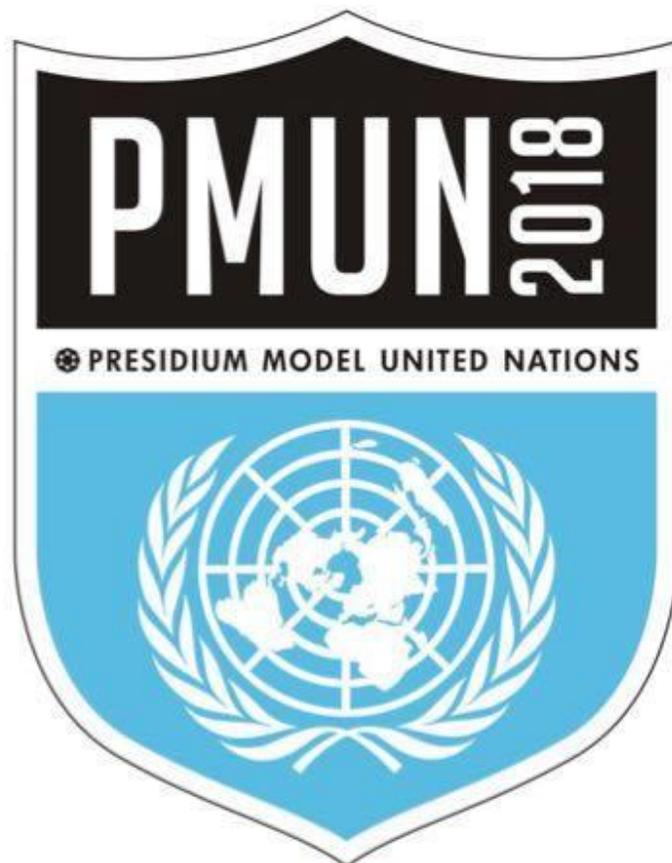


PRESIDIUM MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE 2018

“Changing nature of gender roles in society with emphasis on empowerment through education”



**PRESIDIUM *for*
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

CITIZENS' DIALOGUE (CD)
TOPIC STUDY GUIDE PREPARED FOR PMUN 2018

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“Changing nature of gender roles in society with emphasis on empowerment through education”

Letter from Moderator and Deputy Moderator

India is fast developing in a super power but there still exists a distinction between the two genders. More than 90% of the households are still managed by women because traditionally looking after home is an activity associated with women. This is just one example of how gender roles are still prevalent in our society. In India if we truly want to ensure inclusive growth it is very essential that the women of our country are empowered.

Empowerment does not mean giving an edge to one over another. It means bringing both on an equal platform. Education is one of the most powerful tools which can be used as a catalyst for empowerment. Education opens your mind, makes you question age old tradition and allows you to broaden your horizons.

In India to increase the primary education The Central Government enacted Right to Education Act which has helped in increasing literacy among all sections of society.

India can become a global power only if its women are empowered and the first step towards empowerment is safety. If the women feel safe then only they can be empowered realising this the Central Government has amended existing laws and enacted new laws which aim at increasing the safety of women at public places and workplaces.

The mindset of people in regards of attributing certain jobs to one particular gender can only be changed through education.

Regards

Vansh Saluja

Moderator

Ishan Kapoor

Deputy Moderator

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“You educate a man you educate a man, You educate a woman you educate a generation”

Brigham Young

Introduction to Gender Role

A gender role, also known as a sex role, is a social role encompassing a range of behaviours and attitudes that are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their actual or perceived sex or sexuality. Gender roles are usually centred on conceptions of femininity and masculinity, although there are exceptions and variations. The specifics regarding these gendered expectations may vary substantially among cultures, while other characteristics may be common throughout a range of cultures. There is ongoing debate as to what extent gender roles and their variations are biologically determined, and to what extent they are socially constructed

Various groups, most notably the feminist movement, have led efforts to change aspects of prevailing gender roles that they believe are oppressive or inaccurate.

The term *gender role* was first coined by John Money in 1955, during the course of his study of intersex individuals, to describe the manners in which these individuals expressed their status as a male or female in a situation where no clear biological assignment existed.

Gender roles are cultural and personal. They determine how males and females should think, speak, dress, and interact within the context of society. Learning plays a role in this process of shaping gender roles. These gender schemas are deeply embedded cognitive frameworks regarding what defines masculine and feminine. While various socializing agents—parents, teachers, peers, movies, television, music, books, and religion—teach and reinforce gender roles throughout the lifespan, parents probably exert the greatest influence, especially on their very young offspring. As mentioned previously, sociologists know that adults perceive and treat female and male infants differently. Parents probably do this in response to their having been recipients of gender expectations as young children. Traditionally, fathers teach boys how to fix and build things; mothers teach girls how to cook, sew, and keep house. Children then receive parental approval when they conform to gender expectations and adopt culturally accepted and conventional roles. All of this is reinforced by additional socializing agents, such as the media. In other words, learning gender roles always occurs within a social context, the values of the parents and society being passed along to the children of successive generations.

