



**Young Women
Learners in
Industrial Training
Institutes:**
Decoding Challenges
to Successful Careers

Supported by

J.P.Morgan

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Skilling Women for Effective Careers	
Part 1	5
The Gender Challenge at ITIs	
Part 2	13
Enabling a Gender Responsive ITI Ecosystem; Key Insights and Recommendations	
Conclusion	19
Synergizing the Meaning of Empowerment for Young Women in ITIs	

Introduction:

Skilling Women for Effective Careers

Introduction: Skilling Women for Effective Careers

Women's labour force participation has never looked promising. But the decline in numbers in the last two decades has been alarming. While this rings true across the world, the situation is particularly stark in India **where the**

percentage of working women has reduced from 35% in 2005 to 26% in 2018.¹



Although one of the major reasons for this drop is the rise in the number of women in formal education (which delays their entry into the job market) there is no contending the fact that nearly half in the age group of 15 to 24 years are not engaged in education, employment or training, compared to just 8% men in the same bracket.²

A major travesty here is that the few who do enter the labour force are faced with gendered distribution of jobs, which is mostly concentrated in low productivity industries.

¹ Women in Gender, World Bank (last updated- September 2017). [Link to Source](#).

² Culture and the Labour Market keep India's Women at Home; Economic Times. 5th July 2018.

Introduction: Skilling Women for Effective Careers

Globally too, women are overrepresented in education and health, and underrepresented in manufacturing and science, resulting in lower wages - up to **20% less** (ILO, **2016**) - as compared to men.

In light of this, Quest Alliance, through its program MyQuest, has been working to support the ITI ecosystem in India, to enable a gender focused programming in ITIs engagements with women students.

ITIs in India are centres where the forces of the labour market interact with aspirations of youth and hence wield considerable influence on the future of the economy and the lives of the youth trained through their programs.

At present, there are a total of **13,910** ITIs in there are a total of **13,910** ITIs in all States/UTs. These ITIs impart training in **126** trades (**73** Engineering + **48** Non-Engineering + **05** exclusively for visually impaired) over a duration 1-2 years.



Introduction: Skilling Women for Effective Careers

National Trade Certificate, nationally & internationally recognized under the aegis of National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) is awarded to successful trainees. Women's labour force National Trade Certificate, nationally & internationally recognized under the aegis of National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) is awarded to successful trainees.

MyQuest, as a program, targets students belonging to disadvantaged groups, particularly focusing on career development by working around key components like skill-building and industry engagement. The program aims to enhance the skills of these youth, to enable them to venture into competitive market spaces, find sustainable employment and building effective careers. The program runs through partnerships; with other NGOs, private and government vocational training institutes and ITIs.

This qualitative report presents findings for organizations and persons working with youth, especially young women, in the skilling space in India. It presents a picture of the opportunities as well as barriers that frame the ITI ecosystem, the challenges that young women walk in with and what stakeholders such as NGOs and other skilling partners can do to help girls graduate with informed career choices.

Part 1:

The Gender Challenge at ITIs



Part 1: The (Gender) Challenge at ITIs

The entire premise of this research study was anchored around the fact that female ITI graduates are not present in the labour market in adequate numbers. It pursues possible reasons for the larger gender problem and how it reflects in the skewed distribution of available jobs. Following a qualitative analyses of interviews with women ITI trainers, principals and students from 6 intervention states (Delhi, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Assam, Gujarat), our findings suggested the following as barriers to female ITI graduates joining the workforce:

1 There's a mismatch between market demand, placement strategies and aspirations of female students

This component refers to the issue of poor market demand for trades that are popular among female students. A major factor for this issue of market demand was also found to be related to a larger ITI level poor awareness of local industries or employers relevant to the trades chosen by female students.

For instance, several ITIs covered under the study were found to lack focused employer engagement strategies for trades such as beauty culture, tailoring and cosmetology (versus electrician, welder and turner). A large number of students also expressed how they had been offered jobs in fields and trades (such as retail) unre-

Part 1: The (Gender) Challenge at ITIs

lated to their training and aspirations - causing them to reject the job offers.

2 **Girls often join ITIs without adequate understanding of trades and related future employment prospects**

A major finding of the study is related to the need for ITI management and NGO partners working in the space, to engage with backgrounds, challenges and aspirations that female students walk in with. Our study found that despite the vocational purpose behind ITI training, not every student views it as a road to immediate employment.

These girls often fall into three categories:

- Those who view their ITI training as one of several qualifications on their path towards future employment: They are looking to upgrade their skills and look at employment as a prospect in the far future. This category has a greater representation amongst general trades such as computer courses (COPA, ICTSM) or stenography, as well as architecture and fashion design.
- Those who are either not interested in or are not allowed (by their family/ community) to take up

Part 1: The (Gender) Challenge at ITIs

employment: For these students, the ITI training is a source of diversion or productive use of time, personal skilling, and also skilling for self-employment. In this category, there are trades which are more aligned with traditionally feminine skills like tailoring (dressmaking course) or beautician (basic cosmetology) courses.

