

ICT Enabled Skill-based Programmes for Empowerment of Marginalised Women in Rural India through Open Distance e-Learning

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ABSTRACT: The paper mainly aims at introducing some skill-based programmes using Information & Communication Technologies (ICTs) through ODeL mode to such marginalised rural women for their economic and social empowerment. Some of such programmes include Childcare, Healthcare, House-keeping, Gardening, Poultry and other such similar as these programmes does not require any formal school/college education. All such programmes will be designed, developed in form of Audio/Video programmes in respective local languages, where no need of any formal education for understanding and learning, but only mother tongue is essential. A framework for such programmes has already been done. The programmes will be delivered through smart handheld devices such as Tabs (Tablets), where all Audio/Video programmes along with life coping skills are preloaded in it and offered to the Women, who admitted for such programmes with free of cost. One time cost is involved for a programme design & development and recurring cost for Tabs. Since, it is a social cause towards empowerment of marginalised women in rural India; it is the responsibility of each individual Institution and also State & Central Governments of India to provide financial support for such a great cause. The same will also be extended across India, with a financial and operational support of State & Central Governments in India so that the marginalised women in India will get economic and social empowerment and in turn get self sustainability, dignity and finally fit for life. It will also become a part of Digital India initiative of Govt. of India.

Keywords: marginalised women, ICT, ODeL mode, economic empowerment

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I. INTRODUCTION

Our Indian Constitution is meant to uplift the marginalized community and works for fundamental rights to empower the people to ensure the economic and social democracy. Empowerment is the enhancement of individuals and communities political, social, economic or spiritual stability. Empowerment brings the change in the lifestyle of individuals, communities by developing and building capacities to accommodate them in the main stream society. This change can be possible through the means of education which is a powerful tool to empower the marginalized community by adopting intrinsic and instrumental values to develop human personality. The marginalised women in rural India need economic, social and political empowerment¹. However, the economic and social empowerment is essentially needed to get some degree of autonomy, quality of economic involvement beyond their presence as poorly paid workers, acquiring information, knowledge, skills, and also participation without any gender discrimination in day to day activities and in turn inculcating a feeling of equality, instead of subordination among women. The marginalised rural women in India may not have adequate education, may be no education too due to their poverty, economic and social concerns². This all perspective somehow or the other meant for giving equal opportunity to each and every person in every sphere to develop their total personality which also should work for removing the imbalance of society in socio-economic and political life. Speaking precisely, the marginalized women community has been the most affected in the whole process. In spite of efforts of the government, still they are affected by the vicious circle of the society since the poor implementation strategies at the very ground level³. This paper tries to appraise the challenges in effectively implementing the constitutional provisions by means of education. The paper mainly aims at introducing some skill-based programmes using Information & Communication Technologies (ICTs) through ODeL mode to such marginalised rural women for their economic and social empowerment. Some of such programmes include Childcare, Healthcare, House-keeping, Gardening, Poultry and other such similar as these

programmes does not require any formal school/college education. The scope and nature of work at the above mentioned areas by the unskilled or semi-skilled³ persons can be done effectively with the help of hand held electronic devices, which were preloaded with audio & video visual content pertains to a particular skill-based programme as mentioned above. These audio & video visuals shall be designed and developed by using information & Communication Technological tools⁴.

II. SKILL-BASED PROGRAMMES FOR MARGINALISED RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The skill-based programmes such as childcare, gardening, poultry, housekeeping and other such related are generally does not require much theoretical concepts, instead they are practice oriented and can be done without any formal education. The following section describes on some of the skill-based programmes those are to be designed and developed for marginalized rural women for their empowerment.

2.1 Housekeeping

It refers to the management of duties and chores involved in the running of a house hold, such as cleaning, cooking, home maintenance like cleaning rooms and other areas, bed making, laundering services like ensuring clean and hygienic washing of all the linen items and distributing them to different areas, storage, supplies, and also responsible for safety and security. Overall supervision and maintenance like focus on all responsibilities, care and comfort, communication and finally satisfy the people.

2.2 Poultry farming

The poultry work involves placement of chicks, carry out their feed; water; litter; brooding and health management to raise broiler chicks according to market's standards.

2.3 Child care

It involves the works like sterilizing bottles and prepares food formulas, assistance in preparing food for children and serve meals and refreshments and regulate rest periods. Dress the children and other such activities. Accompany children to and from school, on outings, and to check the medical appointments. Sanitize toys and play equipment, organize and store toys and materials to ensure order in activity areas. Perform housekeeping duties such as laundry, cleaning, dishwashing, and changing of linens.

2.4 Gardening

Gardening duty starts with taking care and management of all plants, flowers, grass, and trees during make-ready season. Irrigates all foliage, sweeps and cleans debris from walkways, driveways. They are responsible for preparing soil and plants for planting. Performs transplanting of shrubs, trees, vegetables, flowering plants and perennial and annual flowers, cultivates, fertilizes, waters, fumigates, and prunes plants, planting of potted plants and flowers for indoor display. Attends display beds to maintain health of plants and beauty of display. Maintains and repairs gardening hand tools and equipment and structures, such as greenhouses and hot beds, using maintenance and carpentry tools. May mow lawns, prune trees, and perform other duties to maintain grounds.

