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Preparing Entrepreneurial Women: A Challenge for Indian Education System

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***Abstract*—**Education, as the most important resource in any country, has multiplying effects on all facets of development in a society. The new social realities, particularly the interplay between democratization of education; unprecedented developments in IT sector; emergence of knowledge society, liberalization of economy and globalization have greatly influenced the educational process of all nations. This turbulence entails upon education to undergo dramatic changes to keep up with the new expectations. Growth of entrepreneurship among Indian women is highly important for empowering them and this is highly essential for socio-economic development of a society. Unfortunately in India there is poor acceptance of entrepreneurship among women as unfounded myths and fears restrain them to be enterprising. To remove these inhibitions, education system needs to be re-engineered to make entrepreneurship more acceptable. This paper empirically analyses the results of a survey done on around 500 female graduates in North India to measure and evaluate various entrepreneurial traits present in them. A formative model has been devised in this context, which should improve the teaching-learning process in our education system, which can lead to sustainable growth of women entrepreneurship in India.

***Keywords*—**Women Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Education System, Women Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Development.

I. Introduction

TODAY, women are fast moving into newer fields to contribute in economic development of a nation. Yet, despite obvious gains, women lag behind men in business ownership and economic independence on every continent [3] Therefore there is an urgent need to convince and motivate women to get exposed to new entrepreneurial trends. The challenges and opportunities of economic liberalization and global market have badly shaken the economies of developing countries [9]. Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change and creation. Vision is to recognize the opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction and confusion [5]. Change and creation involve application of energy and passion towards creating and implementing new ideas and creating solutions [4]. Education has a great role to sensitize women on entrepreneurial prospects but in India, educational institutions have mostly played a passive role, resulting in many myths and fears on entrepreneurship. Survey reports amply indicate the abundant existence of entrepreneurial aptitude among female students but ironically entrepreneurial capability and skills are lacking among them on account of poor inputs on entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial vision is one of the important forces for driving innovations, increasing market efficiencies and responding to challenges and opportunities. Changing needs of employers, away from specialization and towards flexibility and life long learning make a case for change in higher education system. Change needs to be built on sound understanding of factors that affect student learning and Ditcher (2001) [1] too favors problem-based learning in this context.

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II. Researchers' Perspective on Women Entrepreneurship and Education

Entrepreneurship was considered a monopoly of men in developing nations but interest in female entrepreneurship has been increasing all around the world and women are playing an increasingly important role in entrepreneurial activity. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report on 'Women and Entrepreneurship' found that men are twice as likely as women to be engaged in entrepreneurial activity [6]. According to this report fewer women than men know other entrepreneurs and believe they have sufficient skills to run a business. This suggests that men are more confident in their abilities than women and also have better business networks. Therefore the availability of networks and enhancing skills for female entrepreneurs may be very important. Researchers feel that entrepreneurship is more than a mere creation of business and cultural support to entrepreneurship plays a significant role in indigenous entrepreneurship [12]. The characteristics of seeking opportunities, taking risks and having the tenacity to push and idea through to reality combine into a special perspective that permeates every entrepreneur [2].

Entrepreneurial education has become one of the hottest topics at US business and engineering schools, where number of schools teaching entrepreneurial courses has grown from a few as two dozen 20 years ago to more than 1600 at this time [10]. Time has descended for India to wake up and replant the education system to create a better entrepreneurial environment. Indians must follow the US strategy as the entrepreneurial spirit is universal, judging by the enormous growth of interest in entrepreneurship around the world in the past few years [7]. Education is the most important resource in any country and India has the second largest network of higher education in the world [11]. She has about 350 universities level institutions and 15,000 colleges catering to about 10 million regular and full time students and more than two million candidates who are studying through distance and open learning courses. Of these graduates, females alone

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constitute around thirty eight percent. Since, education has multiplying effects on all the facets of development in a society, so among various educational resources; higher education among women holds the key to economic viability of a nation like India where social awakening of women has a direct bearing on national development. India has formally recognized the importance of higher education, especially education on science and technology and committed itself to the development of skilled and technical manpower. As per government statistics in India, more than one million female graduates are passing out every year and hardly five percent of them get immediate employment in public/private sectors. Government must perceive this vast unemployment as an alarming waste of talent, knowledge, skills and "youthful" passion.

India has had a glorious past in the field of education and has produced world known scholars, writers and scientists. Presently too, the country is emerging as an educational hub and is attracting scores of students from other parts of the world. The country has a vast and rich network of higher educational institutes and during the last decade, the growth in number of these institutes has been almost exponential. The government policies have also been highly favorable and aim to create a qualified workforce on a massive scale. All these expansions and changes in the education sector have somehow overlooked to imbibe the concept of quality on a scale proportional to that of quantitative expansion. Literature review also reflects the growing concern of educationists and researchers on lack of strategic planning on quality issues to improve sustainability. With this in mind, the present work has attempted to explore some issues for education system in India to improve the level of entrepreneurship among women. After an extensive literature review and intense discussions with academicians, surveys were conducted over sixty institutes, hypotheses were set and findings were analyzed using different tools.

