



Knowledge. Voice. Democracy.

PRIA

occasional paper

**Gender, Work and Learning Gender
Mainstreaming: Exploring Women's Potential
in the Formal Workplace**

© PRIA 2015

All contents of this publication are the sole and exclusive property of PRIA and may be treated as such. Any reproduction, publication, adaptation, translation, modification, extraction, import or export of the whole or any part of this work, without the express written consent of PRIA shall be deemed to be an infringement of its copyright. Such act(s) may be subject to the imposition of severe civil, criminal and/or other liabilities under applicable law.

Published by: PRIA, 2007



Knowledge. Voice. Democracy.

PRIA

42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area,

New Delhi - 110 062

Tel: +91-11-2996 0931/32/33

Fax: +91-11-2995 5183

E-mail: info@pria.org

Website: www.pria.org

Content

ABSTRACT	1
INTRODUCTION	2
PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN	11
GENDER RATIO.....	12
CONCLUSION	19
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	20
LITERATURE REVIEW	24

Abstract

In today's world of high economic growth and competitiveness employees, within the formal work place, are often encouraged to explore and take responsibility for their own learning needs and capacity building, in order to be able to adapt and change with evolving standards and demands of their careers. However, all situations not being equal, many married women with children and families find scarcely enough time for their full time careers and "home making" commitments, leave alone being able to opt for 'extra learning'. These pressures have led women to opt for part time career options, thereby straddling dual roles and responsibilities. Studies point out that the majority of part time workers in the world are women. In this context, more often than not we find women workers pressured to exhibit commitment in the workplace as their priority and excel in performance, under severe constraints of time and multiple roles. Yet, they often find themselves disadvantaged when the time comes for promotions and higher salary brackets.

If this be the case, then the question that arises is that of the recognition of these different needs, reflected in the policy of the organization, which mirrored in the effective utilization and development of the skills of women workers.

This paper takes a look at women workers, Vis a Vis, their knowledge base, learning needs, contribution to the organization, as well as understanding their roles and responsibilities as employees and homemakers. It tries to unpackage how women balance their careers and homes, in a bid to answer the concerns of most employers at the high tum over of women staff. The paper also attempts to impress upon the need of creating an environment in the workplace, which is conducive to explore and develop the potential of each female employee by encouraging 'learning' and 'knowledge utilization', in the given time span of employment.

In this paper, the authors will question, analyse and impress upon the usage of words such as 'work', 'knowledge' and 'learning' used in conjunction, to the context of gender, work and learning in the formal workplace. Taking PRIA as an example, this paper will trace the history of the entry of women into the formal work place, creation of spaces for women with dual responsibilities, addressing the issue of differential pay scales, women's leadership opportunities, tackling sexual harassment in the workplace, incorporating gender sensitive policies and enforcing a gender sensitive work culture as a backdrop to incorporate effective knowledge based work, learning opportunities and maximizing the contribution of the female worker .

Introduction

Since time immemorial, the value of work done or services rendered by women has not been recognized. India is a multifaceted society where no generalization could apply to the entire nation's various regional, religious, social, and economic groups. Nevertheless, certain broad circumstances in which Indian women live affect the ways they participate in the economy.

Though specific customs vary from region to region within the country, there are different standards of behavior for men and women that carry over into the work environment. Although most women in India work and contribute to the economy in one form or another, much of their work is not documented or accounted for in official statistics. Women plow fields and harvest crops while working on farms, women weave and make handicrafts while working in household industries, women sell food and gather wood while working in the informal sector. Additionally, women are traditionally responsible for the daily household chores (e.g. cooking, fetching water, and looking after children). The informal sector includes jobs such as domestic help, small trader, artisan, or field laborer on a family farm. Most of these jobs are unskilled and low paying and do not provide benefits to the worker. Although such jobs are supposed to be recorded in the census, undercounting is likely because the boundaries between these activities and other forms of household work done by women are often fluid thus, the actual labour force participation rate or women is likely to be higher than that which can be calculated from available data.

In India women are generally confined to home thus restricting their mobility and causing seclusion. When these women enter the workforce, they face constraints beyond those already placed on them by other hierarchical practices. While many times a woman goes out of the house to work to augment the family income, her participation in economic activities is viewed as "slightly inappropriate, subtly wrong, and definitely dangerous to their chastity and womanly virtue".

More women may be involved in undocumented or "disguised" wage work than in the formal labor force. Women account for a small proportion of the formal Indian labor force, even though the number of female main workers has grown faster in recent years than that of their male counterparts. Since the working woman earns

an independent income in the same patriarchal set-up, where the basic infrastructure of society has hardly changed, though her own role within the same structure is passing through a transitional phase, it is but natural that she would remain vulnerable to exploitation even in her economically independent state. Society perhaps yet needs to accord due recognition to women to take the lead role and women, at the same time need to be oriented vigorously towards assuming this role in the society.

It is evident from the above arguments that women's multiple responsibilities constrains their work participation and the learning opportunities and (in and out of workplace) further limit the full realization of their potentials. This paper exemplifies the efforts made by Civil Society Organisations and PRIA in particular, to address these arguments further in a bid towards developing an environment which nurtures women to work, grow, earn and maximize their full potential.

