



**Empowering Futures: Skill Development and School Education for Girls in  
Indian Residential Schools, with a Focus on Warden Training and  
Economic Impact**

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**Abstract**

This paper examines the strategic importance of girls' residential schooling and targeted skill development in India, analysing its profound economic and human capital implications. It critically assesses the current policy landscape, including key government initiatives like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, to understand their role in fostering equitable educational outcomes and integrating vocational training. The paper delineates comprehensive skill development curricula, emphasising the critical blend of academic excellence, life skills, and contemporary vocational pathways. A significant portion is dedicated to the pivotal, multifaceted role of residential school wardens, whose contributions extend beyond supervision to active mentorship and holistic student development. Furthermore, the analysis delves into the economic and social returns on investment (ROI/SROI) in girls' education and skill development, highlighting their transformative impact on individual lives and national prosperity. The paper identifies key challenges in achieving nationwide scalability and effectiveness of training programs for wardens, proposing strategic recommendations for designing and delivering innovative, measurable training modules to empower girls and enhance their socioeconomic participation across India.

**Keywords:** Girls' Residential Schools, Skill Development, Warden Training, Economic Impact, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), Social Return on Investment (SROI)

**1. Introduction: The Strategic Imperative of Girls' Residential Education and Skill Development in India**

**1.1. Contextualizing Girls' Education and Empowerment in India**

Education is a foundational instrument for human capital development and national advancement in India. Despite notable progress in educational access and enrollment over the past decades, significant gender disparities continue to pose a formidable challenge to comprehensive societal development. The female adult literacy rate in India is approximately 48%, notably lower than the 73% recorded for men. This disparity is particularly pronounced in specific regions, such as Rajasthan, where a critical analysis reveals that 9 out of 26 districts suffer from severe gender gaps in education. Only 50% of women in these areas are literate, 40% of girls discontinue their education before reaching Grade 5, and a mere 1% complete Class 12. Nationally, India is home to over 200 million illiterate women and approximately 3 million girls who are eligible but remain out of school.



These educational gaps are intrinsically linked to broader economic challenges, notably the low female labour force participation rate (LFPR). In 2022, India's female LFPR was a mere 24%, starkly contrasting with the global average of 47%. This economic underrepresentation is evident even in more developed regions like Gurugram, Haryana, where the female literacy rate of 77.98% lags behind the male rate of 90.46%, and female work participation is only 16.09% compared to 52.95% for males.

Investing in girls' education and skill development is not merely a social expenditure but a highly strategic economic investment. Education equips girls with the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to pursue employment opportunities, achieve financial independence, and make informed life decisions. This investment generates a transformative ripple effect that extends beyond individual beneficiaries to benefit entire societies, fostering improved health outcomes, stimulating economic growth, and contributing significantly to poverty reduction. Educated women are more likely to prioritise and secure education for their children, initiating an intergenerational positive change cycle. This dynamic positions girls' education as a critical national economic strategy, justifying substantial public and private resource allocation and underscoring the intrinsic link between the long-term economic prosperity of India and its capacity to educate and empower its female population fully.

### **1.2. The Role of Residential Schools in Fostering Holistic Development**

Residential schools offer a distinctive advantage in addressing the multifaceted barriers that often impede girls' access to and continuation of education in India. These institutions provide a structured, safe, and supportive environment that mitigates challenges such as long distances to schools, security concerns, and prevailing social norms limiting girls' educational opportunities.

Beyond merely providing a physical space for learning, residential schools adopt a comprehensive approach to education, extending far beyond traditional academics. Leading institutions like Dundlod Girls' School emphasise a holistic curriculum that integrates rigorous academic excellence with a strong focus on extracurricular activities, values education, and essential life skills. These programs actively cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical abilities alongside practical competencies like time management, effective communication, and resilience. The communal living inherent in residential settings naturally fosters self-reliance, discipline, responsibility, and independence through structured daily routines and shared experiences. This environment also cultivates a strong sense of community, promotes peer learning, and facilitates the development of teamwork skills, often leading to enduring friendships.

Establishing residential schools, particularly models like Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), in areas where geographical distance and security risks compel girls to discontinue their education, represents a strategic intervention. These institutions directly address physical access and safety concerns, but their impact extends deeper by providing a protected and immersive learning environment; residential schools inherently mitigate deep-seated socio-cultural barriers such as early marriage, the disproportionate burden of household chores, and pervasive safety anxieties. This protected space empowers girls to develop individual agency

and decision-making capabilities, which are frequently suppressed in their traditional home environments. The observed improvements in dropout rates and Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in programs like Samagra Shiksha validate the efficacy of these targeted residential models, reinforcing the imperative for continued investment and refinement of such programs as crucial incubators for developing resilient, confident, and independent young women.