- Those who are not actively looking for jobs, but are waiting for vacancies in very specific areas, specifically government jobs: These students wait for openings in this sector and apply for the respective examination when such vacancies are announced.

3 Employers are often unwilling to engage with the challenges of newly graduated women students

Several trainers pointed towards the problem of high attrition among girls who get placed through the ITIs.



Part 1: The (Gender) Challenge at ITIs

While this once again points towards the larger concern of mismatch between aspirations and placements, students covered under the study also brought up concerns around the quality of jobs, working conditions and the unequal demands placed on women, which makes it difficult for some of them to continue their employment. In light of this, several principals and trainers pointed towards the general unwillingness on employers' part, to train and retain female graduates.



4 Future marriage prospects form a major decision criteria for placements

Most female ITI students are in what is broadly and colloquially considered the 'marriageable age' in India. Therefore, along with concerns around their career prospects, these students are also in the process of negotiating their 'marriage prospects' with their family/ neighbours/ community. Across states, students did not have a lot of say and agency in this matter. As is often the case, decisions around this matter were being taken by the student's parents/family members. This also held true for decisions about women's career prospects after marriage – whether she can work after marriage, what kind of job can she take up, what kind of working hours can she commit to, where can she work, etc.- solely depends on the future husband and his family. This, in turn, makes it difficult for girls to commit to jobs or even engage with employers during placements.

Part 1: The (Gender) Challenge at ITIs

Students in Delhi, Bangalore, Jaipur and even some of the students in Ahmedabad and Rehabari were found to be more confident about finding families that will allow them to start or continue to work after marriage. However, those in the Tier 3 cities (including Ajmer) were not as confident. This is likely related to them not having seen enough examples of women around them continuing to work after marriage.



Part 1: The (Gender) Challenge at ITIs

This was also found to be one of the main reasons behind most girls, across all cities, expressing preference for government jobs. Several girls, for instance, voiced that their families and future in-laws are unlikely to force them to leave a stable and permanent government job.

5 Female students' time in ITIs is divided across 4 stages - enrollment, training, placement and employment. In order to address the above problem level factors, it is critical that ITI management and NGO partners working with them, engage with key influencers relevant to these 4 stages - to enable more girls to join the workforce.

Enrollment Stage

Key Influencers

- Parents, especially fathers
- Older siblings
- Friends of fathers and friends of older siblings
- Relatives/cousins considered successful by the family
- Cyber café staff or other third party individuals who help students fill online forms

Part 1: The (Gender) Challenge at ITIs

Training Stage

Key Influencers

- ITI Trainers
- ITI classmates

Placement Stage

- Parents – both mothers and fathers
- Older siblings
- ITI Staff
- ITI classmates
- Relatives/cousins/family friends that are considered successful by the family
- The family of the future husband - for students who are married, or are in talks for marriage

Employment Stage

- Family members - mothers or mothers-in-law, fathers or fathers-in-law, husbands, children (if any) and even extended family members
- Neighbours or community members in the students' societal circle
- Colleagues and supervisors at the workplace
- Friends or peers that students are in touch with

Part 2:

**Enabling a Gender
Responsive ITI
Ecosystem; Key
Insights and
Recommendations**

Part 2: Enabling a Gender Responsive ITI Ecosystem; Key Insights and Recommendations

Lack of quality education and training has popularly been blamed for the skewed gender parity in the workplace. But as is evident from our findings, stigmas surrounding women working outside the home form deeper issues that directly impact their participation in the labour market. Moreover, although specifically geared for employment creation, the placement rates of ITIs leave much to be desired.

Based on the above analyses, we offer the following as some key recommendations and potential solutions; to help young women in ITIs develop and meet their career aspirations. These recommendations are largely directed towards technical agencies and NGOs that often partner with ITIs to help improve the larger ecosystem, as a way of ensuring effective placements and careers for students.

1 Work with relevant government bodies (Directorate of Employment and Training, in this case) to advocate for the following:

Skill upgradation for trainers

This refers to timely refresher trainings to trainers, in order to upgrade their trade-specific skills and knowledge. This in turn, can help them impart training that is in sync with market demands.

Part 2: Enabling a Gender Responsive ITI Ecosystem; Key Insights and Recommendations

Improved and upgraded infrastructure

Support ITIs or partner with technical agencies to improve, upgrade and expand infrastructure to ensure the most effective use of students' time. It is critical that the software and hardware used at the ITI be aligned with those used in the market. This can help ensure that students graduate with proper knowledge of the latest equipment they will be expected to work with.