As in all organizations, as well as in PRIA it is assumed that women who work outside the house will still be liable and responsible for all of the productive and reproductive roles that have to be managed within her home.

It is also expected that women in the workplace adjust themselves to the male dominated environment where all rules, norms and policies have been created to take care of the needs and priorities of men. Organisations presume that women will allow themselves to be dictated to by the patriarchal attitudes that are prevalent within the workplace. Further women in the workplace will be as in their homes - quiet, unassuming, modest, lack ambition and content to let themselves be dominated by men and their rules, never seeing themselves as independent entities with their own dreams.

As in many other countries, women of all segments of Indian society face various forms of discrimination including sexual harassment. Even professional women find discrimination to be prevalent and many feel that they have to work harder to receive the same benefits as comparably employed men. Since Indian culture hinders women's access to jobs in stores, factories and the public sector, the informal sector is particularly important for women.

With more women now entering the workforce the most basic question that PRIA needed to address as organization was "How do we deal with the issue of

empowering women to play a role in the efficiency and effectiveness of their organizations"?

Other questions that followed were:

- How do we develop long and short term strategies for women's retention, keeping in mind the various factors at play including women's reproductive roles?
- How do we interweave the relevance of women's jobs to their personal growth and learning?
- How do we address issues of motivation, fulfillment, and ambitions on par with male colleagues in the organization?
- How do we help women realize their dreams and aspirations through the career paths that they carve out for themselves?

Are we ready as an institution to recognize the qualitative contribution of women in the organization and accept that they have the potential to be top leaders of the organization? If this is so we need to change the mindset of both men and women who work together and take them through a process of change that impact the effectiveness of not only the individual but the organization, the family, the community and society at large.

Before we move onto the issues of women's learning in the context of PRIA, let us examine the concepts of Women in the Workplace and Gender in the Workplace.

Women in the workplace

Women are not newcomers to the working world as some may believe, but their role is changing, as are the social values. Historically, women's work has been relegated to the home and the hearth. But, it was not always so, 'for most of human history, work and the rest of life were completely integrated...with the industrial revolution, the "workplace" moved out of the family home... the workplace became men's domain; and women came to bear the responsibility of supporting the family.' (Rao, Stuart, Kelleher.1999)

Today, women account for nearly fifty percent of the workforce but for less than 4 percent of the nation's top executives. Women managers are clustered into administrative and support functions. (Kaila.2005)

Although a large number of women are now working in managerial positions they are significantly missing in the top level of their organizations. The issues of values, traditions, culture, social contexts, politics of power play a powerful role in creating a "Glass Ceiling", effectively preventing women from reaching the top management positions. These include the realities of sexual harassment in the workplace, losing promotions to men they have trained, inequality of pay and making business deals after office hours in a man's club.

The following quotation representing the attitude of most organizations is the crux of the problem facing a majority of women who wish to pursue a career:

"I see no reason why women can't do top jobs, but you can't expect a young woman to be able to join an organization and say "I want a career which will give me a chance to be a Director General and will give me a chance to have one baby or more and expect to come back and continue like a man". It would be grossly unfair to the organization and to males. (Senior BBC male manager's statement in Women In Top Jobs 1968-79, published by Heinmann)."

In this context we need to look at the factors that have prevented women from reaching their full potential, we need to look at values and traditions, which have inhibited women's participation in the workspace and how these are giving way to new ways of life. Most importantly we need to examine the practices and policies of an organization that reduce discrimination and help in breaking through the glass ceiling.

However, these have to be backed by promoting and facilitating equal opportunities and equal responsibility at the home front. We need to understand that while change has taken place and that too very rapidly it is only at a superficial level.

We encourage women to earn outside the home to supplement the income but do not allow them control over this income; she is still expected to perform all the traditional reproductive roles without assistance from the other male family members; we expect her to excel in her job but do not inspire or even expect her to be ambitious.

In spite of the reality and the proof of a woman's efficiency and capability, we remind her every step of the way that this is a male dominated world and any privileges or opportunities are the generosity of her male counterparts and she can never ever match up to their standards or abilities.

Men as a whole do not consider gender bias as a serious company problem but it leaves females angered and resentful and mistrusting of their own organizations because of the unfair treatment meted out to them. How do we begin to examine the concepts of gender within the workplace and efforts of the organization to plan, systematize, build and maintain an egalitarian environment bearing in mind reproductive roles of women cannot be separated from their daily lives as professionals.

Gender in the workplace

While concepts of women and the issues of their participation and interests are fairly clear, there is a level of uncertainty as soon as the concept of gender is introduced. 'Gender is often used as a synonym for women' (Rao. 2002). Gender refers to the social construction of the relationship between men and women.

Today gender is an essential part of our vocabulary and is clearly defined as the relationship between women and men, how societies and cultures determine what is masculine or feminine and how power is allocated and used differently by men and women.(PRIA)

The roots of gender based discrimination run deep and lie buried in culture, customs, beliefs and superstitions. This discrimination is reflected in our daily lives, be it areas of health, education, job opportunities or legal rights. The complexity and multi layered realities of gender in our society need to be deconstructed for us to be able to work towards creating an equitable future.