Gender roles adopted during childhood normally continue into adulthood. At home, people have certain presumptions about decision-making, child-rearing practices, financial responsibilities, and so forth. At work, people also have presumptions about power, the division of labour, and

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organizational structures. None of this is meant to imply that gender roles, in and of themselves, are good or bad; they merely exist. Gender roles are realities in almost everyone's life.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines gender roles as "socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women". Debate continues as to what extent gender and gender roles are socially constructed (i.e. non-biologically influenced), and to what extent "socially constructed" may be considered synonymous with "arbitrary" or "malleable". Therefore, a concise authoritative definition of gender roles or gender itself is elusive.

In the sociology of gender, the process whereby an individual learns and acquires a gender role in society is termed *gender socialization*.

Some systems of classification, unlike WHO's, are non-binary or genderqueer, allowing for more than two possible gender classifications. Gender roles are culturally specific, and while some cultures distinguish only two (boy and girl or man and woman), others recognize more. Androgyny, for example, has been proposed as a third gender. Androgynous is simply a person with qualities pertaining to both the male and female gender. Other societies have claimed to identify more than five genders, and some non-Western societies have three genders – man, woman, and third gender. Some individuals (not necessarily being from such a culture) identify with no gender at all.

Many transgender people reject the idea that they are a separate third gender, and identify simply as men or women. However, biological differences between (some) trans women and cisgender women have historically been treated as relevant in certain contexts, such as sport.

Gender role, which refers to the cultural expectations as understood by gender classification, is not the same thing as gender identity, which refers to the internal sense of one's own gender, whether or not it aligns with categories offered by societal norms. The point at which these internalized gender identities become externalized into a set of expectations is the genesis of a gender role.

Women were not granted the right to vote in many parts of the world until the 19th or 20th centuries, and some women were not granted a vote well into the 21st century. Women throughout the world, in many ways, do not enjoy full freedom and protection under the law (see women's rights). Due to the prevailing perception of men as primarily breadwinners, they are seldom afforded the benefit of paternity leave.

However, for some individuals gender roles may provide a positive effect, and their absence may prove difficult: while gender roles may be used as deleterious gender stereotypes, they can offer a clear avenue to verify and structure socially acceptable behaviour. Additionally, fulfilling one's prescribed gender roles has been correlated with increased self-esteem, and vice versa.

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Gender Role Theories

Some theories which are collectively termed social construction theories – claim that gender behaviour is mostly due to social conventions, although opposing theories disagree, such as theories in evolutionary psychology.

Most children learn to categorize themselves by gender by the age of three. From birth, in the course of gender socialization, children learn gender stereotypes and roles from their parents and environment. In a traditional view, males learn to manipulate their physical and social environment through physical strength or dexterity, while girls learn to present themselves as objects to be viewed. Social constructionists state, for example, that gender-segregated children's activities create the appearance that gender differences in behaviour reflect an essential nature of male and female behaviour.

As an aspect of role theory, gender role theory "treats these differing distributions of women and men into roles as the primary origin of sex-differentiated social behaviour, their impact on behaviour is mediated by psychological and social processes." According to Gilbert Herdt, gender roles arose from correspondent inference, meaning that general labour division was extended to gender roles.

Socially constructed gender roles are considered to be hierarchical, and are characterized as a male-advantaged gender hierarchy by social constructionists. The term patriarchy, according to researcher Andrew Cherlin, defines "a social order based on the domination of women by men, especially in agricultural societies".

According to Eagly et al, the consequences of gender roles and stereotypes are sex-typed social behaviour because roles and stereotypes are both socially shared descriptive norms and prescriptive norms.

Judith Butler, in works such as Gender Trouble and Undoing Gender, contends that being female is not "natural" and that it appears natural only through repeated performances of gender; these performances in turn, reproduce and define the traditional categories of sex and/or gender.

Talcott Parsons

Working in the United States, Talcott Parsons developed a model of the nuclear family in 1955, which at that place and time was the prevalent family structure. It compared a strictly traditional view of gender roles (from an industrial-age American perspective) with a more liberal view. The Parsons model was used to contrast and illustrate extreme positions on gender roles.

Model A describes total separation of male and female roles, while Model B describes the complete dissolution of gender roles. (The examples are based on the context of the culture and infrastructure of the United States.)

| | | |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | Model A – Total role segregation | Model B – Total integration of roles |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

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| | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| <u>Education</u> | Gender-specific education; high professional qualification is important only for the man | Co-educative schools, same content of classes for girls and boys, same qualification for men and women. |
| <u>Profession</u> | The workplace is not the primary area of women; career and professional advancement is deemed unimportant for women | For women, career is just as important as for men; equal professional opportunities for men and women are necessary. |
| Housework | Housekeeping and child care are the primary functions of the woman; participation of the man in these functions is only partially wanted. | All housework is done by both parties to the marriage in equal shares. |
| <u>Decision making</u> | In case of conflict, man has the last say, for example in choosing the place to live, choice of school for children, buying decisions | Neither partner dominates; solutions do not always follow the principle of finding a concerted decision; <u>status quo</u> is maintained if disagreement occurs. |
| Child care and education | Woman takes care of the largest part of these functions; she educates children and cares for them in every way | Man and woman share these functions equally. |

However, these structured positions become less a liberal-individualist society, and the actual behaviour of individuals is usually somewhere between these poles. According to the interactionist approach, roles (including gender roles) are not fixed but are constantly negotiated between individuals. In North America and southern South America, this is the most common approach among families whose business is agriculture.