III. Entrepreneurial Traits among Indian Women: A Case Study

The women entrepreneurs in today's dynamic society should be opportunistic, money grabbing, aggressive and autocratic [4] and they must imbibe skills of invention, innovation and incubation [8]. They should conceive an industrial enterprise for a purpose and then display considerable initiative, grit and determination in bringing the project into function and during this process, perform different operations to run unit from conceptualization to operational stage. Entrepreneurship Development Institute, Ahmedabad (India) has identified essential qualities of a women entrepreneur as: desire to achieve, perseverance, moderate risks taking, ability to find and explore opportunity, analytical ability, ability to face uncertainty, urge for independence, flexibility, planning skills, motivation, positive self concept and future orientation. Based upon the literature survey and various thoughts of researchers on entrepreneurship, in the case study 'Entrepreneurship' among women has been perceived to be consisting of three basic components: Entrepreneurial Inclination (acceptability); Entrepreneurial Aptitude (adaptability) and Entrepreneurial Capability (sustainability).

a) Entrepreneurial inclination involves an inborn urge to go in for entrepreneurship, without considering any future constraints for the time being. Without a positive inclination, one can never accept an entrepreneurial culture despite the presence of all favorable factors.
b) Entrepreneurial aptitude involves the presence of important behavioral traits, which are essential to adapt to entrepreneurial culture. These traits are also inborn, but even can get inculcated with inputs like education and counseling.

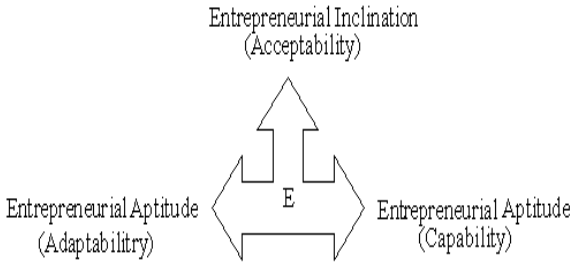


Fig. 1 'Entrepreneurism' (E) Components

c) Entrepreneurial capability involves the existence of 'fighting' skills, which are important for sustaining an entrepreneurial venture. These skills are a direct outcome of inputs like education and counseling.

To assess the presence of these entrepreneurial traits among women, a survey was conducted, for two consecutive years (2011-2012) amongst five hundred final year and pre-final year female students. These girls represented major states of North India like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Professional institutes like medical and engineering colleges have not been included since students of these institutes represent a significant deviation from the characteristics of general population. Questionnaire was given to assess entrepreneurial inclination, aptitude and capability of female students wanting to be entrepreneurs. Myths and fears among them for not wanting to be entrepreneurs were also analyzed. Questionnaire was got responded on personal levels and this ensured 100 percent response rate and a considerable saving in time and other resources. Responses were collected on a linear scale of 1 to 5 for calculating mean values and then values were calculated on percentile basis for simple projection of results.

IV. Survey Inferences

1) There is a serious lack of entrepreneurial inclination among female graduates as almost 68% of them do not want to set up their own industries. Apart from poor educational inputs; cultural differences in upbringing and social constraints are also responsible for this lack of interest.

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TABLE I
EXTENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL APTITUDE

Attributes of Entrepreneurial Aptitude	Total Value	
	*Mean	Percent
Need for Achievement	3.48	69.6
Urge for Independence	3.42	68.4
Perseverance	2.65	53.0
Motivational Power	2.56	51.2
Opportunistic	2.40	48.0
Total	3.00	60.0

(*Mean calculated on a scale of 1-5)

2) The presence of entrepreneurial aptitude among the women graduates is also not encouraging (refer Table I). The attributes of 'Need for Achievement' and 'Urge for Independence' show maximum presence (around 70 percent) followed by 'Perseverance', 'Motivational Power' and 'Being Opportunistic'. These students specifically lack the ability to work harder (53.0 percent) and find them to be failing in being opportunistic. Perhaps this is due to lack of motivation and encouragement from the society for the women in their quest for independence.

TABLE II
EXTENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPABILITY

Attributes of Entrepreneurial Capability	Total Value	
	*Mean	Percent
Problem Solving Skills	2.67	53.4
Awareness on Rules & Legalities	2.34	46.8
Ability to Raise Funds	2.06	41.2
Marketing Management Skills	2.34	46.8
Human Resource Management	3.42	68.4
Total	2.57	51.3

(*Mean calculated on a scale of 1-5)

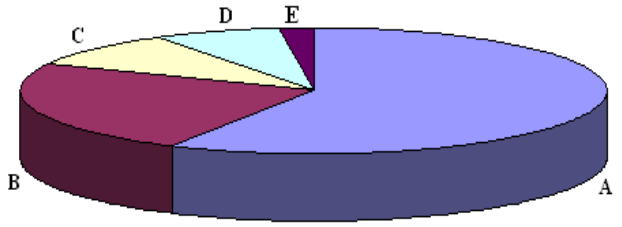


Fig. 2 First option for type of enterprise A – 58% Fashion Designing B - 24% Food Processing C - 9% Agro Based D - 7% Small Consumables E - 2% Others