### **1.3. Defining Skill Development for Girls: Beyond Traditional Academics**

Skill development for girls encompasses a comprehensive process beyond mere academic proficiency to include a diverse array of practical, vocational, and socio-emotional competencies. This holistic approach is crucial for preparing girls to navigate the complexities of modern life and the evolving demands of the workforce.

Key categories of skills central to this development include:

- **Occupational Skills:** These are practical skills directly relevant to various industries, such as healthcare, education, technology, and hospitality, which directly enhance a girl's employability and market readiness.
- **Life Skills (or "Power Skills"):** These essential transversal competencies include critical thinking, problem-solving, self-awareness, effective communication, emotional intelligence, time management, financial literacy, and resilience. There has been a significant re-evaluation of these skills, with a crucial shift in perception from viewing them as "soft skills" to recognising their importance as "power skills" due to their far-reaching impact on personal and professional quality of life.
- **Entrepreneurial Skills:** Training in market research, financial literacy, and business management is vital for fostering self-employment and enabling girls to create job opportunities, thereby contributing to local economies.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the Samagra Shiksha scheme underscore this comprehensive approach by emphasising the integration of skill education into mainstream curricula from early grades, aligning these programs with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) to ensure industry relevance. This policy direction marks a significant shift, as vocational education, previously often confined to Classes 9-12, is now mandated to commence from Class 6, making it more practical and industry-oriented. The NEP 2020's overarching aim to develop all human capacities—intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral—in an integrated manner further reinforces this holistic perspective.

The re-framing of skills from "soft" to "power" is more than a semantic change; it signifies a fundamental recognition that these transversal skills are no longer supplementary but indispensable for navigating the complexities of the 21st-century economy and society. This implies that curriculum designers and training consultants must embed these "power skills" directly into academic and vocational training modules as core competencies rather than treating them as optional add-ons. This proactive integration ensures that girls are academically qualified and adaptable, resilient, and effective communicators, significantly enhancing their long-term employability and contribution to the workforce. This shift is driven by the demands of a dynamic globalised economy that values adaptability, critical thinking, and interpersonal

effectiveness over rote knowledge, underscoring a market-driven imperative for educational reform.

## **2. Policy Landscape and Institutional Frameworks for Girls' Residential Schools and Skill Training**

### **2.1. Government Initiatives: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), and Samagra Shiksha**

The Indian government has progressively developed a robust policy framework to address gender disparities in education and promote skill development among girls, particularly through residential schooling models.

**Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA):** Launched in 2001, SSA was a pivotal flagship program to universalise elementary education across India. Its core objectives included ensuring universal access and retention, bridging gender and social category gaps in elementary education, and significantly enhancing learning outcomes for all children. A key focus of SSA was educating girls and children from disadvantaged communities.

**Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs):** As a targeted intervention under SSA, KGBVs were established as residential upper primary schools specifically for girls from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and Muslim communities residing in educationally backward blocks (EBBs). These schools were designed to address critical barriers such as long distances to schools and security concerns, which often compelled girls to discontinue their education. A significant reservation policy ensures that 75% of seats are allocated to girls from SC/ST/OBC/minority communities, with the remaining 25% reserved for girls from Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. Under the subsequent Samagra Shiksha scheme, KGBVs were upgraded to cover classes 6-12, extending their reach and impact. Crucially, KGBVs are mandated to provide "specific skill training" and "need-based vocational education" to their students.

**National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL):** Implemented in EBBs, NPEGEL aimed to cater to the educational needs of both in-school and out-of-school girls. The program strongly emphasised teachers' responsibility to identify vulnerable girls and provide them with special attention to prevent school dropouts. NPEGEL and KGBVs were designed to work in tandem, complementing SSA's efforts to ensure the inclusion of all girls' quality education for all girls. **Shiksha:** Effective from 2018-19, Samagra Shiksha is a centrally sponsored integrated scheme for school education, encompassing pre-school to Class 12. It subsumes the erstwhile schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education. Primary Shiksha's major objectives include enhancing learning outcomes, bridging social and gender gaps, ensuring equity and inclusion at all levels of school education, and promoting the vocationalization of education. The scheme focuses on girl education, evidenced by upgrading KGBVs to cover higher secondary levels and providing self-defence training for girls from upper primary to higher secondary stages.

The positive impact of Samagra Shiksha is evident in key educational indicators. Between 2018-19 and 2020-21, the dropout rate for girls at the secondary level decreased from 17.03% to 13.7%, while the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) also increased.