Just as development is not gender sensitive, neither are all organizations. Just as women in society are marginalised and relegated to the completion of their reproductive work, women working in organisations are most often given the roles of secretaries, assistants, and support staff that do not allow them to break out of this stereotype. Other than the position they occupy in the organisational structure itself,

organisational cultures themselves operate differently for men and women. (PRIA)

A study conducted by a student in PRIA's Continuing Education Programme records that in an organisation of 114 staff members, 97 are male and 17 are female. 'Out of 17 women staff, 9 are in Secretarial/Office Support, 2 are in Managerial position (Unit Manager, PME-MIS Specialist) and 6 are in program level (Jr. Specialist Agriculture, Jr. Specialist Rural Sociologist, Jr. Agriculture Engineer, Jr. Specialist - GIS, Technical Assistant), Out of 17, ten are on regular payroll and seven are on contracts.' (Bhandula. PRIA 2007)

Sometimes we find that organisations are either gender neutral or blind, but often times the desire of exhibiting gender sensitivity towards one gender becomes obsessively biased against another gender. A study by a student researcher in PRIA reveals that in one such organisation, working for women, all the Board members are female as organisational policies state that a male cannot sit on its Board. There are 70% female staffs as compared to 30% males and the former are recorded as being given preferential treatment. To quote the researcher, 'It is also thinking of the female staff that as this is a woman dominated organization and they are in majority, they do not feel the need to give the same level of respect to their male colleagues. Most of the time suggestions and recommendations of female staff are given more weightage and suggestions of male staff ignored unless these persons play a valuable role in the organization. Their contention is that as the outside world is a male dominated society, within their organisation they have created a reverse environment where males have no role to play.' (Ullah, PRIA, 2006)

The question then arises as to how one can possibly create a cohesive environment of learning, sharing and growth prospects within an organisation. An organisation's structure, culture, strategy, systems, norms and policies determine its organisational behaviour. Strategically planned organisational change efforts only began forty years ago and since these methods attempted to change organisations in ways that would enhance employee motivation and empowerment, as well as organisational productivity, efficiency, and results these methods, therefore seem well-suited to address gender issues that are rooted in the design and process of organisations, including NGOs. (Tandon.et all. 2006)

A transformed organisation would have men and women in equal numbers at all levels and in all functions with equal benefits. It would value productive and

reproductive labour, and diminish the split among work, home and community. It would decrease oppressive hierarchy in organisations and include those voices that are currently marginal in decision-making. It would ensure empowerment and accountability at all levels in organisations and value the different perspectives formed by gender, racial, ethnic, age, class and sexual orientation differences. (Rao et. all. 1999)

Organizations have to work with the implicit understanding that, "you can't just add women in, you have to go back and rethink the whole matter." (Rao. 2002).

Women's Work and Learning in PRIA

PRIA's founding philosophy is based on the principles of Participatory Research. In its core meaning, it describes research as a systematic process of understanding a given reality. Knowledge in this perspective is not merely that which is recorded in books and documents; knowledge is the understanding of realities in order to act upon them. Thus it has evolved methods, tools and techniques, which enable actors to articulate their existing knowledge about a reality (or a set of issues within that reality). Popular knowledge, indigenous knowledge, knowledge in use, or tacit knowledge is valued and recognised as valid in this perspective. Thus it propagates a belief that all human beings are knowledgeable, and capable of knowing more. Knowledge production and utilization do not reside in experts alone, and ordinary folks are knowledge producers and users as well (Tandon 2002).

PRIA's mission clearly recognises the agenda of gender equity in society. Its programmes and interventions have been focusing on addressing such gender inequity and discrimination over the past 25 years. (Tandon et. all. 2006) 'PRIA believes in gender justice as a cornerstone of such relations in the family, community and society.' In keeping with PRIA's vision and mission towards articulating such a world of equity and justice, PRIA in recent times has begun to address gender mainstreaming within its own organisational context.

Over the last several years, development agencies have increasingly had to confront the reality of the gender divide within their programmes in the field. With this came the realization that among the poor - both urban and rural - and among the marginalized, women are the poorest, the most marginalized and the most

discriminated against. Therefore, the initial focus of development organisations being exclusively focused towards bringing women into the development process has evolved over the years and today organisations are also aware of the need to look at gender within their own organizations. This need has emerged from three different directions from the grassroots level work with women's groups/organisations, from women and men within the CBOs (Community Based Organisations) and CSOs (Civil Society organizations) itself and from donors in the North. (PRIA)

PRIA's formation of Committee for Gender Awareness and Mainstreaming in PRIA (CGAMP) was one of the most radical steps towards mainstreaming gender within the workplace. Historically, in December 1998, PRIA's Governing Board mandated the formation of a Committee to address and prevent the occurrences of Sexual Harassment within the institution. This was in accordance with the judgment passed by the Supreme Court of India, on August 13, 1998, which made it legally binding for all institutions (private or government) to create Committee Against Sexual Harassment (CASH) in accordance with the Vishakha Guidelines.

This CASH committee, apart from promoting and developing a conducive working environment within the workplace, was also mandated to advocate the formation of similar such committees within their network. CASH focused on building up an awareness of Sexual Harassment within the workplace, creating structures that minimized the risk to women whether within or outside of the office premises, creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect for both the sexes as well as developing policies which dealt with perpetrators of sexual harassment.

