

Capacity Building of Elected Women Representatives

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Abstract

India is adopting various steps to bring women into the system of governance. Providing reservation for women in local self-governing bodies was one such initiative. With this many women had come forward and took part in various roles in the functioning of local self-governing bodies. But most of them are not having sound educational background or experience in political administrations. So the situation is like, we have a pool of women candidates in administrative roles who need to be equipped with certain skill sets to perform their duties well. The objective of the study is to identify the level of various skills among elected women representatives and suggest training requirements. It was found that the ability of elected women representatives to work in teams, learn new things and make decisions is below the benchmark level. Thus training programs need to be initiated by government in this regard to enable women representatives to outshine in their performance.

Keywords: Training Needs, Leadership, Managing Skills, Learning and Development, Decision Making, Innovation, Flexibility, Teamwork, Responsiveness, Communication and Technical Expertise

Introduction

Mankind always seems to be been in search of leaders. It would seem that, there is an innate desire among human beings to be led; just as there is a strong drive in many people to lead. While the urge to be free is strong, there seems to exist an equally powerful urge to escape from this freedom and the responsibilities that freedom brings with it. People look up to other people who can, in a sense, tell them what to do, make them want to do these tasks, and

feel a sense of elation and pride when they accomplish the tasks. Women in India belong to this category, who look up to their male counterparts to lead them.

India women can attain development when they also actively participate in the system of governance. Their inaction to political involvement will not provide the way for women development in the country. India is adopting various steps to bring women into the system of governance. Providing reservation for women in local self-governing bodies was one such initiative. With this many women had come forward and took part various roles in the functioning of Local Self-governing bodies. By diligently performing the duties as a political leader, women can bring about their empowerment. Reservation of seats at Panchayat Raj system thus become an effective platform for women to occupy positions of decision making.

But most of them are not having sound educational background or experience in political administrations. So the situation is like, we have a pool of women candidates in administrative roles who need to be equipped with certain skill sets to perform their duties well.

Training enables the person to deliver superior performance. It helps to develop the skills required to successfully perform a particular job or role or a set of tasks at a given point of time. This study is an attempt to find out the level of skills among elected women representatives and to suggest the trainings that they require in this regard. The role of training needs assessment in the design of training programs has long been recognised in the organisational literature (Goldstein, 1991). This information can be used to design

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the training and development programs for elected women representatives.

Objective of the Study

To identify the skills among elected women representatives and suggest the training requirements.

Research Methodology

Descriptive research using sample survey approach was carried out. Research instrument was prepared based on the skills for a leader specified in various literatures. In order to test the reliability Cronbach alpha value was computed and it was founded to be 0.722, which shows that data is reliable for further analysis. Population is defined as the elected women representatives of local self-government in Kerala. Since it accounts to be a large number sample survey was adopted. Sample size refers to the representative part of the population. There are 11446 women representatives in Kerala (LSG dept) and with the help of sample size calculator sample size was analysed. The confidence level was 95 and confidence interval was 10. The calculated sample size was 95 however researcher had collected 121 samples foreseeing the chance of missing variables. The study followed area sampling method. A method in which an area to be sampled is sub-divided into smaller blocks that are then selected at random and then again sub-sampled or fully surveyed. This method is typically used when a complete frame of reference is not used.

Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted regarding the role of women in politics. Many studies have been conducted regarding participation of women in politics. Various subjects like barriers for political participation of women, violence against women in politics, motivational factors for their participation are extensively researched in different parts of the world. These studies have been conducted in various parts of the country and have significantly contributed to literature. However, the present study is an attempt to find out the skills of elected women representatives and identify any training requirements.

Evidence from research demonstrates the important role women play as key actors and decision-makers in the development process across a wide range of sectors (Gill, Weiss, & Rao, 2009). Phillips (1993) suggests

four fundamental justifications for expanding the role of women in the democratic process: democratic justice, maximisation of resources, to represent the special interests of women and as role models. Including all these, Ross (2002) adds two more justifications or arguments: utility and symbolic arguments. These literatures point to the need of including women in governance for the progress of the society.

This study again supports the idea that representation of women in governance is essential for their progress in the society. The lack of female and male representation in different bureaucracies affects the extent to which public organisations assist female or male clients (Dee, 2007).

Sekhon's (2006) study explored women's participation in panchayats with an analysis located in feminist politics and participatory democracy. It is a theoretical study in which the author analyses the role of social movements engaged in participatory action research, training, advocacy, and networking with and for women at grassroots level. Study argues that reservations alone is not adequate because women are constrained by a variety of social, cultural, economic, and political factors, for instance traditional gendered believes of the role and position of women in family and community, caste and class inequalities, lack of education, and lack of legal knowledge. Author argues that the Indian social structure is patriarchal, and where women are not fully educated and dependent on their family members, thus they cannot take part in decision making process with full freedom. Thus it become essential to understand the level of skill set among elected women leaders and support them in the required areas.