Gender roles can influence all kinds of behaviours, such as choice of clothing, choice of work and personal relationships, e.g., parental status (See also Sociology of fatherhood).

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch researcher and social psychologist who dedicated himself to the study of culture, sees culture as "broad patterns of thinking, feeling and acting" in a society In Hofstede's view, masculinity and femininity differ in the social roles that are associated with the biological

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fact of the existence of the two sexes: masculinity and femininity refer to the dominant sex role pattern in the vast majority of both traditional and modern societies, males being more assertive and females more nurturing.

Femininity creates a society of overlapping gender roles, where "both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life."

Masculinity creates a society of clearly distinct gender roles, where men should "be assertive, tough, and focused on material success," while women should "be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life."

Hofstede's *Feminine and Masculine Culture Dimensions* states:

Masculine cultures expect men to be assertive, ambitious and competitive, to strive for material success, and to respect whatever is big, strong, and fast. Masculine cultures expect women to serve and care for the non-material quality of life, for children and for the weak. Feminine cultures, on the other hand, define relatively overlapping social roles for the sexes, in which, in particular, men need not be ambitious or competitive but may go for a different quality of life than material success; men may respect whatever is small, weak, and slow.

In feminine cultures, modesty and relationships are important characteristics. This differs from in masculine cultures, where self-enhancement leads to self-esteem. Masculine cultures are individualistic, and feminine cultures are more collective because of the significance of personal relationships.

'The dominant values in a masculine society are achievement and success; the dominant values in a feminine society are caring for others and quality of life'.

Albert Ellis

In the 1940s, Albert Ellis studied eighty-four cases of mixed births and concluded that 'while the power of the human sex drive may possibly be largely dependent on physiological factors... the direction of this drive does not seem to be directly dependent on constitutional element'. In the development of masculinity, femininity, and inclinations towards homosexuality or heterosexuality, nurture matters a great deal more than nature.

John Money

"In the 1950s, John Money, along with colleagues took up the study of intersex individuals, who, Money realized 'would provide invaluable material for the comparative study for bodily form and physiology, rearing, and psychosexual orientation'. Money and his colleagues used their own studies to state in the extreme what these days seems extraordinary for its complete denial of the notion of natural inclination."

They concluded that gonads, hormones, and chromosomes did not automatically determine a child's gender role. Among the many terms he coined was *gender role* which he defined in a seminal 1955 paper as "all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman.

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In recent years, the majority of Money's theories regarding the importance of socialization in the determination of gender have come under intense criticism, especially in connection with the false reporting of success in the "John/Joan" case, later revealed to be David Reimer.

Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman

West and Zimmerman developed an interactionist perspective on gender beyond its construction as "roles." For them, gender is "the product of social doings of some sort...undertaken by men and women whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production". They argue that the use of "role" to describe gender expectations conceals the production of gender through everyday activities. Furthermore, roles are situated identities, such as "nurse" and "student," developed as the situation demands while gender is a master identity with no specific site or organizational context. For them, "conceptualizing gender as a role makes it difficult to assess its influence on other roles and reduces its explanatory usefulness in discussions of power and inequality". West and Zimmerman consider gender an individual production that reflects and constructs interactional and institutional gender expectations.

Certain Examples of Genderization

Consider the earring, Associated exclusively with women for about 200 years, guys have recently started to reclaim them. "In the last two decades," Valerie Steele, director of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, told The Huffington Post, "men have gotten in touch with their inner pirate."

While there are real biological differences between the sexes, gender is generally considered to be a social construction it can be pretty much whatever we want it to be, and we've wanted it to be a lot of things over the years. Below, find some ways our perception of gender presentation has already changed from the past to present.

- ❖ **Pink used to be a "boy colour" and blue a "girl colour," and before that every baby just wore white.**

Not so long ago, parents dressed their babies in white dresses -- due to the fact they could be bleached -- until about age six. Yes, even the boys.

Pastels came into style when a 1918 retail trade publication attempted to nail down the rules: pink for boys and blue for girls. "Being a more decided and stronger colour, [pink] is more suitable for the boy," the article stated, "while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl." Whether or not people listened (and blatantly sexist rationale aside), they at least seemed to accept a much wider variety of colour options for their infants until sometime around 1940, University of Maryland historian Jo B. Paoletti notes, when preferences switched to the colour divide we're familiar with today.

