialises in education and empowerment of underprivileged children, youth and women by working with them at an individual level. The educational qualifications of the beneficiaries are portrayed in the following table.

Table 7
Educational Qualification of Beneficiaries

Educational Qualification	Per cent
Illiterate	3
Primary Education	47
Secondary Education	48
Graduation	2
Total	100

It can be comprehended that 48 per cent of the beneficiaries had completed secondary education, and approximately about an equal percentage (47 per cent) had

completed their primary education. Three per cent of the beneficiaries were illiterate, while, 2 per cent were graduates. To quote a beneficiary who was a graduate, “for my parents, their children going to school and studying was very important. They wanted their children to lead a better standard of life than themselves. These days education is very important for getting a good job.” After studying the educational qualification of the beneficiaries, there is a need to see the employment status of the beneficiaries.

Table 8
Employment Status of Beneficiaries

Employment Status	Per cent
Government Service	5
Private Service	19
Business	35
Unemployed	41
Total	100

It can be grasped that 35 per cent of the beneficiaries were employed in their own business, that is, they had opened their own boutiques or small tailoring shops. Forty one percent beneficiaries were unemployed. It included those who were still undergoing the skill training programme provided by the NGO, and those who had remained unemployed after successfully completing the training programme due to some reason. After observing the educational qualification and employment status of the beneficiaries, the researcher found a need to examine the employment status and the family income before and after the skill training programme.

Tables 9 and 10 examine the family income of the beneficiaries and their employment status before and after joining the skill training programme in the NGO. The data is collected from the beneficiaries who had already completed the skill

Table 9
Family Income before Skill Training Programme vs. Employment Status of Beneficiary

Before Skill Training Programme	Employment Status of Beneficiary				Total
	Government Service	Private Service	Business	Unemployed	
Less than 10,000	1 1.0%	11 11.0%	13 13.0%	35 35.0%	60 60.0%
10,000–20,000	4 4.0%	8 8.0%	20 20.0%	6 6.0%	38 38.0%
More than 20,000	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 2.0%	0 0.0%	2 2.0%
Total	5 5.0%	19 19.0%	35 35.0%	41 41.0%	100 100.0%

Table 10
Family Income after Skill Training Programme vs. Employment Status of Beneficiary

After Skill Training Programme	Employment Status of Beneficiary				Total
	Government service	Private service	Business	Unemployed	
Less than 10,000	0 0.0%	1 1.2%	0 0.0%	21 26.2%	22 27.5%
10,000–20,000	3 3.8%	13 16.2%	26 32.5%	4 5.0%	46 57.5%
More than 20,000	2 2.5%	2 2.5%	8 10.0%	0 0.0%	12 15.0%
Total	5 6.2%	16 20.0%	34 42.5%	25 31.2%	80* 100.0%

**Note: 20 per cent beneficiaries were not taken as they were currently enrolled in the skill training programme*

training programme and those who are undergoing the skill training programme. For an effective study, a period of 10 years (2005–2015) was taken into consideration to see whether the skill training programme has economically helped them. It is a longitudinal study. In Table 10, 20 per cent of the beneficiaries were not taken into consideration as they were undergoing skill training. If we analyse the data, we can see that economically, the beneficiaries are earning better when compared to before they joined the skill training programme. Amongst those who are undergoing skill training, their economic condition was not good and they wanted to improve it so they joined the programme.

With reference to employment status, the tables show that amongst those who have already completed the skill training programme, they are

economically, well off which inspires to others to join the skill training programme. There are few beneficiaries in the lower income group and most of them have improved their economic conditions. This establishes the point that the programme provided by the NGO is empowering the beneficiaries economically.

It can be observed (Table 9) that about 35 per cent of the unemployed beneficiaries had a monthly family income of less than ₹ 10,000. This was followed by around 13 per cent who were employed in their own business but were in this income band.

Four per cent beneficiaries were employed in government service with a monthly family income between ₹10,000–20,000. Twenty per cent of the beneficiaries had their own business in this income band. It is interesting to note that 2 per cent beneficiaries employed in business

had their monthly family income above ₹ 20,000.

Table 10 shows that around 33 per cent of the beneficiaries with a monthly family income between ₹10,000–20,000 were employed in business. Likewise, about 16 per cent beneficiaries were employed in the private sector with a monthly family income between ₹10,000–20,000. Around 4 per cent of the beneficiaries were employed in government service.

Based on Tables 9 and 10, we can conclude that the skill training programme has financially helped the beneficiaries. It can be noted that the monthly family income increased after beneficiaries joined the skill training programme in the NGO and they enjoyed greater success in the business they had started. To quote a beneficiary, “I have started my business a few years back. I am very happy with the business that I have started. I have become popular, and I get many orders. I am able to save for my children’s education.” However, about 31 per cent of the beneficiaries remained unemployed. It can be seen that education level of the beneficiaries does affect skill development, in terms of time taken to acquire the skills. The illiterate beneficiaries could also participate in the programme, but it took them a longer time to acquire the skills. To quote a beneficiary, “I feel that some illiterate people would take longer time to complete this programme when compared to educated people. I am taking a longer time. I have taken two months more

than others.” The Tables 9 and 10 also reveal that the skill training programme benefitted the beneficiaries in terms of employment. It can be perceived that 41 per cent of the beneficiaries were unemployed before the skill training programme, but, post completion, only about 31 per cent remained unemployed. There may be several reasons for this, including lack of interest in working, absence of encouragement from immediate family, pressure of household responsibilities, and so on. This could be attributed to the interaction between those beneficiaries who had previously completed the programme, and then motivated the next batch to take up work to increase their family income. To quote a beneficiary, “I was unemployed before joining this skill training programme. Then my family members wanted me to use the skill I had learned to earn money. So, I have opened my own shop and I am earning well.” Tables 11 and 12 examine the educational qualification of the beneficiaries and their status before and after the skill training programme.

