# Empowerment of women through digital literacy strategies - new challenges

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***Abstract:*** *This paper explores the strategies towards empowerment of women through digital literacy schemes. This article explores the need based policy formulation towards all inclusive digital literacy policy. It is the digital literacy revolution. Technology today is significantly different from what it was yesterday. Digital literacy is needed for women to enable them to have right access to education , right access to employment and right access to equitable resources. Besides this empowers them with right decision making power , to fight against societal discrimination , This supports them to live in a violence free domestic environment with sustainable future. India may have crossed 1 billion mobile subscriptions mark in 2016- 7, but they are not unique users and only indicate the number of SIM cards sold. While access to mobile phones in rural areas is rising, the gadget availability and network connectivity is still very dismal.*
***Keywords:*** *empowerment of women , Digital literacy, strategies, challenges*

## I.    Introduction

Digital revolution has made technology an art of adapting & knitting pieces together evaluating possible strategies & understanding requirements & limitations of functionality outcomes, It is reported by GSMA 2015 that nearly 72% of the women do not have access to mobile phones , only 8% of the women have access to Internet in Urban areas while it is 12 % in rural India .National policy for the empowerment of women 2001 has enjoyment of common rights including

1.   Access to education
2.   Access to employment
3.   Decision making power
4.   Exposure to media
5.   Violence free domestic environment

There is a need to create awareness on following skills women need in this digital world
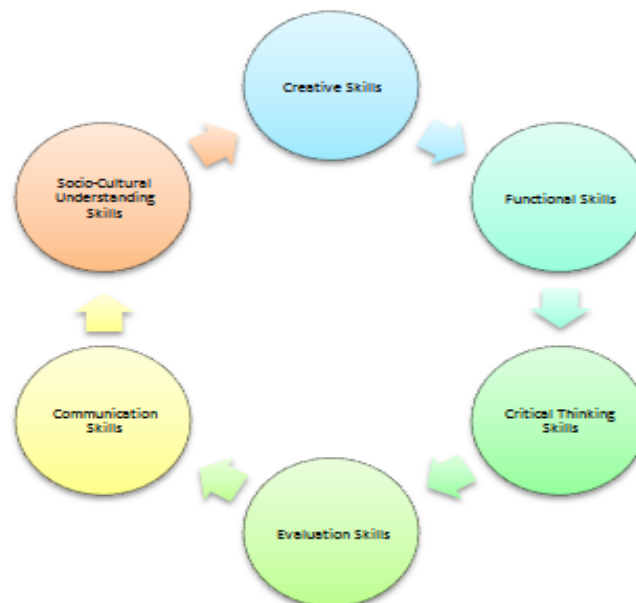


India has the largest number of face book users numbering 195 million users leaving behind US . The following is the list of countries accessing this social media

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | India |
| 2 | US |
| 3 | Brazil |
| 4 | UK |
| 5 | Germany |

**Source:  Report of the IAMAI 2015**

Indian usage of face book is increasing as every person visits his face book at least thrice a day at the minimum. The population within the age bracket of 18-24 are users of  face book This age bracket is the fastest growing population in India  That traction towards face book is increasing as this is available for them in 12 languages . As the following table shows

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | men face book users | 76% |
| 2 | women face book users | 24% |

**Source :  Report of the IAMAI 2015**

This shows that women face challenges towards access to technology & information skills.
**Need for awareness creation**- There is a necessity to extend digital literacy support to women through access packages including

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. | Training on digital literacy |
| 2. | Simplified learning sessions for illiterate women |
| 3. | Comfortable tutoring about digital usage |
| 4. | User friendly environment creation |
| 5. | Easy applications for easier handling |

In India , it is estimated that nearly 300 million people do not have access to electricity which is the main drawback for using internet or any digital gadget. The infrastructural development policy of the  state governments need to prioritize on augmenting budget allocation for creation of innovative  energy solutions.
**Considerations -** the success of any program depends on reach out levels. India has large number of illiterate population and larger number of population without any access to usage of phones. Hence there is a need to address these problems through planned strategies including-
1.   establishing a corporate alliance towards coordination of programs for promotion of gender equality
2.   ensuring health safety and addressing barriers towards removal of barriers towards accessing health care
3.    promotion of equality and creating awareness on human rights, child rights ,labor rights,
4.    measures of achieving gender equality through curriculum content development. This would serve to create responsiveness among children through education.
5.    India government initiatives are good but the