In 2001, CASH evolved into CGAMP or the Committee for Gender Awareness and Mainstreaming in PRIA, which still exists today. This Committee was not only responsible for formulating PRIA's Gender Policy but ensured that it is not only carried out in the word but also in spirit, creating an environment of openness, safety and security for every individual in the organization and stressed upon the engendering of the workplace.

Today, in 2007 we can look back at the achievements of CASH and CGAMP in building up a positive work culture and environment within the organization, which examines Gender Mainstreaming as a continuous process. It has fine-tuned strategies to address gender discrimination, personal growth and learning, coping

strategies for individuals and the institution, review of norms and policies. CGAMP advocates a conducive work environment and challenges patriarchal ideology and male dominance in the process of women's empowerment.

Keeping in view PRIA's commitment towards gender mainstreaming, a gender audit was conducted in November 2000 by an external consultant, at both the institutional and programmatic levels, to assess the impact of PRIA gender mainstreaming efforts. As a part of the recommendations from the audit, interactions were encouraged by staff to come forward to document the existing gender fair practices within PRIA.

The Gender Audit was a turning point in the history of CASH. Staff views, feedback and opinions suggested that the Committee had played more than just developing awareness and prevention of the occurrence of Sexual Harassment but had taken within its mandate, the advocacy of gender sensitivity and facilitation of gender mainstreaming within the organization.

Through the audit, women in PRIA conveyed that they truly felt empowered and believed that the organization had their interests as a central part of the organizational structure. Men in the organization felt that they had developed a better understanding on gender issues as well as the problems and frustrations of not only their female colleagues but also other women in their lives. The organization had started a process of thinking and questioning in every aspect of its functioning.

If gender equality is a key principle with which we want to shape our organization, then we need to begin by understanding the Gender Dynamics that operate and prevail within the work culture, the infrastructure as well as the norms and procedures of our institution. Each of these different dimensions of the organisation, though separate entities, are inextricably linked to each other and the processes of each impact other.

These were the issues that faced PRIA 5-6 years ago and though we have found some answers for some of the problems, we still have to fine tune our efforts and devise innovative and forge new paths to meet the constant challenges that we face in our attempts to mainstream gender in the workplace.

Gender Infrastructure

In PRIA we began with taking stock of where we stood in relation to gender equality.

We asked ourselves several questions

- How equal are we with regards to staffing, decision making processes and structures?
- Are the roles and job descriptions of people working in the organisation dictated to and constrained by gender stereotyping?
- Is the working environment conducive and comfortable to both sexes?
- Has the organization institutionalized the gender debate - is it an intrinsic part of our development policy, reflected in our rules and regulations?
- Are the processes of gender equity and strategised efforts of affirmative action clear and reaching to the ultimate goal of a gender just organization?

Today several years down the line we can retrospect on all the changes to see where we have reached and what more needs to be done. If the current thinking states that the basics of gender inequality require a Gender Policy, which commits the organization to a path of gender equality and a gender unit which ensures that women are not disadvantaged through their programmes, then PRIA surely meets the demand with its simple yet effective gender policy.

PRIA's Gender Policy very clearly spells out the policies, norms, procedures and regulations both within the institution as well as its programmatic areas, which will initiate as well as reinforce efforts at Gender Mainstreaming, at both levels. In fact formulating of the Gender Policy was the first step for CASH to create a space where women felt empowered and secure.

The first concrete step towards a comfortable workplace in the context of PRIA was a policy which prohibited the consumption of alcohol not only within the office premises but also at every event hosted by, sponsored or organized by PRIA. This policy effectively put an end to drinking while on official duty, even outside of the office premises. The message sent out was very clear - women were uncomfortable when their male colleagues got drunk and heightened the chances of exhibiting inappropriate behaviour. PRIA supported their discomfort and official measures were formulated, within the Service Rules, which regarded drinking on duty as an act of indiscipline.

Other issues of women's discomfort and safety were also addressed and formally dealt with. These included special provisions for women traveling alone or late at night. A special allowance allows women to avail of a higher mode of transport while traveling alone to ensure her safety. This is also reflected in her being able to avail of staying in better accommodation, not usually covered by her allowance, but ensuring her personal sense of physical safety.

However, more than the rules it is important to understand the processes that went into developing these rules. Workshops were conducted where women were encouraged to share their problems without the fear of ridicule or being labeled trouble makers or even to be found wanting in comparison to their male colleagues. Intensive discussions took place amongst men and women to discuss why there was a need to provide steps to safeguard women's safety and for men to be assured that such measures were not an indication of discrimination against the male population. The general environment of the organization also clearly stated that ridicule of women on aspects of their safety and security was totally unacceptable, giving women the confidence to avail of these facilities as well as confront those who attempted to deride them for their "weakness".

Participation of Women

The Gender Policy very clearly states that the 'participation of women is required in all activities of PRIA. The first step towards achieving this is the recruitment of women in the organisation. All advertisements for posts available clearly state that preference will be given to suitable women candidates. As a concrete follow up action, it is imperative that all interview panels have an equal representation of women to ensure that the process is conducted with a gender perspective, the presence of women interviewers provides a sense of solidarity to the female candidate, minimizes the risk of discriminatory questions being posed (e.g. Will you work after your marriage, do you intend to start a family, how will it impact your work etc.) and results in a gender balanced decision.