McClelland (1973) presented data that traditional achievement and intelligence scores may not be able to predict job success and what is required is to profile the exact competencies required to perform a given job effectively and measure them using a variety of tests. He argued that traditional intelligence tests, as well as proxies such as scholastic grades, failed to predict job performance. When the study of McClelland (1973) is thought about from the perspectives of an elected women representative, it states that rather than the educational background the competencies to perform the job need to be tested. Research by Boyatzis (1982) states that the capacity that exists in a person leads to behavior and meets the job demands within parameters of organisational environment, and that, in turn brings about desired results.

Analysis and Discussions

The reservation for women in the local bodies is aimed at ensuring their active involvement and support in socio-economic development of the country. When the number of women in Parliament was considered, it could be understood that reservations is vital for women to enter into the system. There has been no significant increase in the number of women representatives in Parliament since Independence.

With the reservation provided, women were able to occupy the seats in local self-governing bodies. The

present study was conducted among these elected women representatives.

Profile of the respondents describes the basic characteristics of respondents. In social research, personnel characteristics of respondents have a significant as it plays a role in shaping the response towards a subject. Profile of an individual usually has a significant position in shaping the cognitive behaviour of an individual. It helps in understanding the context in which respondents are providing their views. The basic profile of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Demographic Factors

Experience in politics	Less than 2 years	3-5 years	6-8 years	9-11 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
	1.65	27.27	24.79	22.31	14.05	9.92
Age	Less than 25	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	Above 55 years	
	2.48	23.14	40.50	32.23	1.65	
Qualification	SSLC	HSC	Graduation	Post-graduate		
	38.02	31.40	26.45	4.13		

Among the total respondents, 40.5% of respondents belong to the age group 36-45 years. 33.9% belonged to the age group 45 and above. 25.6% of the respondents are less than 35 years. Thus it is seen that major portion of the respondents belong to middle age group. Out of the total respondents, majority (24.79%) are having 6-8 years of experience. But when educational qualification was considered, the majority was having education only up to matriculation. Thus it was observed majority of them were not having high educational background and doesn't have much experience in politics. So definitely they may require certain set of assistance in delivering their duties. Thus the study tries to find out the level of various skills set among these representatives and suggest if any training is required.

Ten skills, viz. leadership, managing skills, learning and development, decision making, innovation, flexibility,

teamwork, responsiveness, communication, and technical expertise were considered for the study. Leadership skills are essential for an elected women representative as they need to lead the Panchayats/Block/Municipality they represent. Managing skills is all about managing the people around them and coordinating their works. Skills like flexibility and team work are also essential for this. An elected representative should be able to make decisions at the correct time foreseeing all the consequences. For this, innovation and technical expertise is highly required. Innovation skills enable them to think out of the box and bring creative solutions the problems they encounter in the society. Responsibility to the actions is another skill which should be possessed among them. For implementing all the decisions and developing team work among peers, communication skill is also very necessary. Thus these ten skills were analysed to find out, whether there is any deficiency and training requirement.

Table 2: Statistical Assessment of Competency of Women Representatives

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Scale
Leadership	17.55	1.85	3.43	10	10	20	4-20
Managing skills	16.9	1.74	3.78	10.4	9.6	20	4-20
Learninganddevelopment	15.81	1.72	4.46	8.67	11.33	20	4-20

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Scale
Decision making	17.13	1.51	3.88	7.65	12.35	20	4-20
Innovation	15.8	2.14	3.44	10.67	9.33	20	4-20
Flexibility	15.99	2	3.99	10	10	20	4-20
Teamwork	16.48	2.45	3	10	10	20	4-20
Responsiveness	16.52	2.02	3.05	9.33	10.67	20	4-20
Communication	16.99	1.72	2.96	8	12	20	4-20
Technical expertise	16.81	2.44	2.99	10	10	20	4-20

Source: Data Analysis

All the skill sets were measured on same scale, so that researcher can compare the mean and standard deviation values of the skill sets for their analysis. From Table 2, we can infer that the women elected representatives covered in this study have very high decision making skill followed by Communication skills and Managing skills. It is also found that they have very low competency in Learning and development and Innovation. Now in order to check the statistical significance of this observation, Anova was attempted with the following hypothesis.

H₀: Elected women representatives are having the same level of various skill sets.

H₁: Elected women representatives are having different level of various skill sets.

Table 3: ANOVA Test Results of all Competencies

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	47839.671	9	5315.519	1442.686	.000
Within Groups	4211.338	1143	3.684		
Total	52051.010	1152			

Source: Data Analysis

Table 3 shows the test is significant at 95% confidence level. So alternate hypothesis is accepted which states the level of each skills is different from other. Thus it can be statistically proved that elected women representatives have certain skills set at lower level than others. Now in order to find out clearly the area required for training, the skills sets were classified into low and high category (Table 4).

