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S. John Kaviarasu
Assistant Professor, School of
Human Excellence, Loyola
College (Autonomous),
Chennai, India

P.Jai Prakash
Assistant Professor,
Department of Service
Learning, Loyola College
(Autonomous), Chennai, India

J.Antony Anbarasan
Assistant Professor,
Department of Service
Learning, Loyola College
(Autonomous), Chennai, India

Correspondence:
S. John Kaviarasu
Assistant Professor, School of
Human Excellence, Loyola
College (Autonomous),
Chennai, India

Promotion of Entrepreneurship from the Slums of Chennai City through Service Learning Department of Loyola College, Chennai

S. John Kaviarasu, P.Jai Prakash, J.Antony Anbarasan

Abstract

The interdepartmental approach in every institution is to be the key element of synchronization of ideas which help the institutions to reach out to the outside world. The students are to be exposed by the respective departments to interact with other departments and this fruitful interaction should give an idea for them to identify the possibilities to network and avail the resources internally for the benefit of students and the community. Students can also be made to approach the private companies and government organizations to pool out their resources as way of starting public-private partnership to largely benefit the society. In this way, the concept of land to the lab and lab to the land could be exercised. Institution can emphasize this as one of its goals and this should be focused on the academic restructuring of the syllabus. This article gives the concept note of networking with other departments to understand the possibilities of the strengths and weakness. This approach could help the departments bridge the gap of their weakness and strengthen their existing best practices and available talents.

As a social concern and social significance, students of commerce, for example, while studying the degree to make their prospective future can explore and pool out the resources for promoting the women to become women entrepreneurs from the poor communities; specifically from the slum. Initially students can help the women to start with a small business like saree selling, flower selling, vegetable vending, running tiffin shops, stitching clothes through tailoring shops, selling soups and they could gradually help women to extend and also strengthen their business / entrepreneurship.

The women entrepreneurs are to be trained enough by the institution in such a way that this would give a chance for the unskilled women in the slums and villages to develop their confidence in order to sustain their business and to become a successful entrepreneur with the support of educational institutions. This article concludes that outcome of such interaction and synchronization should at least help widows and deserted women to become successful entrepreneurs in a small way in their localities. This good initiative, if taken seriously and implemented by educational institutions, the poor women will gain social respect and lead a dignified life and have a strong footing in their life. For example, students of commerce in networking with outreach department can help financially at the end including the marketing skills to create victorious women entrepreneur in the neighborhood community.

Keywords: Interdepartmental approach, synchronization, public-private partnership, social concern, social significance, women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship, unskilled women, educational institutions, marketing skills, neighbourhood community, networking, outreach department

Introduction

In the present globalized world, the Indian women are no longer treated as show pieces in the family life. They are even enjoying the impact of globalization and making an influence not only on domestic but also on international sphere. Women are doing a wonderful job in striking a balance between their house and career. Women Entrepreneurs may be defined as a woman or a group of women who initiate, organize, cooperate and execute a business enterprise. Government of India has defined women entrepreneur as “an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of employment generated in the enterprise to women”.

Women in our society can really make a difference if they work hard to achieve their dream. Perseverance, I believe, is the key to success and to win in this male dominated society. Half of the women populations have been subjected to various kinds of harassment. Traditional society looked at women as a prey and tempter and therefore were secluded and excluded and their involvement in social enterprise is considered to be a social stigma. The society has been very harsh towards women particularly widows who lost their husbands and live without re-marriage. They are being subjected to ill-treatment, insult, molestation and the cruelty inflicted upon widows is a common phenomenon in the present day scenario.

Having overcome the controversial situations, today, Indian women have ventured out into various fields and achieved success to a greater extent. The Indian women entrepreneurs are making their presence felt globally. They are not only successful entrepreneurs, but are doing a wonderful job at striking a balance between their home and career.

Women who are below the poverty line, living in the slum community can also become small entrepreneurs. The Government is supporting them for their sustainable development. In cities like Chennai, earlier where the SHG concept was new and where most trainees started business as individuals rather than in groups, the banks were apprehensive about repayments. They are wary about the program itself. Even among those women, many of them who started business have folded up because they could not sustain their shops without loans. Even though the government provides enough funds and training to start small business, they could not succeed or sustain in their business. In this situation, the students who are pursuing management studies, commerce, economics and social work can play very crucial and pertinent role to assist the women entrepreneur to succeed in their business primarily due to lack of adequate skills, right motivation and entrepreneurial development follow-up.

Intervention by students for promoting women as entrepreneurs

By undertaking a mini-research in the neighborhood areas with the support of the institutions in all possible ways, every educational institution can adopt a neighborhood slum community / a deserving village where the prospective stakeholders who could be ventured in to small business could be identified.

