

Title Registration for a Systematic Review: Vocational and Business Training to Increase Women's Participation in Higher Skilled, Higher Valued Occupations in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review

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TITLE OF THE REVIEW

Vocational and Business Training to Increase Women's Participation in Higher Skilled, Higher Valued Occupations in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review

BACKGROUND

Development of women's skills can contribute to economic growth by increasing women's contribution to and role in the economy (Revenge & Shetty, 2012). Although women's employment possibilities have improved with the rise of globalization, women in low- and middle-income countries (L&MICs) tend to be overrepresented in informal labor markets, work in precarious conditions, and have few opportunities for learning and advancement (Borges Månsson & Färnsveden, 2012). Women often perform jobs that have low skill requirements (Aedo & Walker, 2012; Altman, 2006); and frequently choose occupations that are highly feminized, tend to be less socially valued, and pay lower wages.

Policymakers are interested in increasing the employment of women in higher skilled, higher valued occupations. To achieve this goal, development agencies have created a wide range of programs, such as vocational and business training, which aim to improve the skills of women (McKenzie & Woodruff, 2012; Blattman & Ralston, 2015). A preliminary mapping of the evidence suggests that a relatively large number of studies focus on the effectiveness of vocational and business training in stimulating women's employment in higher skilled jobs. We also identified a number of studies assessing the structural barriers associated with cultural gender norms and the different positions of men and women in the labor market in L&MICs. The goal of this review is to synthesize this literature to help inform decisions on how to improve women's participation in higher-skilled and higher-valued occupations.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this systematic review is to synthesize the evidence on the effects of vocational and business training on women's employment, earnings, and profits. The secondary objective is to improve our understanding of how structural barriers associated with cultural gender norms and the differential positions of men and women in the labor market influence the effectiveness of vocational and business training for women. In doing so, we will address the following research questions:

Primary Research Question

1. What are the effects of vocational and business training on women's employment, earnings, and profits?

Secondary Research Question

2. What is the influence of structural barriers associated with cultural gender norms and the differential position of men and women in the labor market on the effectiveness of vocational and business training for women?

EXISTING REVIEWS

Recent non-systematic literature reviews have been critical of the effectiveness of vocational and business training programs (Blattman & Ralston, 2015; McKenzie & Woodruff, 2012). These reviews have raised concerns about the effect sizes of vocational and business training. Such concerns suggest that it is crucial to present rigorous evidence of the effectiveness of vocational and business training. However, although several literature reviews focus on the effects of vocational and business training (Blattman & Ralston, 2015; McKenzie & Woodruff, 2012; Katz, 2008), there has been no systematic review of the effects of these programs since 2013, and this systematic review only includes studies that were published in or before 2012 (Tripney *et al.*, 2013). Our preliminary literature review indicates that the rigor of studies on vocational training has increased since the publication of this last systematic review on vocational training in 2013.

A systematic review that addresses the primary and secondary research questions above will add to the systematic review literature in the following ways: First, our systematic review will be the first to assess the impact of vocational and business training on women's socioeconomic outcomes. Second, the review will be the first to present a mixed-methods systematic review of the effects of vocational and business training. Our analysis of the secondary research question on barriers and facilitators is of particular relevance for policymakers and practitioners in order to inform ways to improve the design of vocational and business training programs. Third, we will be the first to present a rigorous synthesis of the effects of business training. Fourth, our review will present more rigorous evidence of the effects of vocational training by examining studies following the publication of the most recent systematic review.

INTERVENTION

The interventions included in this review will be vocational and business training programs that *directly* aim to increase women's participation in higher skilled or higher valued occupations. Interventions that train women to work in low-skill occupations fall outside the scope of this review. Interventions without a skills component, as well as interventions that focus exclusively on skills not relevant to the labor market such as life skills training, will not be considered. To answer the secondary research questions, we will include quantitative and qualitative studies associated with an intervention, which will provide relevant insights into the structural barriers associated with cultural gender norms and the differential position of men and women in the labor market.

Eligible comparison conditions will include no intervention, pipeline, or “business as usual.”

