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## TEACHING OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS TO WOMEN UNDERGRADUATES

GANNU NATARAJA SHEKHAR

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**Abstract:** It is an undeniable fact that women are not treated equally with men across the world. Government of India has been making sincere efforts to provide education and employment to women in order to make them economically independent and self-reliant. Government has become successful in providing facilities for education to girls and women. Though government has been taking several steps to implement gender mainstreaming strategy in employment promotion, some women do not show interest to come forward to accept the employment due to traditional, cultural barriers and marriage constraints. Indian educated women show interest to work in service sector rather than in manufacturing sector for various reasons. This paper makes an attempt to throw light on the different causes for women unemployment. It also suggests a set of skills to be taught to female undergraduates along with the regular curriculum. This paper focuses on the various steps to be taken by the employers and the university authorities to provide job opportunities to women to make them self-reliant.

**Keywords:** employability, employers, employment, gender disparity, women empowerment

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Manu says in *Manusmriti*: *yatra naaryastu puujyante*

*ramante tatra devataah |yatraitaastu na puujyante sarvaastatraaphalaah kriyaah ||*

(Gods live where women are honored and respected. All actions will be fruitless, if women are dishonored.)

**Introduction:** The nation which does not respect women will not prosper. It is an irrefutable fact that women are not respected and treated equally with men in all the ages in all the societies. Women across the world are challenged by a number of internal and external barriers that restrict their innate ability to play considerable roles in the society. There was a lot of gender disparity during the Vedic period and most of the women, during that period, were not allowed to learn the Vedas. During the medieval period also, women were not permitted to participate actively in the developmental activities in the society. For a long time they have lagged far behind men in key socio-economic indicators that place them at a huge disadvantage.

For around two centuries, social reformers and national leaders educated women in India to bring them out of confines. Indian government took several measures to improve the status of women in India. The national leaders and framers of the constitution treated men and women equally and provided "equality of status and opportunity" through the Preamble to the Constitution of India. Part III of the Constitution of India, which deals with the fundamental rights, also treats all Indians equally and provides them right to equality, right to freedom and right against exploitation, etc. The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) was launched by the Government of India on International Women's day in 2010 with the aim to strengthen the overall processes that promote all-round development of women.

The governments of other nations also started fighting against gender disparity and providing several facilities to women to make them self-reliant. The UNO has also worked for women empowerment through its various subsidiaries. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women is working for the empowerment of women. The theme of International Women's day –

2014 declared by the United Nations is "Equality for women is progress for all."

Indian government has been making sincere efforts since independence for the empowerment of women. Empowerment refers to increasing the economic, political, social, educational and spiritual strength of individuals and communities. According to Hazarika, "empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities" (200).

Women will get respect and honour in the society and treated equally with men, if they are educated and employed. Indian government has become successful in providing the education to the women. The literacy rate of women went up from 8.86 in 1951 to 65.46% in 2011. In India according to 2011 census, 43% of women are employed where as 87% of men have employment. In the current scenario, one of the key priorities of the Indian government is to promote decent and productive employment and income opportunities to the women to eradicate the gender disparity.

Though government has been taking various distinctive to implement gender mainstreaming strategy in employment promotion, women do not show interest to come forward to accept the employment for various reasons. Some women do not like to work at distant places, due to the traditional barriers and family responsibilities, and choose low paid jobs in their vicinity. Some women, who do not have leadership qualities and cannot take bold decisions, do not like to be in the managerial side, due to the apprehension of failure, and compromise to work for the low wages as teachers, health assistants, clerks. Some Indian women do not show interest to work due to the marriage constraints like child-bearing and child-rearing or lack of work-life balance. Women job-seekers do not possess

all the requisite skills as they have less access to productive resources, education, and skills development than men. They are usually not allowed to go to towns or cities to join the coaching centers to acquire additional skills sought after by the employers. They do not show interest in the jobs which are not of their choice and do not hesitate to relinquish the jobs if they face any problems at the world of work.

Indian women job-seekers show interest to work in service sector for a variety of reasons like job safety, job satisfaction, good wages, convenient working hours and congenial working conditions. Even employers also prefer female graduates in service sector for their sincerity, honesty, graciousness, moral values, generosity and ability to handle difficult situations with a lot of patience. Employers look for a specific set of skills from the female graduates that match the skills necessary to perform a job in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to meet the needs of the customers in the highly competitive world. Due to the high expectations of the employers, there is a large amount of pressure on women job seekers to acquire the employability skills. According to Hillage and Pollard, "employability is about having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment, if required" As government cannot provide job to every woman graduate, it shall take necessary steps in providing them the essential employability skills to make them job-ready. University authorities have to take essential steps in imparting the following sought after skills to the women graduates along with the generic skills to meet the needs of the employers. Those skills and attributes are: Basics of accountancy, commerce and management

- IT skills
- Telephoning skills
- Communication skills
- Event management skills
- Initiative and enterprise skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Teamwork skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Presentation skills
- Office administration
- Positive self-esteem
- Creativity
- Critical thinking
- Adaptability

Despite some progress made over the last fifty years in India in enhancing job opportunities to women and narrowing gender gaps in wages, gender equality in the world of work still remains an elusive goal. In order to empower women, university authorities and curriculum designers, while designing the curriculum, have to lay

emphasis on the employability skills required by the women undergraduates. They have to

- Identify the essential employability skills exclusively suitable for women job-seekers.
- Get in touch with the employers frequently for knowing the latest trends in the global markets and identifying the specific skills useful at the workplaces in that vicinity.
- Provide apposite training to the women graduates in the skills sought after by the local entrepreneurs.
- Introduce add-on courses in women's degree colleges to teach employability skills which are absolutely pertinent for women job-seekers.
- Establish Jawahar Knowledge Centers exclusively for women job-seekers to teach the essential employability skills.
- Provide part-time job opportunities to women graduates to make them familiar with the working conditions at the world of work.
- Educate them to overcome the traditional and cultural barriers in order to implement gender mainstream strategy.
- Provide financial help to the poor women undergraduates to join JKC and other coaching centers to acquire additional employability skills.
- Establish a cell for women development to provide assistance to women undergraduates in identifying the suitable jobs.
- Help the women in getting financial assistance for establishing the small scale industries.
- Take them to the workplaces to make them aware of the skills required at the world of work.
- Organize mock interviews, training programs, lectures by the guest faculty on career guidance

The two major challenges faced by organizations across the world today are to convince the women graduates, who do not show interest to accept the job due to the traditional, cultural barriers, and to retain the qualified and experienced women in the workforce who wish to relinquish the job due to the marriage constraints or lack of work-life balance or family responsibilities. University authorities and employers shall work together to educate women job-seekers to triumph over the barriers. Government has to take some significant distinctive steps to provide job opportunities to educated women and privileges to women employees to fuel the national economy.

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Ph.D. Research Scholar, Kakatiya University, Warangal. Address: 1-7-637; Subedari, Warangal. A.P.  
e-mail: [natarajashekhhar@gmail.com](mailto:natarajashekhhar@gmail.com)