- ❖ **High heels were originally created for men and seen as "masculine" for a century.**

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Persian soldiers wore high-heeled shoes in the name of necessity when riding horseback, since shooting an arrow from a saddle was easier with a heel to secure the foot in its strap. As the European elite became fascinated with the unfamiliar culture, men adopted the horsemen's masculine footwear for their own (totally impractical) use around 1600. After the (gasp!) lower classes began sporting heeled footwear, the leisure class responded as only they could -- by making the heel higher. But when women began adopting the style as well, men's shoe heels became stockier and shorter, while women's became thinner and higher. "Most of the time," Steele told HuffPost, "when something begins to be associated with the feminine, it gets kind of 'contaminated' for men." By the end of the 18th century, she noted, men were over the whole heeled shoe thing. If only they could've looked past the gender divide, they'd have seen a way to longer-looking legs and a perkier butt.

❖ **At one time, secretaries and schoolteachers were all guys.**

The term "women's work" is based on the idea that women are intrinsically less qualified for all but certain roles in the workforce; but what those roles are, exactly, has changed a bit over time. At the turn of the last century, an estimated 85 percent of clerical jobs were filled by men earning twice the salary of their female counterparts. These men usually used the job as an entry-level managerial position in their climb up the white-collar ladder. As more women entered the workforce, the field began to shift. But female secretaries rarely made the jump from office peon to executive, and a "secretary" came to look like the smartly dressed girls we see on "Mad Men." Around the same time, teaching schoolchildren was also a male-dominated profession, until the work became "feminized" and men backed away, slowly, into the bushes.

❖ **Lace used to be manly. And womanly. So long as you were upper-class.**

Much like the high-heeled shoe, lace was popularized in the European market around the 16th century as a status marker, Steele told HuffPost. The stuff was so intricately crafted that just an inch and a half of Valenciennes lace (one particularly labour-intensive variety) took 14 hours to produce -- and it came with a price to match.

It was acceptable for men to wear lace through the 18th century, Steele explained, but the style died out around the 19th century. "A lot of decoration in clothing was interpreted as meaning 'aristocratic, upper class'" she explained, "and it becomes redefined around 1800 as meaning 'feminine.'" The same goes for the business of shopping for clothing fabric. "Men shopped quite happily for clothing right through the 18th century," she explained.

❖ **Even men used to cry when they wanted to seem sincere.**

❖ **A man's stoicism has always been a point of pride, up there with biceps and ability to drink his weight in beer -- right? Nope. "Tearlessness," wrote historian Tom Lutz, "has not been the standard of manliness through most of history." Although men inclined against crying, the act has been used over centuries by both genders to signify sincerity, pleasure or even**

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heroism. Odysseus cries throughout the *Iliad*. Jean-Jacque Rousseau, Lutz wrote, considered crying part of our natural state. In the 18th century, crying was so normalized and even expected that "if you didn't cry at the theatre ... you were some kind of lower class boor," he told the Orange County Register. Even American hero Abraham Lincoln cried at certain moments during his public speeches.

❖ **Cheerleading started out as a boys' club, because it was too "masculine" for girls.**

"The reputation of having been a valiant 'cheer-leader' is one of the most valuable things a boy can take away from college," reads a 1911 article in *The Nation*. Similar to actually playing collegiate sports, leading cheers for the team helped prepare students for leadership roles later in life, argued Mary Ellen Hanson in her history of American cheerleading. The first cheerleader is said to be University of Minnesota student Johnny Campbell, who convinced the crowd to follow his chanting lead during an 1898 game. His legacy was carried on by Dwight D. Eisenhower, Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan -- all cheerleaders. It wasn't until the 1920s and 1930s that women were really included (and not until the 1960s that it became female-dominated) since the sport was previously deemed too "masculine" for them, helping develop powerful, unladylike voices. Plus, they'd hear too much cursing hanging around all those manly male cheerleaders.

❖ **Respectable dudes used to wear their hair long**

It wasn't just a Beatles shag, either -- the Merovingian kings of the early Middle Ages in Europe rocked long locks, and many others at the time followed suit. Men of the lowest classes, however, wore short hair or were made to shave it completely as a symbol of their low status. Later on, 17th century men began wearing long wigs. Sure, it could have been because tons of people had syphilis, causing their hair to fall out in embarrassing patches, but long, thick hair became a status symbol anyway. King Louis XIV was particularly known for wearing a wig with rich, wavy tresses that were the envy of all the land, probably.

❖ **Both men and women can get kind of baby-crazy -- it just happens to men later in life.**

Research by two Kansas State University psychologists in 2011 found that the urge to procreate -- often known as "baby fever" -- is strongest in women at younger ages, and decreases as they age. For men, however, likelihood of baby fever increases with age. "It's like men and women are converging over time," one of the researchers told *LiveScience*. "Gender role norms didn't do much as far as explaining people's desire to have a baby." Results of a 2013 survey of 81 women and 27 men in Britain suggested that while men were slightly less likely to express desire for children, they were more likely to feel depressed, jealous, or angry if they didn't have any.

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❖ **The art of brewing beer was pioneered by women.**

Yes, the manliest man drink for manly men was primarily brewed, according to ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, by the ladies. Brewing beer was seen as a domestic chore for much of history, like making bread and other things that came from grain, until the economy shifted into an industrial-based one and commercial breweries (run by men) took off. As a sad side effect, unique regional brews died out as large-scale production limited available varieties of beer. There's even a word, likely originating during the 12th century, for female brewers: "brewster."