The progression from broad universalisation under SSA to targeted residential interventions like KGBVs, specifically for girls from marginalised communities in challenging areas, and their integration and expansion under Samagra Shiksha demonstrates a critical policy learning curve. This evolution acknowledges that gender disparities in education are not monolithic but are deeply intertwined with socioeconomic status, caste, religion, and geographical location. The targeted nature of KGBVs, addressing security and distance, indicates a recognition that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient. This implies that future training modules and interventions must be highly nuanced, culturally sensitive, and capable of addressing the complex, intersectional challenges faced by girls from diverse marginalised backgrounds. The observed improvements in dropout rates and GER validate the efficacy of these targeted residential models, reinforcing the imperative for continued investment and refinement of such programs.

## **2.2. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Integrating Skill Education and Gender Equity**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative shift in India's educational philosophy, placing 'Equitable and Inclusive Education' at its core. This policy explicitly addresses the concerns of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), a category that prominently includes female individuals. A fundamental aspect of NEP 2020 is its approach to gender as a cross-cutting priority, aiming to achieve gender equality in education through collaborative partnerships with states and local community organisations.

A significant recommendation within NEP 2020 is integrating skill education programs into mainstream education across all institutions. Under the umbrella of Samagra Shiksha, financial assistance is provided to states and union territories for introducing Skill Education to students from Grades VI to VIII and for offering Skill courses from Grades IX to XII, all meticulously aligned with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF). This represents a pivotal change, as vocational education, which was previously confined mainly to Classes 9-12, is now mandated to commence from Class 6, making it more practical and industry-oriented.

Furthermore, NEP 2020 mandates a holistic development approach, aiming to cultivate all human capacities—intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral—in an integrated manner.

This policy directive represents a fundamental paradigm shift, elevating vocational education from a marginalised, often stigmatised, pathway to an integral component of holistic education. For girls in residential schools, this early and integrated exposure to skills aligned with NSQF can significantly enhance their future employability and entrepreneurial readiness, directly addressing the persistently low female labour force participation rate. This also necessitates a dynamic curriculum responsive to evolving industry demands, ensuring the skills imparted are market-relevant. The policy aims to create a more adaptable and skilled workforce, particularly

among women, thereby contributing to India's economic competitiveness and social equity by ensuring that education directly translates into viable livelihood opportunities.

### **2.3. Contributions of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is crucial in coordinating nationwide skill development efforts, effectively bridging the gap between industry demands and the available workforce supply. MSDE operates through key functional arms, including the Directorate General of Training (DGT), the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), which collectively implement and regulate skill development programs across the country.

MSDE spearheads several major schemes, such as the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), and the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS). These initiatives provide essential skill, re-skill, and up-skill training across various economic sectors.

A significant aspect of MSDE's strategy is its explicit focus on encouraging women's participation in skill development programs. Special provisions have been made in the Common Cost Norms (CCN) to reimburse women's boarding, lodging, and conveyance costs. Under PMKVY, training programs in high-demand sectors like Electronics, Retail, Healthcare, Beauty & Wellness, Handicrafts, and Apparel are specifically structured to attract higher female participation. The presence of 324 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and 19 National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) exclusively for women further underscores this commitment. The JSS scheme has demonstrated remarkable success in reaching women, with approximately 82% of its beneficiaries being women since July 2018. It targets non-literates, neo-literates, and school dropouts up to the 12th standard.

NSDC's strategic goals include boosting employability, promoting inclusive growth (specifically targeting women and Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups), strengthening industry collaboration, and enhancing digital skilling. The Entrepreneurship Program for Women, a notable initiative, aims to empower 10,000 women entrepreneurs by 2025 through self-learning courses, grants, and access to venture capital. This program focuses on emerging fields, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, and Industry 4.0, to make India's female workforce future-ready.

The explicit and targeted efforts by MSDE, including dedicated institutions and high female participation rates in specific schemes, are crucial for narrowing the existing vocational training gender gap. This demonstrates a strategic recognition that generic skill programs may not adequately overcome the unique social and economic barriers women face. The focus on entrepreneurship marks a progressive shift from merely creating employees to fostering job creators, which has profound long-term economic and social benefits for women and their communities. For a Project Consultant involved in training, this highlights the importance of aligning training modules with MSDE's frameworks and leveraging their resources and pathways to maximise the impact of skill development in girls' residential schools.

## **3. Comprehensive Skill Development Curricula in Girls' Residential Schools**

### **3.1. Academic Excellence and Life Skills Integration**



Leading girls' residential schools in India have adopted a holistic curriculum that seamlessly integrates rigorous academic excellence with cultivating essential life skills. This integrated approach recognises that a well-rounded education extends beyond textbook knowledge to encompass competencies vital for personal growth and societal contribution. For instance, Dundlod Girls' School emphasises the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills alongside a rich array of extracurricular activities. The curriculum explicitly integrates values and life skills such as time management, effective communication, and resilience, preparing students for future academic and professional challenges.