3) Similar to entrepreneurial inclination and aptitude, entrepreneurial capability is also lacking among all the female students (51.3 percent) (refer Table II). They are poorly endowed with skills like ability to collect funds and marketing management. Awareness on rules and legalities regarding enterprise management is extremely poor. Students lack confidence on human resource management as well as problem solving skills.
4) Among 37% women graduates wanting to be entrepreneurs, enterprises on fashion designing and crafts are most popular (58%) followed by food processing units (24%), followed by agro based units (9%) and then consumable items (7%) and other (2%) (Refer Fig. 2).
5) Most prevalent myths and fears on entrepreneurship among the female graduates were analysed on a scale and these were lack of funds (26%), lack of guidance (11%), involvement of tension (14%), lack of confidence (14%), lack of information (12%), lack of experience (10%) and lack of risk taking capacity (13%) (Refer Fig. 3).

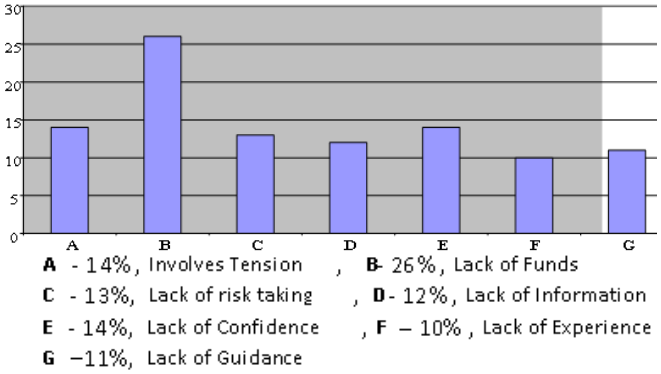


Fig. 3 Myths & Fears on Entrepreneurship

V. REMEDIAL ANALYSIS

Educational institutions have a crucial role to play as inputs by faculty not only include knowledge enhancement, these also include skill enhancement and increasing entrepreneurial awareness. Some of the suggested remedial measures by the institutions are:

a) Development of academic curriculum on entrepreneurship and its compulsory introduction as a subject for all girls at the graduation levels studies in all non-technical degree colleges.
b) Opening of "Entrepreneurship Development Cells" (EDCs) in all these colleges for making students aware on various aspects of entrepreneurship.
c) Continuous "Opportunity Guidance" in emerging areas like software project management, incubation centers, bio-technology, cluster promotion, technology management etc.
d) Regular information on schemes on finances for budding entrepreneurs through lectures by banking and financial institutions.
e) Regular information on government and institutional support for enterprising ventures.
f) Regular counseling of girls; identification of their inherent skills and career guidance by experts/psychologists/trainers.
g) Capacity building of faculty members in behavioral inputs to develop and promote entrepreneurship.
h) Organization of seminars/workshops for the girl students on cottage industries, food processing, crafts, fashion designing, cosmetics, computer skills etc.

In regular arts and science degree courses, girls seldom get a chance for aptitude identification and skill development. Though in recent times, several vocational courses are being

introduced in the degree colleges but objectives are rarely achieved. The ten strategic steps suggested above, if adopted, would surely help the education system in India to produce talented, innovative and vibrant women entrepreneurs, who shall lead the nation to prosperity in 21st century with full confidence. If national development is treated as a social movement, then the role of women must be glorified, as they have always been full of energy, innovation, aptitude and skills. In our male dominated society, women must be prepared to shed their inhibitions and to follow the path of self-dependence and perseverance. For this educated and skilled women must take the lead and adopt entrepreneurial ventures for sustainable development of the nation.

VI. Conclusions

If India is to become a developed country in the fullest sense of the term in the shortest possible time, her development has to be linked with the emancipation of women. Her economic planners have failed to attain the vital objectives of development and sustained productive employment. In this scenario, the role of women is no less important since they constitute a vital part of the work force. Women, all over the country, ought to realize their potential skills, abilities and aptitudes. The levels of inclination, aptitudes and capabilities on entrepreneurship are severely lacking among the female graduates which has been indicated by survey findings over north India. Entrepreneurship must be inculcated in them to exploit their innovation, creativity and energetic spirit. For sustainable development of India, women emancipation must precede all our efforts to strengthen the societal fabric at large. The existing policies, programmes and practices of the education system need to be re-engineered to prepare masses to cope with the dynamism of present competitive age. Since women are the creators of tomorrow's world-class achievers and nation builders, they must be made enterprising themselves, so as to create a positive environment in the society. Literacy level among women is astonishingly low in the country and employment level is still lower among the literate women. This has seriously restrained women from making a direct contribution to the productivity of the nation.

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