Role of Education in empowerment of women

Improving girls' access to education has been on the mainstream development agenda for some time, largely because of the poverty reduction potential that education offers through increasing access to economic opportunity. The long-term positive effects of education for the individual, family and wider society have also been recognised. As a study by the International Center for Research on Women confirms, "women are more likely to control their own destinies and effect change in their own communities when they have higher levels of education".

In addition, education is often seen as one of the main pathways to achieving another key development goal: girls' and women's empowerment. As the International Conference on Population and Development programme of action states: "Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process."

However, experience has shown that the relationship between education and empowerment is not as simple as it may first appear; while education is undoubtedly a key element contributing to empowerment, the two do not necessarily go hand in hand.

Many educational programmes will focus on students' acquisition of formal knowledge and training, and will often equip them with the technical skills necessary to take up paid employment in a specific sector. For adolescent girls, this can mean being formally trained in an activity traditionally seen as "women's work", such as sewing, the small-scale production and commercialisation of food products, artisanal production or secretarial skills for the more literate.

While it is often important that girls receive this vocational training as part of their education, a more holistic approach that places a strong emphasis on enabling girls to develop a wider awareness of themselves and the external context in which they live is also vital. Having the opportunity to develop an awareness of their own social situation, as well as to gain confidence and self-esteem, means not only that girls are in a better position to deal with the multiple

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challenges that entry into the labour market can pose, but also are increasingly empowered to define and act upon their ambitions.

The importance of developing girls' ability to reflect on their own reality, to develop self-awareness and to build self-esteem has been recognised by the Burkina Faso branch of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (Fawe), an organisation that works to promote gender equality and education across Africa. One of the projects run by Fawe Burkina in Ouagadougou, the resource and training centre, offers training to adolescent girls from underprivileged backgrounds, who generally have a low level of formal education.

At the centre the girls primarily receive training in income-generating activities such as sewing, weaving and soap-making, as well as in non-traditional activities such as plumbing and mechanics. To complement this, they also participate in life skills and awareness-raising workshops, which include children's and women's rights, as well as on reproductive health and – importantly for their chances of being engaged in remunerated activity – basic maths and French language courses.

Earlier this year the manager of the centre, Absétou Lamizana, decided to further expand the life-skills element of the training programme, in response to an increasing recognition of the importance of self-esteem for the personal and professional development of the trainees. She explained: "Lack of ambition, of self-confidence and self-esteem are challenges faced by the girls, and are linked to a deeply-rooted culture of gender inequality and traditional attitudes towards the role of girls and women. This creates an atmosphere in which they have very little confidence in themselves and underestimate their capacities."

A partnership was developed with another local NGO, Génération Butterfly, which designed a workshop series tailored to the situation of the girls enrolled at the centre. Ibrahim Kaboré, the director of Génération Butterfly, noted that the trainees are also deeply affected by their less privileged socio-economic background, viewing themselves as inferior to other adolescents of their age, which results in an inability to value themselves and the products of their work. "Our self-esteem workshops help them to free themselves from their past and think more about what they are going to do today so that tomorrow can be better. Somebody who does not have confidence in themselves cannot easily act to improve their future," he said.

During the workshops another important element was revealed, which can be seen as a misunderstanding about the role of NGOs vis-à-vis the lives of adolescents from less privileged backgrounds. "It became clear that those living in poverty had become accustomed to a culture of receiving free services, which meant that the girls sometimes engaged in training because they felt it was expected of them, rather than because they were personally motivated to change their lives by learning professional skills. They saw their enrolment at the centre as a consequence of being poor, and this was also damaging to their self-esteem."

It is not easy to overcome the effects of a lifetime of poverty and marginalisation. Despite this, Fawe Burkina are committed to working to further develop holistic "life skills" training, which

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aims to ensure that on completion of the programme trainees are in a stronger position to make informed choices about their lives and act on previously unthinkable ambitions.

While it is important not to lose sight of the huge challenges many will face while trying to become engaged in economic activity, leaving the centre with a reinforced self-belief means they have already overcome a huge hurdle. As a result, they will be better able to control their own destinies and participate more meaningfully in development – an aspiration for the adolescent girls leaving the centre and development practitioners alike, and which is firmly rooted in the notion of empowerment.

Lamizana summed up this approach: "In our view, education must be reinforced by the development of self-esteem to lift girls from the status of inferiority in which society confines them. Similarly, without education and without self-esteem there cannot be empowerment. All of these elements go together.

As the 2015 target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals was nearing, a number of processes were under way among UN Member States, the UN system, academia, policymakers and civil society to reflect on the post-2015 development framework.

A growing number of states are reviewing and prioritizing the lessons learned that need to be incorporated into the post-2015 framework. The most recent (2012) Millennium Development Goals Report revealed that while there was notable progress in some gender equality dimensions there remains much to be done in every country, at every level, to achieve equality and women's empowerment.

Empowerment means moving from enforced powerlessness to a position of power. Education is an essential means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to fully participate in the development process. Sustainable development is only possible when women and men enjoy equal opportunities to reach their potential.