Programs like Pratham's Second Chance further exemplify this dual focus. They provide foundational support in core academic subjects—math, language, and science—while imparting crucial life skills. These include health education, childcare, digital literacy, communication, conflict management, and financial literacy, all designed to empower girls to navigate daily life and future opportunities. Comprehensive life skills curricula, such as Room to Read's Girls Education Program (GEP), meticulously teach a range of specific competencies, including self-confidence, expressing and managing emotions, empathy, self-control, critical thinking, decision-making, perseverance, communication, relationship building, and creative problem-solving.

This integration is strongly reinforced by national policy. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 mandates the development of all human capacities—intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral—in an integrated manner. Re-classifying these competencies as "power skills" underscores their significant impact on personal and professional quality of life, highlighting their indispensable nature in the 21st century. Within Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), life skills training, yoga, and activities promoting all-round development are integral components of the curriculum. Furthermore, the School Health Programme under Ayushman Bharat, implemented in KGBVs, includes modules on "Growing up Healthy," emotional well-being, mental health, interpersonal relationships, gender equality, nutrition, and safety, ensuring a comprehensive approach to student welfare and development.

This integrated approach recognises that academic knowledge alone is insufficient for navigating the complexities of modern life and the workforce. Life skills, such as critical thinking, communication, financial literacy, and emotional intelligence, are crucial for converting academic knowledge into actionable human capital. They enable girls to adapt to changing environments, make informed decisions, manage finances, and build successful careers, maximising the overall educational investment return. This holistic development ensures that girls are knowledgeable, resilient, confident, and socially adept. For curriculum designers, this necessitates designing modules where life skills are not merely standalone subjects but are interwoven into academic and vocational training, creating a more cohesive and impactful learning experience.

### **3.2. Vocational Training Pathways and Emerging Skill Sets**

The landscape of vocational training for girls in residential schools has significantly evolved. Historically, residential schools, particularly in international contexts, often focused on preparing girls for traditional domestic roles by teaching skills such as ironing, sewing,

washing, and cooking. In stark contrast, contemporary Indian initiatives and policies are increasingly emphasising a shift towards modern, industry-relevant skills that align with current and future labour market demands.

Within India, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) are mandated to provide "specific skill training" and "need-based vocational education" to their students. While detailed curricula for all KGBVs are not extensively documented, examples of vocational training include tailoring, mat making, and computer skills, along with entrepreneurial skills like candle making, which provides vital information on marketing and raw material sourcing. Pratham's "Second Chance" program complements this by offering career counselling to help learners identify and pursue suitable career paths based on their skills and aspirations.

Beyond government initiatives, private and non-profit organisations are pioneering innovative vocational pathways. The Sapna Center, for instance, provides a year-long residential program that trains rural women in STEM fields, including coding, web design, project management, and primary-school-level mathematics for aspiring teachers. This program has demonstrated a commendable 75% employment rate among its graduates, enabling women to access the IT industry and achieve financial independence. Other practical and life-readiness skills integrated into curricula include Martial Arts for self-defence, Financial Literacy, First Aid Training, Swimming, Public Speaking, and Cooking. Some progressive schools also incorporate hands-on training in farming, basic electrical work, woodworking, pottery, and plumbing, fostering practical life skills and potential entrepreneurial avenues.

This critical transition from traditional, often gender-stereotyped, domestic training to modern, technology-driven, and industry-relevant skills is crucial for breaking cycles of informal employment and low wages. This shift directly enhances women's formal sector employability increases earning potential, and fosters entrepreneurial opportunities. India must leverage its female demographic dividend and integrate women into high-growth sectors to achieve its economic aspirations. However, despite this progressive shift, there is a concerning trend of "stagnation in placement rates" for some government skill programs like PMKVY and a "rising reliance on short-term training" with "poor employment outcomes". This indicates a gap between policy intent and effective implementation, highlighting that merely offering training is insufficient; quality, market-aligned training with robust placement linkages and comprehensive support is paramount.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 explicitly supports this forward-looking approach by advocating for vocational education from Class 6, making it more practical and industry-oriented. This aligns with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship's (MSDE) focus on equipping women with skills in emerging fields such as AI, Robotics, Drone Technology, and Industry 4.0, aiming to create a future-ready workforce.

**Table 1: Illustrative Life Skills and Vocational Training Modules in Indian Girls' Residential Schools**

Category	Specific Skills/Modules	Description and Relevance
Life Skills	Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving, Analytical Skills	Develops cognitive abilities for complex challenges.