Table 4: High Level and Low Level Skills - Percentage Analysis

	High	Low
Leadership	97.50%	2.50%
Learning	0.00%	100.00%
Innovation	66.12%	33.88%
Managing skills	0.83%	99.17%
Decision making	6.61%	93.39%
Flexibility	97.50%	2.50%
Teamwork	0.00%	100.00%
Responsiveness	50.41%	49.59%
Communication	98.35%	1.70%
Technical	100.00%	0.00%

Source: Data Analysis

When the skill set was classified into two, it was observed that all the respondents were having low level of teamwork and learning ability. When a woman occupies a seat in LSG department, she is expected to learn many new things and work as a team. But unfortunately data reveal that the ability of women representatives in Kerala is low in these two regards.

When a person occupies a leadership role, she has to manage lot of resources around him. It is especially true in the case of an elected women representative as she has to coordinate the activities of government officials, politicians and general public with the allotted financial resources. Managing is a skillful act, as there can be different conflict of interest, priorities etc. which need to be addressed judiciously. However, data show that 99.17% of the respondents are having low managing skills. Thus certainly programs need to offered to improve this skill set.

Another skill set which was found to be less was decision making ability. 93.39% of the respondents were having very low level of decision making ability. Decision making ability is yet another area which is crucial for an elected women representative. These women leaders are primarily responsible for the development of the

area they represent. For which they may require to solve various issues by properly analyzing the situation and thus making decisions. The data shows that only 6.61% are considering themselves competent in this area, thus pointing to the need of initiating training programs in this regard.

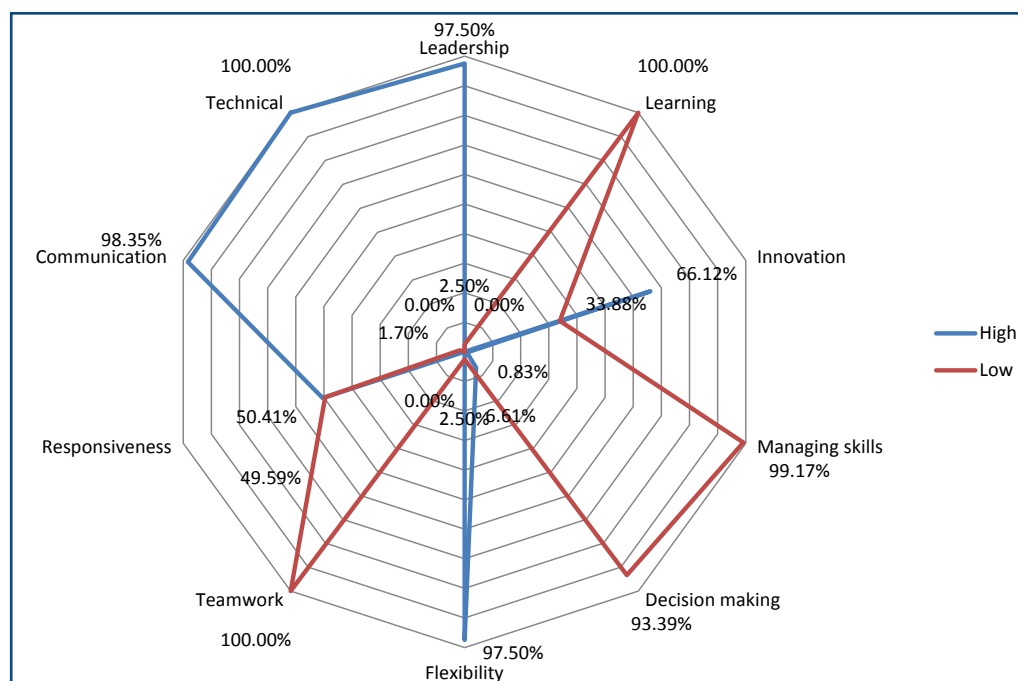


Fig. 1: Level of Various Skill Sets

Data also reveal that leadership, communication and flexibility skills are high among the respondents and 66.1% have opined that they were have skills to innovate (Table 4). This is a good sign as these qualities are essential for an elected women representative to excel in her work. The same is also shown in Fig. 1.

Thus study points that the ability of elected women representatives to work in teams, learn new things and make decisions is low. Thus training programs need to be initiated by government in this regard to enable women representatives to outshine in their performance.

Table 5: Summary: Skills that Need to be Improved

1.	Teamwork
2.	Learning and development
3	Decision making

Source: Data Analysis

Conclusion

A major argument that is raised against participation of women in politics is they will not be able to face the problems that arises during governance. But the study proved that elected women representatives from Kerala are having good set of leadership skills among them. However certain set of training programs need to be provided to enable them to work in team, learn a new things and make correct decisions.

When a leader performs her action diligently she moves to the next stage of evolution at work. At this stage, since more attention is paid to the work, the work become more engaging. When a person loves the work she does, it will never tire her. This leads to the experience of effortlessness. "Perform your obligatory action, Arjuna for action is superior to inaction. Even the bare maintenance of body will not be possible if you are inactive" (Bhagavat Geetha, 3.8). As pointed out by Lord

Krishna in the state of effortless action, people work very hard and yet don't feel tiredness as our being transcends our physical nature and the leader experiences the higher dimension inside her. So when Indian women raises to this stage political leadership will become an effortless action. This upliftment is possible by providing them with adequate training programmes.

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