Women and girls experience multiple and intersecting inequalities.

Structural barriers in the economic, social, political and environmental spheres produce and reinforce these inequalities. Obstacles to women's economic and political empowerment, and violence against women and girls, are barriers to sustainable development and the achievement of human rights, gender equality, justice and peace.

Across much of the world, either by law or custom, women are still denied the right to own land or inherit property, obtain access to credit, attend school, earn income and progress in their profession free from job discrimination.

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Women are significantly under-represented in decision-making at all levels.

While the economic benefits of educating girls are similar to those of educating boys, recent findings suggest the social benefits are greater.

Women have the potential to change their own economic status and that of their communities and countries in which they live yet usually women’s economic contributions are unrecognized, their work undervalued and their promise undernourished.

Unequal opportunities between women and men hamper women’s ability to lift themselves from poverty and secure improved options to improve their lives. Education is the most powerful instrument for changing women’s position in society.

Investing in women’s and girls’ education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty.

In line with the Millennium Development Goals and the objectives established by the international community, MASHAV, Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation, at Israel’s Foreign Ministry, consistently promotes the empowerment of women, considering women’s education a critical component of development policy and planning, and central to sustainable development.

Following important changes in the international development landscape in recent years MASHAV adopted a dual approach to development: We engage in active development policy dialogues and development diplomacy, thus contributing to and shaping policy at a higher, multilateral level.

And, through professional programs, we maintain an active and effective presence at the field level.

One of MASHAV’s earliest affiliate training institutions, The Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center (MCTC), has addressed the connection between gender, poverty reduction and sustainable development for over five decades.

MCTC places education at the core of women’s ability to contribute to all activities, working to enhance knowledge, competency and skills, including in the development process and in their contributions to civil society.

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Guided by this mindset, MASHAV, together with MCTC, the UN Development Program and UN Women is organizing the 28th International Conference for Women Leaders on “The Post-2015 and Sustainable Development Goals Agenda: Ensuring the Centrality of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in the Next Framework.”

This November, senior women and men from the public and associative sectors – ministers, members of parliaments, heads of women’s associations, representatives of international organizations and representatives of the judicial, business and academic sectors – will convene in Haifa to discuss progress achieved and gaps remaining in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals from a gender perspective. We will highlight lessons learned and best practices in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Education is important for everyone, but it is a critical area of empowerment for girls and women. This is not only because education is an entry point to opportunity but also because women’s educational achievements have positive ripple effects within the family and across generations.

Education is much more than reading and writing. It is an essential investment country make for their futures, a crucial factor in reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development.

Every child has a right to equal educational opportunities. Women constitute more than 60% of the world’s population which ought to place them as pacesetters in education. Sadly, in some countries, girl-child education is neglected due to cultural beliefs. Women are seen as only relevant in the kitchen and for procreation purpose.

History has proven that *“If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation”*. Educating a woman brings about self-esteem and confidence. It also promotes active participation in her society. Women need to be more involved in educational policy decision making process.

It takes collective effort of the government and society in creating equal opportunities for education and increasing the enrolment of the girl-child into schools. This in itself reduces poverty. On the long run, an educated woman will actively play a better role in directing her children through life’s journey.

Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Discrimination of women from womb to tomb is well known. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors and women oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walk of life. In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women have to swim against the system that requires more strength. Such strength comes from

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the process of empowerment and empowerment will come from the education. And rural development will come from women empowerment. Researches conclude that if women's empowerment is to be effected, it can be carried out only through the medium of education. Hence, it is of foremost importance to raise the level of education amongst women.

There are always a number of components in the society which are underprivileged of their basic rights in every society, state and nation, but these components lack in the awareness of their rights. If we enlist such components from the society, then women would top this list. In fact, women are the most important factor of every society. Even though everybody is aware of this fact, yet nobody is ready to accept this fact. As a result, the importance which used to be given to women is declining in today's society. As a significance of this growing tendency of underestimating women such as to make them occupy a secondary position in society and to deny them of their basic rights, the need for empowering women was felt. Today we enjoy the benefits of being citizens of a free nation, but we really need to think whether each of the citizens of our country is really free or enjoying freedom, in the true sense of the term. If we consider our country, each Indian citizen is given certain basic rights. The Structure of our nation doesn't discriminate between men and women, but our society has destitute women of certain basic rights, which were bestowed upon them by our Constitution. Due to such current situation, it was needed to make women free from all the fetters and to empower them as well. This is nothing but empowerment of women.

Women's empowerment is not limited only for the Indian society. If we deliberate the global aspect in this regard, we see that women are being given equal treatment in developed nations. In fact, if we take a recollection of history, we come to know that women have always been given secondary position in society, but the difference between men and women created by the Nature is but natural. It is education through which we realize this fact. When American women realized this, they opposed this unfairness which was meted out to them by way of a huge movement, through which they asked for equal rights. For eliminating this injustice, the UNO (United Nations' Organization) framed an agreement which is called 'The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women' (CEDAW), which further led to the formation of Women's Commission.