	Communication (Verbal & Written), Public Speaking	Enhances interpersonal effectiveness and self-expression.
	Self-awareness, Emotional Intelligence, Empathy	Fosters self-understanding and social-emotional well-being.
	Time Management, Self-Discipline, Responsibility	Builds organisational skills and personal accountability.
	Financial Literacy, Budgeting, Saving	Equips girls with essential money management skills for independence.
	Health & Hygiene (including Menstrual Health Management)	Promotes physical well-being and addresses critical health aspects.
	Self-Defense (e.g., Martial Arts, Judo, Taekwondo, Boxing)	Enhances personal safety and confidence.
	Digital Literacy, Cyber Awareness & Security	It is essential for navigating the digital world safely and effectively.
	Decision-Making, Perseverance, Resilience, Adaptability	Develops capacity to make informed choices and overcome challenges.
	Relationship Building, Conflict Management, Teamwork	Fosters positive social interactions and collaborative abilities.
	Values and Responsible Citizenship	Instills ethical principles and civic engagement.
<b>Vocational Skills (Traditional)</b>	Tailoring, Stitching, Mat Making	Provides practical skills for traditional crafts and livelihoods.
	Cooking, Housekeeping, Laundry	Develop essential domestic management skills.
<b>Vocational Skills (Modern/Emerging)</b>	Computer Skills (General, IT-enabled services)	Foundational digital proficiency for various industries.
	Coding, Web Design, Project Management	Advanced technical skills in the IT sector.

	AI, Robotics, Drone Technology, Industry 4.0	Future-ready skills for emerging high-growth sectors.
	Primary School Maths Teaching	Specific vocational pathway for aspiring educators.
	Entrepreneurship (Market Research, Business Management)	Foster's self-employment and job creation.
	Basic Electric Work, Woodwork, Pottery, Plumbing	Practical skills for various trades.
	Farming/Gardening	Connects to agricultural livelihoods and sustainability.

#### 4. The Pivotal Role of Wardens in Girls' Residential Schools: Beyond Custodial Care

The role of wardens in girls' residential schools is far more expansive than mere custodial supervision; it is pivotal in fostering a holistic environment conducive to academic success, skill development, and students' overall well-being. Wardens are central to creating a dynamic, safe, and stimulating environment that underpins all other educational efforts.

Their responsibilities are multifaceted, encompassing:

- **Ensuring Safety and Security:** Wardens are primarily responsible for students' physical safety and security. This includes monitoring premises with CCTV surveillance, providing controlled access points, conducting regular rounds, especially at night, and maintaining meticulous records of visitors. They must be knowledgeable about safety measures and capable of rapid action in emergencies.
- **Health and Hygiene Management:** Wardens supervise children's hygiene practices, cleanliness, and appearance. They provide initial medical support, administer medicines, and escort students to medical appointments, ensuring consistent health monitoring and emergency response. Ensuring nutritious meals and managing laundry services also fall under their purview.
- **Fostering Discipline and Structured Routines:** Wardens enforce hostel rules and regulations consistently and fairly, ensuring students adhere to structured daily routines for meals, study, and leisure activities. This structured environment instils discipline, time management skills, and personal accountability.
- **Mentorship and Emotional Well-being:** A critical aspect of the warden's role is acting as a mentor and guide. They address student concerns, provide guidance and counselling, and foster community among students. This includes supporting new admissions to adjust to the residential environment and helping students cope with homesickness, academic pressure, and social adjustment challenges. Professional counsellors are often available, with wardens playing a key role in connecting students to these services.

- **Promoting Holistic Development and Life Skills:** Beyond direct instruction, wardens contribute to skill development by creating an environment where life skills are learned through daily living. They inculcate good manners and foster independence by guiding students in managing their daily routines and responsibilities. Their leadership qualities and ability to work as part of a team are crucial for creating a nurturing and supportive atmosphere essential for the overall development of children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Wardens also play a role in encouraging participation in extracurricular activities, which contribute to confidence, teamwork, and leadership skills.

The intimate nature of residential life means that wardens are often the first point of contact for students facing challenges, making their capacity for empathy, conflict resolution, and crisis management paramount. Their continuous presence and engagement allow for a nuanced understanding of individual student needs, vital for providing personalised support and fostering a sense of belonging. The effectiveness of a residential school model, especially for empowering girls, is thus heavily reliant on its warden staff's competence, dedication, and holistic approach.

## **5. Designing and Delivering Nationwide Training: Development of Training Modules for Wardens**

Effective and scalable nationwide training for wardens in girls' residential schools is paramount to ensuring consistent quality of care, fostering holistic development, and maximising the impact of these institutions. The training must be comprehensive, addressing the role's foundational duties and evolving demands.