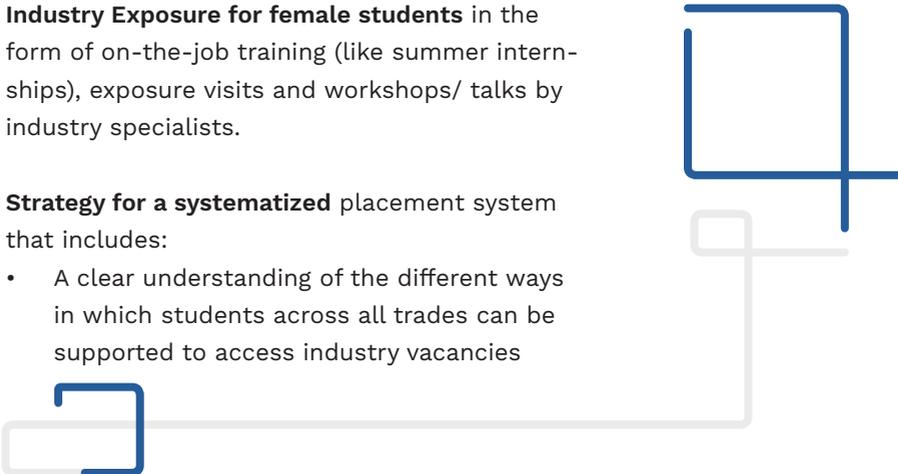
2 Support the existing ITI system with the aim of strengthening it, by providing:

Pre-admission Counselling or Open-days for potential female students and their parents, to ensure students take informed decisions about the institutes and trades they are signing up for.

Industry Exposure for female students in the form of on-the-job training (like summer internships), exposure visits and workshops/ talks by industry specialists.

Strategy for a systematized placement system that includes:

- A clear understanding of the different ways in which students across all trades can be supported to access industry vacancies



Part 2: Enabling a Gender Responsive ITI Ecosystem; Key Insights and Recommendations

and ways in which companies can come to the ITIs in a more formalized manner and

- A clear definition of the role of the placement officer
- A placement cell which can include students and teachers that take care of the daily management of this system.

A focused placement strategy with the above elements can also include the following components:

- **Alumni Database:** This will help the institute in tracking which ITI students are doing after passing out of the institute, the trends and data on their employment, and also in maintaining relations with the alumni for any future support in skilling and placement of current students.
- **Industry Engagement:** ITIs need to be supported in taking more proactive steps for industry engagement, which includes local industries as well the bigger state or national level enterprises. This will help break the stereotypes against ITI students in the market, expand the number and kind of companies that come to the institutes with their vacancies and also help access skilling, on-the-job training/ internship and infrastructure support from such industry partners.
- **System for Collecting Employer Feedback:** As part of the placement system, the ITIs need to be supported in developing a system for collecting

Part 2: Enabling a Gender Responsive ITI Ecosystem; Key Insights and Recommendations

feedback from every company/ employer that hires a student from the respective ITI. This will help in developing the ITI program according to identified needs of the industry and gaps in student skills, and also maintain relation with the employers for future placements.

- **System for Collecting Alumni Feedback:** Along with feedback from the employers, as an indicator of the success of the placement system at the ITI, it will be important to collect timely feedback from the alumni for every job accessed through the ITI placement system. This will help the ITIs to track the trustworthy employers and ensure that those practicing deceptive or unfavourable practices are removed from the ITI's list of companies.

3 Work with the management to help address gender-specific barriers:

Engage parents/ family members of students:

Since the primary decision-makers of the female students' lives are their family, for any change in students' aspirations and career goals, ITIs will have to be supported to engage with these key decision-makers.

Introduce curriculum changes with a focus on building female students' negotiation skills:

Since many of the challenges faced by the female students are interpersonal in nature (whether at homes or

Part 2: Enabling a Gender Responsive ITI Ecosystem; Key Insights and Recommendations

jobs), equipping them with negotiation skills will help them navigate through some of these challenges.

Initiate mentoring and exposure to female role models:

ITIs can be supported to initiate mentorship programs/sessions in which female mentors not only support students through their difficult career and personal decisions, but also act as female role models for them. Repeated exposure to female role models in different kinds of jobs will help break stereotypes on the nature of jobs women can take up.

Engage alumni and celebrate success stories:

Developing systems for continuous engaging with alumni through regular alumni meets in which success stories are celebrated can encourage students currently studying in the ITIs to think long term and define career goals for themselves. Facilitating meets and interactions between current students and alumni, to share learnings, can provide relatable role models.

Encouraging female students' entry into non-traditional jobs:

ITIs should be supported to encourage female students' entry into non-traditional jobs. This will help break stereotypes around the gendered nature of jobs. In such non-traditional jobs, a system for hand-holding through the initial 3-6 months will be necessary.

Conclusion:

Synergizing the Meaning of Empowerment for Young Women in ITIs

The findings in this report are based on qualitative interviews with young women students, their parents, trainers and principals from government ITIs of Assam, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. They present a consolidated understanding of the numerous factors and influencers behind low numbers of women in India's workforce.

The factors detailed in this research also help unravel the meanings that young women attach to their education and employment, the nature of their career related decisions and the sources that influence them to take those decisions. As presented in the analyses, these factors vary in intensity across cities and trades and some may be applicable for male students as well. They together unravel the gendered nature of the aspirations and opportunities available to female students passing out of government ITIs in India.