Taking an account of this background, we come to know that women's empowerment has now become a topic of global discussion. Seeing all the aspects of this discussion, we will realize that education is the only means for empowerment of women. Therefore, literacy should spread amongst women. The literacy rate amongst the women in the post-

Independent Era is not as per the expectations. We, as a nation, dream of becoming a Super Power by 2020. For becoming a Super Power, each element of our society/ nation should contribute in the nation building process. But women, who are a major factor of this society, aren't literate then we can't expect to become a Super Power. Therefore, it is urgent for us to know the importance of

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women's education, which would, in turn, give a motivation to the process of women's empowerment. This paper aim to create the awareness among the women's about different empowerment and identifying the impact of education in women overall empowerment.

Literature review

The term empowerment has been overused, misused, and coopted (Stromquist, 2002; Stacki and Monkman, 2003). It is commonly deployed as a synonym for enabling, participating, and speaking out. The notion that education leads to women's empowerment has gained popularity, although we still have much to learn about how education actually empowers women (Stromquist, 2002; DaCosta, 2008; Murphy-Graham, 2008). Nevertheless, in the past 10 years, the goal of women's empowerment (often linked with women's education) has received serious attention, as well as funding by donors and international agencies (Unterhalter, 2007; Mosedale, 2005; Malhotra et al., 2002; Papart et al., 2002; Oxaal and Baden, 1997). Despite its widespread use and occasional abuse, there is some agreement (e.g. Kabeer, 1999; Malhotra et al., 2002; Mosedale, 2005) that empowerment:

- • Is a multidimensional process of change from a condition of disempowerment?
- • Cannot be bestowed by a third party, as individuals are active agents in this process.
- • Is shaped by the context, and so indicators of empowerment must be sensitive to the context in which women live.

At the core of the word empowerment is power. Therefore in conceptualizing empowerment I draw on previous scholarship on the theme, as well as feminist scholarship that views power as capacity (Karlberg, 2005). Hartstock (1983), commenting on the feminist theory of power, describe show women's stress on power not as domination but as capacity, on power as a capacity of the community as a whole, suggests that women's experience of connection and relation have more consequences for understandings of power and may hold resources for a more laboratory understanding. The idea of power as capacity is at the core of the conceptualization of empowerment in this article, where I view women's empowerment as a process through which women come to recognize their inherent worth, their power within (Kabeer, 1994), and begin to participate on equal terms with men in efforts to dismantle patriarchy and promote social and economic development. Women's empowerment is not an end in and of itself, but a pivotal step towards establishing gender equality. In part, gender equality is manifest through a just and equitable sharing of responsibilities by men and women. Gender equality is not synonymous with gender parity, and does not mean that men and women are the same or need to split work exactly in half. Rather, it characterizes social conditions and relationships in which a vision of mutuality and cooperation shapes interactions and enables men and women to reach their full potential (hooks, 2000).

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Right to Education – A Powerful tool

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE), is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted on 4 August 2009, which describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India under Article 21a of the Indian Constitution. India became one of 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child when the Act came into force on 1 April 2010.

The Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 and specifies minimum norms in elementary schools. It requires all private schools to reserve 25% of seats to children (to be reimbursed by the state as part of the public-private partnership plan). Kids are admitted in to private schools based on economic status or caste based reservations. It also prohibits all unrecognised schools from practice, and makes provisions for no donation or capitation fees and no interview of the child or parent for admission. The Act also provides that no child shall be held back, expelled, or required to pass a board examination until the completion of elementary education. There is also a provision for special training of school drop-outs to bring them up to par with students of the same age.

The RTE Act requires surveys that will monitor all neighbourhoods, identify children requiring education, and set up facilities for providing it. The World Bank education specialist for India, Sam Carlson, has observed: "The RTE Act is the first legislation in the world that puts the responsibility of ensuring enrolment, attendance and completion on the Government. It is the parents' responsibility to send the children to schools in the US and other countries."

The Right to Education of persons with disabilities until 18 years of age is laid down under a separate legislation - the Persons with Disabilities Act. A number of other provisions regarding improvement of school infrastructure, teacher-student ratio and faculty are made in the Act.

Education in the Indian constitution is a concurrent issue and both centre and states can legislate on the issue. The Act lays down specific responsibilities for the centre, state and local bodies for its implementation. The states have been clamouring that they lack financial capacity to deliver education of appropriate standard in all the schools needed for universal education. Thus it was clear that the central government (which collects most of the revenue) will be required to subsidise the states.

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A committee set up to study the funds requirement and funding initially estimated that INR 1710 billion or 1.71 trillion (US\$38.2 billion) across five years was required to implement the Act, and in April 2010 the central government agreed to sharing the funding for implementing the law in the ratio of 65 to 35 between the centre and the states, and a ratio of 90 to 10 for the north-eastern states. However, in mid 2010, this figure was upgraded to INR 2310 billion, and the center agreed to raise its share to 68%. There is some confusion on this, with other media reports stating that the centre's share of the implementation expenses would now be 70%. At that rate, most states may not need to increase their education budgets substantially.

A critical development in 2011 has been the decision taken in principle to extend the right to education till Class X (age 16) and into the preschool age range. The CABE committee is in the process of looking into the implications of making these changes.