### **5.1. Current Training Content and Methodologies for Wardens**

Existing training frameworks, such as those under Samagra Shiksha for KGBV wardens and staff, provide a valuable foundation. These programs cover a range of critical topics using various methodologies:

- **KGBV Training Content:**
  - **Management and Administration:** This includes the KGBV Staff Job chart, subhead-wise budget provision, financial and expenditure guidelines, and safety and security protocols. It also covers the KGBV Scheme Introduction, Girls Enrollment, and maintenance of records.
  - **Health and Nutrition:** Training focuses on maintaining nutritional elements in meals and increasing haemoglobin levels in anaemic girls, often aligned with themes like the International Year of Millets.
  - **Life Skills and Well-being:** Modules cover menstrual health management, emotional well-being, mental health, interpersonal relationships, values, responsible citizenship, and general health and sanitation. The School Health and Wellness Program under Ayushman Bharat guidelines integrates 11 themes, including growing up healthy and preventing substance misuse.
  - **Child Protection and Rights:** Training includes Child Rights, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, and the Child Marriage Act.

- **Career Guidance:** Experts provide guidance on courses available after Std. 10 and Std. 12, as well as Diploma/Degree Courses, often converging with District Employment offices.
- **Digital and Cyber Awareness:** Cyber awareness and security training is also provided.
- **Methodologies:** Training often employs online modes (e.g., BISAG, Vande Gujarat education channel), master trainer sessions, and district-level workshops. Gujarat Vidyapith is involved in preparing training modules and providing counselling.

While existing training covers essential administrative and welfare aspects, there is a need for continuous refinement and expansion to encompass the full spectrum of a warden's role in fostering skill development and holistic growth. The current descriptions of warden responsibilities, while emphasising a "peaceful, stimulating, and secure environment" and "overall development," do not always explicitly detail their direct involvement in specific skill development programs or extracurricular mentorship beyond general supervision. This suggests a potential gap between policy intent and explicit training content regarding skill development.

### **5.2. Challenges in Nationwide Training Scalability and Effectiveness**

Scaling warden training programs across a diverse and vast country like India presents several inherent challenges:

- **Geographical Dispersal and Accessibility:** Residential schools, particularly KGBVs, are often located in remote or educationally backward blocks, making centralised in-person training logistically challenging and expensive.
- **Resource Constraints:** Scaling training programs requires significant resources, including budget, qualified personnel, and infrastructure. Variations in funding provisions across states and schemes can lead to uneven training quality and coverage.
- **Maintaining Consistency and Quality:** Ensuring a uniform level of expertise and consistently delivering core training material across various locations and diverse contexts is difficult. Poor provisioning and maintenance issues have been observed in some government residential schools, which could impact training effectiveness.
- **Adapting to Diverse Needs:** Different regions and student populations may have unique needs, requiring training content to be adaptable while maintaining core principles.
- **Measuring Impact and ROI:** A significant challenge in learning and development (L&D) is the disconnect between tracking inputs (e.g., attendance) and measuring actual impact and return on investment (ROI). Only a small percentage of organisations measure ROI despite its importance for demonstrating value and securing executive support. This is particularly complex for intangible benefits like improved collaboration or emotional intelligence.
- **Resistance to Change:** Introducing new teaching techniques or shifting traditional mindsets can face resistance from existing staff.

### **5.3. Strategies for Effective and Scalable Training Program Design**

To overcome these challenges and ensure the effectiveness and scalability of nationwide warden training programs, a multifaceted approach is required:

- **Modular Training Programs:** Break down training content into smaller, manageable modules that can be easily updated, customised, and distributed. This allows for flexibility and targeted learning based on specific needs and roles.
- **Leveraging Digital Learning Platforms:** Utilise e-learning platforms to provide a centralised hub for all training materials, enabling consistent, high-quality training delivery regardless of location. Digital initiatives like DIKSHA can be extensively used to upgrade teacher and warden skills. Online modes, as already used in KGBV training, can be expanded.
- **Blended Learning Approach:** Combine online modules with periodic in-person workshops for practical skill development, interactive discussions, and peer-to-peer learning. This balances the benefits of digital scalability with the depth of face-to-face interaction.
- **Train-the-Trainer Model:** Implement a robust "Master Trainer Training" program for District Gender Co-ordinators and selective school teachers/staff, as seen in KGBV models, to build local capacity and ensure cascading of training.
- **Needs-Based Curriculum Development:** Conduct thorough training needs analyses to identify specific skill gaps and competencies required for different roles and regions. This ensures training remains relevant and impactful.
- **Focus on "Power Skills" Integration:** Explicitly design modules that enhance wardens' abilities to foster critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, emotional intelligence, and leadership among students. This moves beyond administrative tasks to active developmental roles.
- **Scenario-Based and Experiential Learning:** Incorporate interactive workshops, role-play, and simulated scenarios to equip wardens with practical skills in conflict resolution, crisis management, and student counselling.
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Establish a culture of continuous learning, providing ongoing development opportunities for wardens to keep their skills and knowledge updated with evolving educational and social needs.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Foster strong relationships between government bodies, private sector entities, NGOs, and academic institutions. This can leverage diverse expertise, resources (e.g., CSR contributions, L&D budgets), and best practices for funding and sustaining skill education initiatives.
- **Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks:** Implement comprehensive evaluation frameworks to measure the impact and ROI of training programs. This involves defining clear success criteria with stakeholders, collecting data at multiple levels (input, reaction, learning, application), and quantifying tangible and intangible benefits. Utilising Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodologies can provide a comprehensive view of the social, environmental, and economic value created per unit of investment, demonstrating the broader societal benefits.