Women's representation is also mandatory in any institutional committee, task force, representational team, panel that is set up in PRIA.

It is a well-known fact, that very often the ratio of women and men in organisations is imbalanced, with women being fewer in number. It is also very common to find that even where numbers of women are equal, their representation at the decision-making levels and the top-management are very low.

Gender Ratio

In PRIA, the organizational structure and ratio of men and women are reviewed bi-annually to assess the numbers of women working in the organization as well as their positions in terms of authority and decision-making. An analysis of the same is conducted to gauge the possible reasons for high turnover amongst women, steps that could be taken to increase retention of women staff, long-term strategies to ensure that existing women staff is given adequate support to play more responsible roles in future.

Publications and Documents

All PRIA publications, internal documents and those for public dissemination are scanned for gender insensitive language or discriminatory remarks. This includes the website, audio visual material, press and media releases. Special emphasis is taken to ensure that the Service Rules and other administrative documents are gender sensitive.

Day Care Facilities

One room in PRIA has been designated for use by the children of staff, in the event that their parents need to bring them to the office. It is permitted that a caretaker be brought along who would be with the child. However, it is common (especially during long vacations), to see children sitting at their parents desk as they work.

Short Leave

This provision is provided to all staff members for two hours at a stretch, twice a month to cope with smaller personal matters - paying a bill, attending a parent-teacher meeting, getting something fixed at home etc. This provision allows staff to take a few hours off when needed, without feeling obligated to their supervisors for favours.

Institutional Norms

The most important aspect of any organization is its work culture and informal norms and procedures. These give out important signals of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Employees take their cue on whether punctuality is a big issue; working overtime finds favor with the boss and likewise whether gender issues are of prime importance or only powerful words confined to paper.

In the context of gender equality within the workplace, the Committee also proposed the granting of 15 days of Paternity Leave to men who were to be fathers. This was a positive step forward in recognizing the importance of the role of men as parents. It was equally important to create a supportive atmosphere.

It is only recently that the importance of fatherhood had gained recognition and acquired a status. Motherhood was perceived to be of supreme importance and no other role could ever come near this position. Therefore, to set the stage for motivating men in PRIA to play this role with responsibility and be convinced of their importance rather than avail of 15 days of relaxation was a challenge. There was an open discussion on how men could support their wives/partners with taking care of their newborn. Experienced fathers gave tips to the men about to enter this new phase in their lives. They shared the joy of seeing their children grow, the pleasure in the child's demonstrated need for the father's attention and affection, all of which helped in creating a positive attitude towards fatherhood.

The test came when fathers discussed and demanded the revision of the structure of Paternity Leave, so as to maximize its value for their family. Instead of the rule, which stated that Paternity Leave had to be availed of within 15 days of the child's birth, a new rule was created. Paternity can now be availed in slots of 5 days each during a -period of 2 weeks before the child's birth to 10 weeks after the birth. The recognition of men as caretakers and playing a reproductive role was a path clearly being chartered in PRIA.

Work Culture

In PRIA, in the past it was considered appropriate and indeed an indicator of hard work for individuals to work later than regular office hours, as well as to come in on

Saturdays, Sundays and holidays to finish their tasks. There was a subtle approval of all those who so showed their commitment to the organization. More often than not it was the men in the office who did so and in the process male secretaries stayed on to support them, reinforcing the stereotype that women never stayed on late to complete tasks or even work extra hours.

There was a serious discussion on this aspect of loyalty and commitment to the organization. The issue raised was whether those who did not stay late but finished their tasks were not efficient, was staying late the only indicator of loyalty and efficiency to their work and the organisation. It was discovered that most people in the Accounts Section had worked every single Saturday and most Sundays for more than two years at a stretch. This was creating pressures within their families.

More importantly was raised the issue of obligations that individuals had towards their families as well as responsibilities within their homes. If they were not around to fulfill their reproductive roles, was the burden being taken over by someone else? Was this person a woman from their families? Could absence from family events and responsibilities also be construed as lack of commitment and disloyalty? Could such actions be found as reinforcing the gender stereotype of women's roles being primarily those of homemakers, while men were considered as the breadwinners?

This finally gave way to Saturdays being declared as an official holiday and a ban on working late or coming in on holidays unless there was an urgency to the task involved.

Performance Appraisal

Annual Performance Appraisals have Gender Sensitivity as an indicator of performance. Supervisors are to note whether individuals, male or female, have displayed instances of gender sensitivity or to record whether there has been any proof of unaccepted behaviour. Feedback is given to individuals and they are counseled with a view to changing their attitude

Part Time Jobs in PRIA

The need for a better and more stable economic condition for the family has seen many women now entering the workforce. 'Though the employment of women

outside family is accepted by our society there is no clarity about their role within family circumstances.' (Kaila. 2005). It is a daunting task indeed for women to then balance work and their family since they are still the prime caretakers for their children. This creates a problem situation for these women. Because of their commitments at home, they are unable to attend workshops, seminars, go for exposure visits, stay late at the office since they all require longer working hours. In most organisations, opportunities for professional learning are also seen as an opportunity of professional 'bonding' and often conducted after work hours or held in out of town locations. Female staff with families or single women with conservative families very often cannot attend, leading to a loss of opportunity for further learning and of 'bonding' with other professional staff and professional growth then becomes a distant dream. Some work requires extensive travel and inability to travel also could lead to possibly being overlooked for promotions and recommendations.