III. PROGRAMME DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ICT TOOLS

The marginalized women in rural areas are generally had utmost elementary education or no education due to their poverty and/or economic/social conditions. The programme design for skill-based courses for such women is a challenging task as they could not read, write and understand. However, it can be achieved by using Information & Communication Technology (ICT) tools in designing a skill-based programmes in form of audio and video visuals, along with animations³. The audio must be in their regional languages or mother tongue so that they can easily watch, observe, hear and understand easily.

3.1 Some standard ICT Tools for Programme design

The simple and standard ICT tools such as Photoshop, Adobe Flash, Microsoft Power point and creative audio tools are being used for development of skill-based programmes as specified above in form of audio & video visuals⁴. Each skill-based programme is divided into number of modules. Each module is designed in such a way that, it will not be more than one hour duration so that the women can watch a particular module at her convenient time with more attention without any interruption due to limited resources of a hand held electronic device. Each module then designed and developed in form of audio & video visuals. Therefore, each skill-based programme consists of group of audio & video files and packaged in a hand held electronic device such as a Tablet for usage. In addition to all modules of each skill-based programme, one common module on "life coping skills" also be developed and packaged along with the programme.

3.2 Role of Hand held Electronic Devices

A low cost hand held electronic device such as Tablet can be used to store the files of audio and video visuals of all modules pertains to a specific skill-based programme. These files are preloaded and made like in-built in each handheld electronic device so that software problems, can be totally avoided like a mobile phones as they are easily accessible and are customer friendly. Hand held electronic device will be given to each marginalized rural women with free of cost for usage, learning and practicing the skill-based programme, which she opted for it.

IV. COST ANALYSIS FOR A SKILL-BASED PROGRAMME

The cost can be calculated in designing and developing each skill-based programme as described above using ICT Tools will take an average of 20 modules and each module is of one hour duration. The following shows tentative cost estimate (in Indian rupees) of a single skill-based programme of 20 modules for 500 marginalized rural women:

i.	Low cost Hand held Device (Tablet) for 500 Women (in Rs)	: 3,500 X 500	= 17,50,000
ii.	Domain expertise (Academic) for 20 Modules (in Rs)	: 3000 X 20	= 60,000
iii.	Technical Expertise (ICT Tools) for 20 Modules (in Rs)	: 5000 X 20	= 1,00,000
iv.	Software Tools (in Rs)		= 90,000
v.	Registration, Counseling and Administrative activities (in Rs)	1,00,000	
vi.	Publicity (Print and Electronic) (in Rs)		1,00,000
	One time investment for one skill-based Programme (ii+iii+iv): (in Rs)	2, 50,000	
	Total Cost for one Programme for 500 Women (excluding one-time investment):	19,50,000	
	Total cost per candidate (Woman) = Rs.3, 900		

V. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Wide publicity will be given in selective rural areas in different modes such as pamphlets, print media and electronic media about programme details. Like any other academic programme, registrations will be done for each skill-based programme. A simple application will be designed for collecting basic details such as name, address, educational qualifications, annual income, community, family details, mobile number, adhar number, programme name to register and other such related. All these applications will be scrutinized, based on laid down eligibility criteria and admission will be offered and communicated accordingly along with date of first counseling. The first counseling session will be conducted programme-wise by a designated counselor. The counseling session is on about skill-based programme, learning procedures, practices and details of evaluation of each candidate in terms of eligibility and fit for issuance of certification.

5.1 Funds Resources for Programme Implementation

Since, these skill-based programmes are to be designed, developed and to be implemented for empowerment of marginalized rural women as a social concern, the Central and State Governments, Charity organizations, Educational Institutions have to come forward and contribute the required funds for the social cause, at least for one skill-based programme for 500 marginalized rural women.

VI. CONCLUSION

Skill-based programmes are essentially needed for marginalised rural women for their empowerment as they are deprived in many ways such as poverty, economic and social causes⁵. These programmes definitely facilitate and help such women to empower not only economically, but also bring self confidence, self sustainability, fit for job and finally fit for life. An attempt is made in this paper to achieve empowerment of especially marginalised rural women as a model in form of offering some skill-based programmes to learn, practice at their convenient time with free of cost. The paper focuses on need of such programmes, cost-benefit analysis, programme design, development and implementation strategies along with social concerns of each Institution such as Government agencies, NGO, Academic Institution and Industries. To begin with, the ODL Institutions would come forward to initiate such social cause and provide financial support to start as a pilot project for empowerment of at least 500 marginalised women in neighbouring States of Delhi. This same will also be extended across India, with a financial and operational support of State & Central Governments in India so that the marginalised women in India will get economic and social empowerment and in turn get self sustainability, dignity and finally fit for life. It will also become a part of Digital India initiative of Govt. of India.

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