## **6. Economic Implications and Return on Investment in Girls' Education and Skill Development**

From a commerce perspective, investing in girls' education and skill development yields substantial economic benefits and a significant return on investment (ROI) for individuals and the broader society. This aligns with human capital theory, which posits that investments in education and skills enhance an individual's productivity and earning capacity, leading to economic growth.

### **6.1. Human Capital Development and Economic Benefits**

Skill development programs directly contribute to human capital formation by equipping women with the necessary tools to enhance their economic, social, and political standing.

- **Enhanced Employability and Earning Potential:** Providing pertinent occupational skills across healthcare, education, technology, and hospitality increases women's appeal to employers and helps them adapt to dynamic labour markets. Research indicates that higher education levels and specialised training programs are correlated with greater job prospects and higher employment rates. This directly translates into increased earning potential, offering stability and financial security.
- **Fostering Entrepreneurship:** Training in market research, financial literacy, and business management empowers women to launch and grow their enterprises, boosting the economy and creating jobs. Women-led enterprises often exhibit higher survival rates and tend to reinvest more in their communities, creating virtuous economic cycles.
- **Financial Independence and Improved Financial Management:** Women with marketable skills are better equipped to earn a living, reducing financial dependency on others. This independence enables them to support their families, make informed decisions about their lives, and contribute significantly to household incomes. Financial literacy training further enhances their ability to manage finances, save, and invest wisely, leading to long-term economic stability.
- **Bridging the Gender Wage Gap and Formal Sector Participation:** Skill development programs contribute to narrowing the gender wage gap and facilitate women's entry into the formal, organised sector, offering better wages and job security. This challenges traditional gender roles and enhances women's social status.

The low participation of women in the labour force significantly impacts India's GDP growth. India can boost its GDP and promote sustainable growth by enhancing women's empowerment through education and skill development. Educated women are more likely to participate in the workforce and invest in their children's education and health, leading to intergenerational improvements in societal well-being and economic development. This underscores that education is vital for improving individual lives and crucial for fostering broader societal development and inclusive economic growth.

### **6.2. Social Return on Investment (SROI) in Education Programs**

Beyond direct economic benefits, investments in girls' education and skill development generate substantial social value, which can be quantified through Social Return on Investment (SROI) frameworks. SROI measures the broader impact of activities by incorporating social,

environmental, and economic value, providing a comprehensive understanding of how investments create positive change in communities and ecosystems.

The process of calculating SROI involves identifying stakeholders, mapping outcomes (both positive and negative), valuing these outcomes (often by assigning monetary proxies), and then comparing the total value created to the investment's cost. For instance, an SROI ratio of 5:1 indicates that every ₹1 invested generates ₹5 in social value.

Case studies in India demonstrate the applicability and value of SROI in the education sector:

- A Women's Literacy Program assessed using SROI found a ratio of 4.66:1, meaning every ₹1 invested generated ₹4.66 in social value. This program achieved functional literacy and transformed many graduates into community leaders, mentors, and entrepreneurs, demonstrating impact beyond mere literacy.
- Another program focusing on vocational skills and 21st-century skills for youth showed an SROI ratio of 5.69:1, indicating significant social and financial benefits generated for every rupee invested. This program focused on improving employment prospects and incomes, fostering aspirations for higher education, and instilling confidence and communication skills.

The societal benefits of skill development for women, which contribute to SROI, include:

- **Increased Social Mobility and Status:** Skill development helps women challenge stereotypes and conventional gender roles, leading to increased autonomy and confidence.
- **Improved Health and Education Outcomes for Families:** Women with greater economic empowerment are more likely to invest in the health and education of their children, benefiting future generations.
- **Increased Participation in Decision-Making and Leadership:** Skilled women participate more in household, community, and national decision-making processes, promoting gender equality and gender-sensitive governance.