The idea of part time jobs was initially conceptualized in the context of those women who would like to work but due to responsibilities of young children could not commit themselves to working a full/normal working day. Some of these women had a working experience of 10 years or more (sometimes within PRIA itself) and could provide valuable inputs to the organization in areas of training, documentation, monitoring, evaluation and developing resource material etc.

The first experiment worked well in terms of the satisfactory completion of tasks by the individual woman concerned. Though the first part-time role-played a support function rather than a programmatic role it was a positive experience for both the organization and the individual. In fact after working for ten years as a part timer, this individual has now started working full-time as her domestic situation has changed, allowing her to spend more time in the organisation.

Gradually, this role was extended to other women who expressed a desire to work part time. A minimum number of 5 hours of daily work is required for a part time worker, though women extend this according to their ability to give more time. Efforts have also been made to include these senior women in decision making bodies that look after institutional matters, recognizing their valuable experience, rather than the number of hours they work.

Over the years the system has been fine-tuned to take into account needs of the individuals as well as the organization:

- Most meetings where the presence of part timers is required are scheduled for the morning hours, as most of these individuals work in the first half of the day.
- In the event that the meeting cannot be scheduled in the morning, part timers will work in the second half of the day.
- In the event that the meeting is scheduled for the whole day, the individual can bring their child along with a caretaker, availing of the room set aside for this specific purpose.
- On occasions like the Annual Retreat (2 nights), which is mandatory for every staff member to attend, the organization pays for the travel, accommodation and all other expenditure of the caretaker who accompanies the child.
- On some occasions women are allowed to work from home, in case the situations demands that she be present, in order to meet deadlines of work.
- The positive environment that the organization provides has encouraged women to work, without feeling pressured or taking a break in their careers.
- The importance of children and families are supported and recognized and due respect is given to those individuals who prioritise their families.
- Working part time has no negative implications on the salary structure. It would be commensurate to the scale of a full timer at the same position, though on a pro-rata basis.
- Provision of leave remains the same as for all other staff members.
- Some senior individuals would be paid up to 80-90% of the salary scale with the formal contract stating that they would be 100% responsible for their role.

It is interesting to note that though this provision of working part time has been extended to all staff; it is only women who have availed of this facility. However, it has been noted that when the need arises, men sometimes operate from home in order to be with their family. In fact it is no longer considered only a woman's role to take care of the home or the children.

Part time work in PRIA has been one of the most successful schemes within the organization. It has been noted that part-time workers are more efficient and time bound to their tasks. In fact in one unit consisting of 6 persons, three of them were part-timers, including the head of the unit and their performance last year was rated as outstanding.

The Adult Woman's learning

We are all aware that adults learn, grow and change, contrary to the belief that learning is difficult to alter once it has taken place. The key principles of Adult Learning include:

Adults are *autonomous* and *self-directed*; they need to be free to direct themselves. Adults have accumulated a foundation of *life experiences* and *knowledge* that may include work-related activities, family responsibilities, and previous education.

Adults are *goal-oriented*, they usually know what goal they want to attain. Adults are *relevancy-oriented*; learning has to be applicable to their work or other responsibilities to be of value to them.

Adults are *practical*, focusing on the aspects of a lesson most useful to them in their work or lives.

As do all learners, adults need to be shown *respect*. Their wealth of experiences must be acknowledged and they must be viewed as equals. If these, therefore, are the principles of adult learning, then it would be safe to infer that these principles could be applied to women's learning as well.

However, in reality the learning process of an "Adult Woman" is to be treated differently to that of an "Adult Learner". Several popular Adult Learning theories may be gender blind and do not take into account social context, cultural impacts and the politics of power in educational theory.

Women's 'learning' and 'learning ability' have always been considered inferior and amongst the unprivileged group of women, non-existent, like her role and status in society. (PRIA.1991). Women, by the very nature of their upbringing and

socialization processes made more difficult by the continual denial of opportunities through their growing up years, begin to take interest in learning, when they feel that it is going to relate to their life. Their process of learning enhanced when it includes the concerns of their homes and families.

In PRIA, the focus of all women's learning takes into account their skills, their own life's roles and their specific orientation. Women are encouraged to develop their careers in areas which are of interest to them and not only of convenience to their families.

It has often been noted that women are exceptional managers who when given these roles play them with a generous humane and emotional touch. Their abilities to multi-task have helped them juggle several responsibilities at one time. Therefore women's learning helps them focus on these areas of learning, that help them realize the value of these skills and develop a strong sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

Given the fact that women learn when concerns of their families and homes are taken into account, the Human Resource Division within PRIA now seeks ways and means for women to further learn, which is of value to them and does not compromise their reproductive roles. Distance learning, Online Universities, subject specific, short term courses and educational programmes are given priority for women to improve their capacities.