It can be grasped from Table 11 that 2 per cent of the illiterate beneficiaries were involved in unpaid work before they joined the skill training programme. To quote a beneficiary, “One should have a respectable status in the society. Being uneducated is already looked down upon. So, I thought of earning, which will help in uplifting myself

Table 11
Educational Qualification vs. Status Before Skill Training Programme

Educational Qualification	Status before Joining the Skill Training Programme			Total
	<i>Wasting time at home</i>	<i>Children a source of motivation to learn</i>	<i>No thoughts</i>	
Illiterate	2 2.0%	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	3 3.0%
Primary Education	39 39.0%	3 3.0%	5 5.0%	47 47.0%
Secondary Education	40 40.0%	3 3.0%	5 5.0%	48 48.0%
Graduation	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	1 1.0%	2 2.0%
Total	81 81.0%	7 7.0%	12 12.0%	100 100.0%

Table 12
Educational Qualification vs. Status After Skill Training Programme

Educational Qualification	Status after Joining the Skill Training Programme		Total (I+II)
	<i>Confident to earn (I)</i>	<i>Want to study and work (II)</i>	
Illiterate	3 3.0%	0 0.0%	3 3.0%
Primary Education	44 44.0%	3 3.0%	47 47.0%
Secondary Education	44 44.0%	4 4.0%	48 48.0%
Graduation	2 2.0%	0 0.0%	2 2.0%
Total	93 93.0%	7 7.0%	100 100.0%

socially and economically.” And after joining (Table 12), 3 per cent became confident to earn their living.

Similarly, amid the secondary school educated, there were 40 per

cent beneficiaries who were of the view that they would not be doing household activity thereafter. To quote a beneficiary, “Doing nothing at home is very unproductive. While you

are studying or working, people have respect for you. These things make one empowered.” There were 44 per cent beneficiaries after joining (Table 12) who became confident to earn their living. Interestingly, with those who had done graduation, there were 1 per cent of the beneficiaries who wanted to do something as they had young children with them.

In Table 12, it can be noticed that there is an almost equal percentage of illiterate and graduate beneficiaries (3 per cent). They had aimed to improve their economic conditions after they had joined the skill training programme provided by the NGO. One illiterate beneficiary was of the opinion that, “It is very interesting to learn these skills. It helps you to learn the skills which will help in social and economic upliftment. It also makes you confident in life.”

As can be seen from Tables 11 and 12, we can articulate that there were 93 per cent beneficiaries who wanted to improve their economic conditions and 7 per cent who wanted to study further and work after their skill training. The skill training programme has changed the outlook of the beneficiaries, by making them more confident to take up a job and earn to increase the family income, no matter what their educational qualification were.

CONCLUSION

Skill development is within the broader context of the educational policy. For the development process,

it is important to provide skill education, so that, the adults can improve upon their skills in their profession.

Sulabh International when compared with Vidya Foundation, had more illiterate beneficiaries who had their family income as less than ₹ 10,000 and there was maximum percentage shift from the income band of less than ₹ 10,000 to the family income band of ₹ 10,000–20,000. Also, there were more beneficiaries (81 per cent) in Vidya when compared to Sulabh International (42 per cent) who thought that they were wasting their time at home before they joined the NGO’s programme. On the same lines, in Sulabh International, there were about 20 per cent beneficiaries who became confident to earn while undergoing skill training and development. But, there were 93 per cent beneficiaries from Vidya Foundation who gained confidence to earn during the skill training programme. Thus, beneficiaries from Vidya Foundation were becoming more confident to earn and therefore, improve their status in the society.

The data shows that in Sulabh International and Vidya Foundation, there were illiterate and educated beneficiaries who had joined the skill training and development programme. Beneficiaries from both the NGOs had expressed their opinion on the importance of social and economic empowerment of women. About 85 per cent of the

beneficiaries were unemployed before they joined the skill training programme with monthly family income being less than ₹10,000. This was the main reason that the beneficiaries had opted for the skill training programme, that is, cutting and tailoring provided by the NGO. They wanted to improve the financial conditions of their family, and provide quality education to their children. Most of the beneficiaries have been successful in improving their family's financial conditions. However, there are a few beneficiaries who are either housewives or unemployed for which there may be associated reasons.

Also, the beneficiaries from both the NGOs had improved their status (from before to after) through the skill training programme. The analysis shows that both NGOs have worked for women empowerment (social and economic) through skill development.

Throughout the article, it may be observed that beneficiaries do accept the critical role that education plays in their lives. Thus, we can say that the skill training programme provided by the NGOs to the beneficiaries has been successful and effective in financially and socially empowering the women of the slums.

REFERENCES

- DELORS, JACQUES. 1996. Learning: The Treasure Within. *Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty – first Century*. Highlights. UNESCO Publishing. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001095/109590eo.pdf>.
- GUPTA, KAMLA AND P. PRINCY YESUDIAN. 2006. Evidence of Women's Empowerment in India: A Study of Socio – Spatial Disparities. *GeoJournal*. Vol. 65, No. 4. p. 365.
- Knowledge Paper on Strategic and Implementation Framework for Skill Development in India. September 2011. FICCI and Ernst and Young.
- NARAYAN, DEEPA. (ED.) 2005. Measuring Empowerment: Cross – Disciplinary Perspectives. World Bank, Washington, DC
- Delhi Information. <https://www.delhiinformation.in/delhi/areas/dwarka.html>. Accessed: November