The Ministry of HRD set up a high-level, 14-member National Advisory Council (NAC) for implementation of the Act. The members included Kiran Karnik, former president of NASSCOM; Krishna Kumar, former director of the NCERT; Mrinal Miri, former vice-chancellor of North-East Hill University; Yogendra Yadav – social scientist. India

Sajit Krishnan Kutty, Secretary of The Educators Assisting Children's Hopes (TEACH) India; Annie Namala, an activist and head of Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion; and Aboobacker Ahmad, vice-president of Muslim Education Society, Kerala.

A report on the status of implementation of the Act was released by the Ministry of Human Resource Development on the one year anniversary of the Act. The report admits that 8.1 million children in the age group six-14 remain out of school and there's a shortage of 508,000 teachers country-wide. A shadow report by the RTE Forum representing the leading education networks in the country, however, challenging the findings pointing out that several key legal commitments are falling behind the schedule. The Supreme Court of India has also intervened to demand implementation of the Act in the Northeast. It has also provided the legal basis for ensuring pay parity between teachers in government and government aided schools. Haryana Government has assigned the duties and responsibilities to Block Elementary Education Officers–cum–Block Resource Coordinators (BEEOs-cum-BRCs) for effective implementation and continuous monitoring of implementation of Right to Education Act in the State.

It has been pointed out that the RTE act is not new. Universal adult franchise in the act was opposed since most of the population was illiterate. Article 45 in the Constitution of India was set up as an

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act: The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

As that deadline was about to be passed many decades ago, the education minister at the time, MC Chagla, memorably said: "Our Constitution fathers did not intend that we just set up hovels, put students there, give untrained teachers, give them bad textbooks, no playgrounds, and say, we have complied with Article 45 and primary education is expanding... They meant that real education should be given to our children between the ages of 6 and 14" - (MC Chagla, 1964).

In the 1990s, the World Bank funded a number of measures to set up schools within easy reach of rural communities. This effort was consolidated in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan model in the 1990s. RTE takes the process further, and makes the enrolment of children in schools a state prerogative.

The Constitutional provision safeguarding the Right to education

The 86th amendment of the constitution in India in 2002 got inserted Article 21-A which is, free and compulsory education for all the children between 6 to 14 years old. This article made education a fundamental right for every child. The right to education (RTE) act, 2009 under article 21-A, means that every child has the right to study in the school in a proper way such that it must satisfy essential rules and regulations.

Article 21-A and RTE act came into force on 1 April 2010. The RTE act basically supports and encourages “free and compulsory” education. Here, free education means that none of the child is allowed to pay any fee or any kind of charges for completing and getting education except for the child whose parents are there who are capable of paying fees and affording all other kinds of expenses for their child related to studies. And compulsory education means that it is the duty of the government and concerning local authorities to check for proper attendance of the students, to ensure proper admission and also to take care for the fulfillment of fundamental education of every child.

SALIENT FEATURES OF RIGHT TO FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION ACT, 2009

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The RIGHT TO EDUCATION (RTE) ACT, consist of the following measures-

- Every child has the fundamental right to free and compulsory education.
- The RTE act makes rules for the non-admitted students to be admitted at a proper age to the specified class.
- It specifies different responsibilities to the local authorities and government to ensure to provide free and compulsory education.
- It also lays down rules regarding Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs).
- It also ensures that the employment of every teacher whether in urban or in rural areas is in a balanced way, and should maintain a proper ratio.
- It also lay down rules for maintaining the infrastructure of the schools, proper working hours for the teachers etc.
- It also suggests employing trained and well-educated teachers.

The Right to Education act also forbids some of the issues like,

- Any type of mental harassment over any student or physical assault.
- Capitation fees, which means that the amount of fee taken by the institution which is more than the prescribed fee.
- It also prohibits the working of the school without its identification.

The RTE act wants to form an education system in which every child should be allowed to get education freely and he or she should be free from any kind of fear regarding harassment, unequal treatment etc. This act wants to establish the system in which full knowledge regarding subject and moral values should be provided and none of the child could be remained deprived of their fundamental and the most basic rights.

Some steps that should be taken by the Government and local authorities and also by the parents for increasing awareness regarding education are-

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- In RTE “compulsory education” creates an important responsibility for the government as well as for the local authority to ensure admission of every child of the age 6-14 years.
- It is the responsibility of the parents to maintain proper attendance of their child.
- Fulfilling elementary education of each and every child falling under the age of 6-14 years.
- The government should try to maintain proper training facilities of the teachers.
- It should ensure a good elementary education that should be according to the norms.
- It is the responsibility of the local authorities that the child belonging to the weaker section of the society and anyone who is disabled should not be discriminated from the other students.

There are certain responsibilities of the school and the teachers too. These are,

- The teacher appointed should perform the norms the under sub-section (1) of section 23.
- A teacher should be regular and punctual towards his duty.
- It is the responsibility of the school to maintain proper discipline, to make compulsory the elementary education and try to take care that every child is being treated well or not and gaining proper knowledge.