Thus digital literacy  enhances the abilities of the  women in particular and community in general to use digital technologies for meaningful actions within challenging life situations. Digitally literate women can operate computer related devices and help them in the process of nation building. But a key factor that is hindering the growth of a digital India  is the shortage of  skilled work force this can be filled by women. Thus an integrated approach  between  digital India  and skill India  needs to be constructed to design programmes and impart training  The role of   private sector  is very important. They have to be incentivized to develop infrastructure provide services and promote digital literacy as  part of the digital India program.
Women empowerment debates revolve around her  enriching her ability towards equitable access to decent living.  Closing the gender gaps of internet access and technological  empowerment is a very important issue in national progress. Women use internet fir very less while the use by men is more thus there is a gender gap in internet usage which is hindering the  empowerment strategies. Finding critical information participation in community issue s, participation in local affairs  finding income generation  etc has been halted  and this directly influences the  women empowerment strategies.
Government of India  need to  make  the average cost of  broadband connectivity Globally women earn 25% of the average earn less high internet prices discriminate disproportionately against women.
Giving educational on digital skills  about   women rights women.    They need digital literacy training and internet access in public schools.
Some time internet content  is not women friendly  because the native language content is very less. Financial   services relating to  internet connection  and access to mobile services making them
Internet   crimes are also increasing  Cyber regulations have to be made very effective to protect women  from cyber  crime.  74%  of the countries were not doing enough regulations Legislation  to protect the privacy of data and communications is also still lacking across many countries.  There is  a need  create  a safe space for

women true potentialities of women have to be untapped. The bulk of the policy interventions focus on improving access to internet services by upgrading spectrum and broadband infrastructure and bringing down the costs to individual users in addition to facilitating the uptake of digital technologies through programs which include skill training , orientation and session of awareness of digital usage

1. bringing down the cost for individual users
2. enahncing free awareness sessions
3. focusing on rural women
4. simplifying technology
5. universalization of internet connectivity

Digital divide and gender gaps in internet accessibility is a key factor in augmenting economic resources for national progression. A nation can manage to reflect positive progress only when the gender gaps are very less or comparatively negligible.

The Societal setup in rural India differs from Urban India and social cultural restrictions on women following their gender limitations are very much discernible. The Indian social value system do not allow women to share resources as with male counterparts.

There are about 2,50,000 panchayats in India encompassing some 6,50,000 villages and almost all of them are not connected to the internet. Neither are majority of 1.4 million government schools, 7-10 million teachers and several millions of children, as per official figures. There are millions of people who are denied of their rights and entitlements because of a corrupt administrative, financial and governance system. Their illiteracy, lack of information and inability to question the authorities become their biggest enemies. In such as a scenario, knowledge of the computers and access to the internet could help them come out of information darkness and access their rights, without the role of a middleman. Another key factor that hinders the growth of a digital India is the shortage of skilled workforce. Only an estimated 2.3% of India workforce has undergone formal skill training, which is significantly lower than the world average of 50% among developed nations.

Thus the gender gaps in internet usage can be filled by augmenting basic educational resources for women specially in rural areas. Women have to be motivated to continue their education at least up to secondary level in these areas to match up with males literacy points. The school dropout ratio needs to be focused with strong education policy. The patriarchal restriction have to eased out with awareness and community support. Women need awareness on equality, social dignity and women rights. Women access to public places including government offices , cooperative societies, banks , schools , public offices, etc are very restricted , hence her community have to support her towards empowering them with responsiveness on equal rights of women.

Digital literacy has been hailed as a forceful catalyst for gender equality and promotion of women empowerment These strategies have to become the national development agenda of all the political parties. gearing up Civic education computer assisted awareness classes , simplifying usage options, digital literacy campaigns enhancing political participation of women help women digitally. Corporate tie ups need to endeavor towards promotion of women entrepreneurship gender budgeting. As it is a proven fact that digital literacy reduces workplace inequality it is a welcome programs for Indian women as well.

**References**