For organisations and governments, SROI helps measure the effectiveness and impact of CSR initiatives and social welfare schemes, ensuring effective resource utilisation and achieving targeted outcomes. NGOs and social enterprises can leverage SROI to attract funding by transparently demonstrating the broader impacts of their programs.

## **7. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The comprehensive analysis underscores that empowering girls through residential schooling and targeted skill development is a social welfare endeavour and a strategic imperative for India's human capital development and sustained economic growth. The persistent gender disparities in education and labour force participation represent a significant untapped financial potential. Residential schools, particularly government initiatives like KGBVs, are crucial in mitigating systemic barriers and fostering holistic development, thereby creating a protected environment where girls can thrive academically, personally, and vocationally.

The evolution of national policies, from Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to the National Education Policy 2020 and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship's targeted initiatives, reflects a growing understanding of girls' complex, intersectional challenges. The strategic shift

towards integrating "power skills" and future-ready vocational training from early grades is a critical step towards enhancing female employability and fostering entrepreneurship, aligning education directly with market demands. However, challenges persist in the effective implementation and scalability of these programs, particularly concerning placement outcomes and the need for high-quality, market-aligned training.

The role of residential school wardens is paramount in this ecosystem. Beyond their essential custodial duties, wardens serve as mentors, facilitators of holistic development, and frontline responders to student needs. Therefore, investing in their comprehensive training is an investment in the overall effectiveness of girls' residential education programs.

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations are put forth for the Project Consultant (Training) position, focusing on designing and delivering nationwide training modules for wardens:

**1. Develop a Holistic Warden Training Curriculum:**

- **Integrate Advanced Life Skills Facilitation:** Design modules that explicitly train wardens to facilitate life skills sessions, including critical thinking, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and financial literacy, not just supervise them. This moves beyond administrative oversight to active pedagogical engagement.
- **Vocational Guidance and Linkage:** Equip wardens with knowledge of contemporary vocational pathways and local market demands. Training should enable them to guide girls towards relevant skill development opportunities and connect them with external resources for career counselling and placement.
- **Enhanced Socio-Emotional Support:** Provide advanced training in adolescent psychology, mental health first aid, and trauma-informed care, recognising the unique emotional needs of girls in residential settings. This should include protocols for identifying and addressing stress, anxiety, and other psychological challenges.
- **Digital and Cyber Safety Expertise:** Given the increasing digital engagement of students, modules on cyber awareness, online safety, and responsible use of technology are crucial for wardens to ensure a secure digital environment.

**2. Implement Scalable and Adaptive Training Methodologies:**

- **Blended Learning Model:** Combine robust online learning platforms with periodic, intensive in-person workshops. Online modules can cover theoretical knowledge and foundational skills, while in-person sessions can focus on practical application, role-playing, and peer interaction.
- **Train-the-Trainer (TtT) Approach:** Strengthen the master trainer model by developing a cadre of highly skilled trainers at district and state levels who can effectively cascade training to all wardens, ensuring consistency and quality across diverse geographical locations.
- **Modular and Customisable Content:** Develop training content in flexible modules that can be adapted to the specific socioeconomic and cultural contexts of different regions and the varying needs of various residential schools. This allows for localised relevance while maintaining core competencies.



**3. Establish Robust Impact Measurement and Evaluation Frameworks:**

- **Outcome-Oriented Metrics:** Shift from merely tracking training completion rates to measuring tangible outcomes. This includes assessing wardens' practical skills changes, their impact on student well-being, academic performance, and participation in skill development activities.
- **Social Return on Investment (SROI) Assessment:** Implement SROI methodologies to quantify the broader social and economic value generated by enhanced warden training. This involves identifying key stakeholders (students, families, communities, employers), mapping the positive changes in their lives, and assigning monetary values to these outcomes to demonstrate a comprehensive return on investment.
- **Continuous Feedback Loops:** Establish mechanisms for regular feedback from wardens, students, and school administration to continuously refine training content and delivery methods, ensuring ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

**4. Foster Inter-Ministerial and Stakeholder Collaboration:**

- **Leverage MSDE Resources:** Actively collaborate with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and its arms (NSDC, SSCs) to align warden training with national skill frameworks and leverage their expertise and resources for vocational training components.
- **Community and Parental Engagement:** Integrate modules that train wardens on effective strategies for engaging with local communities and parents, fostering a supportive ecosystem for girls' education and skill development that extends beyond the school premises.

By adopting these strategic recommendations, the nationwide training program for wardens in empowering girls' residential schools can be transformed into a highly effective and measurable initiative, directly contributing to the holistic development of girls, enhancing their economic prospects, and ultimately accelerating India's journey towards inclusive growth and human capital maximisation.

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