PRIA's own Continuing Education Programme encourages women learners, who wish to improve their own skills in specific thematic areas. It does so by subsidizing the fees and extending deadlines for submission of assignments and other necessary considerations. In their future planning PRIA Continuing Education intends to develop courses for those women at a field level, who need to develop specific learning needs- literacy skills, programmes for neo-literates, computer literacy, thematic areas such as micro-finance, watershed management, natural resource management, social audit etc.

Women employees and especially part-time women employees are encouraged to go and visit PRIA's field sites, whenever an event takes place and it is possible for them to travel at that particular time- e.g. Women's Day Programme, Seminars, and Conferences etc. Support is given in terms of taking their children and a caretaker

along. Wherever possible, they travel over the weekends, so that other family members can take over their role.

Therefore, women's learning have to take into account the fears, aspirations, rebellions, and transformations that are an integral part of a woman's educational journey. Women's learning focus on the importance of factors such as sense of identity, self-esteem, social world, and power in which they learn. It realizes the importance and the influence of her home, family, community and how women are connected to the object and process of learning. (Haye, Flannery).

Conclusion

In today's context gender in the formal workplace is not only about women entering male dominated bastions and creating their own spaces but it is about organisations progressing towards building an employee friendly work culture and developing strategies for each individual to attain their maximum potential. Gender in the formal workspace also implies integrating family life and domestic responsibilities into each individual's holistic framework and vision of their life. Professional careers and personal paths cannot be treated as two parallel operations, where one does not impact upon the other.

The formal workplace can now be considered a workshop, where people discuss traditional roles and views and transform their attitudes and perceptions in realistic and practical terms to face the challenges of the future. Equalising the responsibilities and opportunities for both men and women would be less conflicting if women were viewed as individuals who are exploring their capabilities and strength both in the private as well as the public domains.

"Engendering" the formal workplace should not be construed as "endangering" the space for either men or women, but rather, it is creating structures and spaces for both men and women to maximize their potential at both the personal and professional front and prove to be assets to their organizations.

However, in conclusion it can be said that workspaces can only truly be engendered when within their own personal lives women and men both share equally in the reproductive roles within their homes. Domestic chores, care of children, the sick and the elderly when equally divided will truly liberate both men and women in reaching the dream of a gender just society. This reality will be reflected in workplaces where men seek part time employment, where women can take on challenges without being burdened by dual responsibilities, where gender practices ensure just treatment of individuals within the organization, irrespective of their gender.

Acknowledgements

References

Tandon, Rajesh. Farrell, Martha. (2006). Handbook of *Collaborative Management Research*. SAGE Publications.

Tandon, Rajesh. Nilakant, V. (1982). An alternative approach for improving quality of working life in India. New Delhi, India.

Dhar. Sunita. (1991). PRIA unpublished. New Delhi, India.

Rao, Aruna. Stuart, Rieky and Kelleher, David. (1999). Gender at work organizational change for equality. Kumarian Press. Connecticut, USA.

Bhandula. Seema. (2007). PRIA unpublished. Ullah. Shafqat. (2006). PRIA unpublished.

Dr. Mandakini Pant. (2004). Adult education and livelihood: women as agents of change. PRIA.

Chadha, Prem. Jagadananda. Lal, Gayatri. (2003). Organisational behaviour: a framework for non-government development organisations. Centre for youth and social development.

Rao, Aruna. Stuart, Rieky. Kelleher, David. (1999). Gender at work: organisational change for equality. Kumarian press.

Kaila. H.L. (2005). Women, work and family. Rawat publications.

Walters, Shirley (Ed.). Globalisation, adult education and training: impacts and issues. Zed Books.

Women workers: inequalities at work: final draft. South Asian research and development initiative.

Rao, Aruna. Kelleher, David. (2001). Transforming institutions for gender equality: history, challenges and a proposal to move forward.

TOT learning materials. Adult learning. PRIA unpublished.

Nilakant V. Roy, P. Tandon, Dr. R. Discussion paper on the quality of worklife issues and prospects. Public enterprises centre for continuing education.

Documentation of gender fair practices in PRIA. (2003). PRIA unpublished

Nilakant, V. Tandon, Dr. Rajesh. (1982). An alternative approach for improving quality of working life in India.

Farrell, Martha. Tandon, Dr. Rajesh. (2006). Collaborative participatory research in gender mainstreaming in social change organisations. PRIA unpublished.

Rao, Aruna. (2002). Gender equality and institutional change: prepared for the PRIA organisational development training course. PRIA unpublished.

Women's work and voluntary organisations. PRIA unpublished.

Rao, Aruna. Kelleher, David. (2001). Transforming institutions for gender equality: history, challenges and a proposal to move forward.

Putting gender on the agenda. PRIA unpublished.

Haye, Elisabeth. Flannery Daniele. Women as Learners: The significance of Gender in Adult Learning.

Women Employment in India, Employment opportunity for Women
azadindia.org

Literature Review

Since the paper's objectives are to exemplify PRIA's efforts towards mainstreaming gender and exploring women's potentials in the workplace, most of our literatures are PRIA documents, some published and others unpublished. In this section, we are going to provide a synopsis for all literatures that have been referenced by the authors during the preparation of this paper.

Dr. Mandakini Pant. (2004). Adult education and livelihood: women as agents of change. PRIA.