Students of every institution with the guidance of their professors could play an active role by mobilizing resources and helping them become entrepreneurs in their locality. By doing so, students are enabled to put into practice theatrical studies of their core subjects. This is called as lab to the land and this would pave the way for the students to become socially responsible citizens. If this procedure is adopted with the input facilitation of the concerned departments and students, it would lead to a definite success of women entrepreneurs. The students could review, guide, and show the way for technical know-how for the smooth functioning of their enterprise, thereby they would be able to get a decent income and also they would be empowered to have a strong footing in their lives. If this kind of support continues every year, the institution could stand as a witness in making a successful women

entrepreneur in the vicinity. This could be one of the agendas of an educational institution in creating ripple effects in the lives of women.

The departments like commerce and Service Learning; formerly known as "outreach" could very well play a pivotal role to empower the women by channelizing women's potential and skills to start entrepreneurship by utilizing the state and central government's support.

Amongst the economically poor women in India, there is a good percentage of women who are widows or are deserted. They could be given the top priority for the sustainable growth in their enterprise. These target groups are the most deserving people due to the economical backwardness, social deprivation, lack of family support and un-employability.

After the death or desertion by their husband, there is a drastic reduction in the family income. Therefore these women are forced to go out to seek employment for their livelihood and running the family as well. In the face of mounting unemployment in the society and stiff competitions, widows find it difficult to get a job. The widows are not able to compete for a job on a competitive basis in the present day because a vast chunk of widows have had no formal training or education to be eligible for a job. By chance, some of the widows and deserted women who had received some kind of the education or training, we find that they are inadequately equipped for a job by the existing standards. In such a situation, naturally they face lot of problems, issues and tribulations in getting some kind of job that fetch regular income to meet their day-to-day needs. They may lack education and professional skills, and therefore they lack confidence of surviving in society, economically alone. Finally they are pushed to the fact of taking up some odd jobs available to them in order to provide the concern for the welfare of their children and elders in the family. To earn required money for the fulfillments of their basic needs and in the time of distress, they often engage in self-employment available to them. For this they go to the extent of selling or mortgaging their assets in distress or else sending their children to work, or even involve in undignified appeasement of those who can help them. Most of them finally land themselves in self-employment, instead of going unskilled works. In such a situation, the educational institutions can play a vital, strengthening and supporting role to empower widows and deserted women of urban/rural areas. In such a distressed situation, the educational institution could step in adopting either the neighborhood slum community or a rural place and identify the widows and deserted women by utilizing the students' skills and involvement for the development of targeted group.

Moreover, they can also identify deserving women for training them to acquire the skills and other activities they are interested in. All these could be done by students who are pursuing their management studies, commerce, social work and other disciplines in providing the necessary skills for them to involve in entrepreneurship through their outreach activities.

There are government schemes and programs for the development of poor women. The students could identify and create awareness of these programs and the procedures to be adopted to mobilize for starting small business.

With the guidance of outreach professors, students can even identify the unskilled widows and deserted women

who are enthusiastic to start self-employment and give them training with the collaboration of NGOs and Government to succeed in their business and avail their grants with subsidy for them to take up entrepreneurship.

If possible, the economically better off students could also come forward to experiment the entrepreneurship to the group of women with their own support or mobilizing the money from the corporate.

The grant mobilized by the students in this regard could be utilized as a revolving fund in the institution so that it can be funded to other poor woman who is willing to start or strengthen their small business.

On a sustainable basis year after year, the students can assist, follow and motivate them to sustain their business. The department of Outreach could do a follow up and monitor their development.

Impact of Widow Entrepreneur

With the facilitation provided by the students with the guidance of professors from the respective departments and Outreach department, the widows could be empowered of their economic status through small business and earn sufficiently and decently for the fulfillment of their family's requirements.

The targeted group of women will get empowered with a management of their small business in the following ways.

1. Gaining an awareness on the various types of small enterprise
2. Technical know-how and implications to be followed
3. Given due to respect by the members of their family and society
4. Developing the confidence to venture in to newer areas of small enterprises.
5. Especially the young widow entrepreneurs can provide good education to their children.

Impact of the Students

1. Students will gain hands on experience of initiating and organizing small enterprises for the women to start.
2. Development of personal and social skills
3. Development of leadership skills
4. Development of networking skills with the government institution and private organization
5. The skills to mobilize financial resources for the entrepreneurial development of women.

This will ultimately give a personal satisfaction of the students for having achieved a tangible role towards women entrepreneurship.

Impact of the Institution

1. The institution can become a role model for all other institutions in social service activities.
2. Through outreach activities the institution can create corporate social responsibilities among students.
3. Various outreach activities have demonstrated that institution has more responsibility in increasing the economic and social development of the people of downtrodden community.
4. The institution can even get funds from the University Grants Commission by writing projects on empowerment of the women and utilize it for assisting more women entrepreneurs in a wide range.

Conclusion

Women have definitely proved their mettle in this male-dominated world. As far as Indian women are concerned, not only have they cut away from the typical housewife stereotype, but they also have managed to come out shining dynamically in the business world. In the same way, women entrepreneur from the marginalized sector have also become a successful entrepreneur by the assistance rendered by the Government, NGOs and Educational institutions.

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