This paper draws upon the findings of PRIA's impact study, which aimed to explore the educational practices of NGOs towards empowering self-help groups and on the impact of educational practices on women collectives from their vantage point.

Chadha, Prem. Jagadananda. Lal, Gayatri. (2003). Organisational behaviour: a framework for non-government development organisations. Centre for youth and social development.

Recording some of the best practice in use among a number of social organisations in Asia, this book also offers a comprehensive model to assess effectiveness of individual non-governmental development organisations in using the available resources in the service of their visions, missions and goals.

Rao, Aruna. -Stuart, Rieky. Kelleher, David. (1999). Gender at work: organisational change for equality. Kumarian press.

A collection of seven papers and case studies, this book presents an analysis of the institutional barriers to gender equality. Laying down strategies and approaches for transforming organisations, it describes how to uncover the hidden values and cultures in order to stimulate and entrench new gender equitable ways of working.

Kaila. H.L. (2005). Women, work and family. Rawat publications.

This book aims at providing organisations a better insight on myriad issues towards creating an understanding and appreciation within organisations on integrating family and life concerns at the workplace for maximizing the performance and potential of the human resources in organisations.

Walters, Shirley (Ed.). Globalisation, adult education and training: impacts and issues. Zed Books.

This book is a collection of critical reflections on adult education and training, a product of a meeting of a large number of leading academics and practitioners to help contend with the changes brought about by globalisation and changes in social relations.

Women workers: inequalities at work: final draft. South Asian Research and Development Initiative.

This survey looks at specific working conditions for women in industry (wages, timings etc.), promotions and benefits, occupational health and safety, collective bargaining and harassment at the work place. It examines and analyses these working conditions in the industry for possible discriminations against women with the view towards shaping future strategies from the perspectives of the female worker, male worker, management and the union leader.

TOT Learning materials. Adult Learning. PRIA unpublished.

A major challenge that most trainers confront is how to reach across to the adults. PRIA believes that adults learn, grow and change.

Nilakant V. Roy, P. Tandon, Dr. R.; Discussion paper on the quality of work life issues and prospects. Public enterprises centre for continuing education.

The paper seeks to clarify some of the terms used in the "quality of work life" movement and at the same time raises issues of practical consideration while redesigning work and improving the quality of work life.

Documentation of gender fair practices in PRIA. (2003). PRIA unpublished

Keeping in view PRIA's commitment to the process of gender mainstreaming at the institutional and programmatic levels, its gender audit was conducted by an external consultant. This paper documents the gender fair practices of PRIA and all the organisations within its network as a pre requisite for the audit.

Nilakant, V. Tandon, Dr. Rajesh. (1982). An alternative approach for improving quality of working life in India.

This paper attempts to analyse the improbable stagnation of efforts for improving the quality of working life in India even though written accounts do portray a success story.

Farrell, Martha. Tandon, Dr. Rajesh.(2006). Collaborative participatory research in gender mainstreaming in social change organisations. PRIA unpublished.

This paper describes PRIA's learning process approach to gender mainstreaming within the organisation using a collaborative research methodology.

Women's work and voluntary organisations. PRIA unpublished.

This paper discusses the perspectives of women's work and empowerment. This paper does not talk about individual entrepreneurs, but rather focuses on the component of labour involved in the work of self-employed women, working for survival, sustenance and subsistence of the family.

Rao, Aruna. Kelleher, David. (2001). Transforming institutions for gender equality: history, challenges and a proposal to move forward

This paper offers some perspectives on what has shaped the connections between gender equality and organisational / institutional transformation debates. It discusses some key learnings and dilemmas of developmental interventions towards the achievement of gender equity and then goes on to discuss a vision of a collaborative process and how this can be implemented.

Rao, Aruna. (2002). Gender equality and institutional change: prepared for the PRIA organisational development training course. PRIA, unpublished.

This paper, revisits the concepts of gender and gender equality, discusses institutional change and provides a framework of approaches towards change for gender equality.

Putting gender on the agenda. PRIA unpublished.

Women as learners: The significance of Gender in Adult Learning by Daniele D. Flannery (Author) Elisabeth Hayes (Author).

About PRIA

Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) is a global participatory research and training centre. PRIA's professional expertise and practical insights are utilised by other civil society groups, NGOs, governments, donors, trade unions, private business and academic institutions around the world.

Since its inception in 1982, PRIA has embarked on a set of initiatives focusing on empowerment of the poor and excluded. PRIA has consistently worked on issues of citizens' access to rights and entitlements, such as basic services in health, education and water in rural and urban areas; women's literacy and livelihood; forest rights of tribals; prevention of land alienation and displacement; and workers' occupational health and safety. In all its interventions, PRIA emphasises gender mainstreaming institutionally and programmatically. Its perspectives on participatory research generate innovative participatory methodologies.

The intensive field programmes of PRIA are currently located in the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan. In addition, through its network of partners, these interventions extend throughout India. PRIA is also involved in programmes in countries like Afghanistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Philippines and Sri Lanka.



42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi – 110062, India

Tel: + 91 – 11 – 2996 0931/32/33; Fax: + 91 – 11 – 2995 5183; Email: info@pria.org ; Web: www.pria.org

PRIA is a global participatory research and training centre