POPULATION

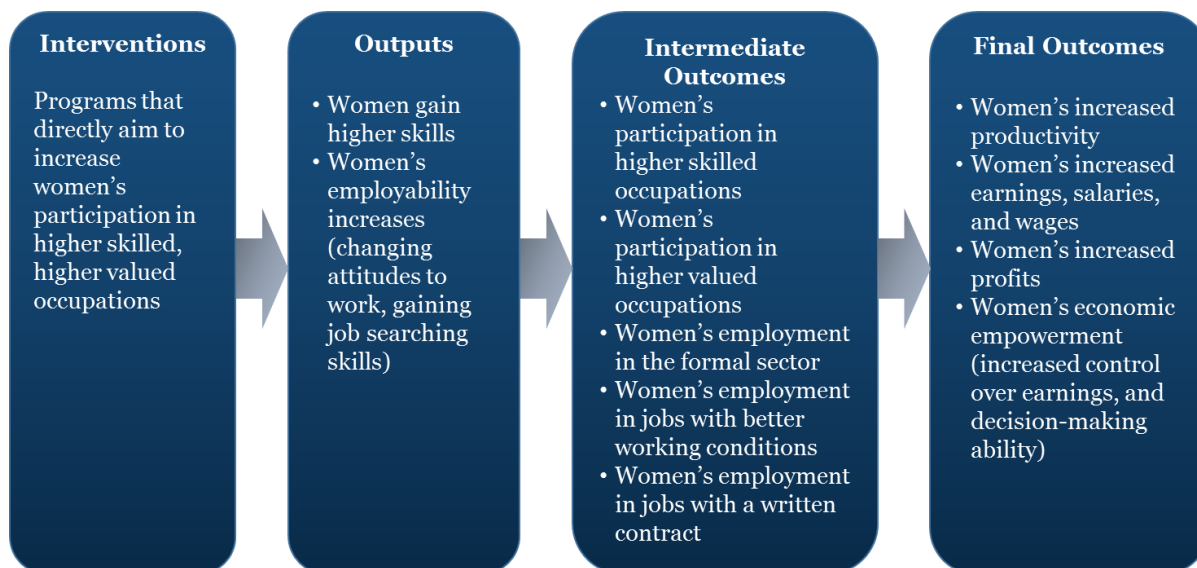
We will include studies that focus on interventions that include women of all ages in L&MICs, as defined by the World Bank. In cases where the intervention participants are not exclusively women, studies will be eligible only if impacts on women are assessed separately from those on men.

We will include studies about the effects of vocational and business training regardless of the employment status or skills level of women at the time of the intervention.

OUTCOMES

Policy-relevant research should be based on a theory of change that maps out the causal chain among interventions, outputs, intermediate outcomes, and final outcomes, as well as the assumptions underlying the theory of change (White, 2009). We developed a simplified theory of change for interventions that *directly* aim to increase women’s participation in higher skilled or higher valued occupations, in order to determine relevant outcomes for the systematic review. The theory of change is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Theory of Change



We will include studies that include earnings, salaries, wages, employment, formality, profits, and economic empowerment as outcome measures. Our initial literature review has indicated that there might not be sufficient quantitative studies that focus on other outcome measures. Therefore, we will include qualitative studies that focus on the outputs of the theory of change, such as skills acquisition and increased employability.

STUDY DESIGNS

Quantitative Evidence

The primary research question on the effectiveness of interventions will be addressed using quantitative studies based on an experimental or quasi-experimental design.

Specifically, we will include the following study designs: (a) experimental designs using random assignment to the intervention and (b) quasi-experimental designs with non-random assignment (such as regression discontinuity designs, “natural experiments,” and studies in which participants self-selected into the program). Quasi-experimental studies must (a) collect longitudinal data (baseline and end line) or cross sectional data (end line) from treatment and comparison groups; and (b) use propensity score or another type of matching, difference-in-differences estimation, instrumental variables regression, multivariate cross sectional regression analysis, or other forms of multivariate analysis (such as the Heckman selection model or multivariate ordinary least squares regression analysis) that are able to correct for selection bias under specific circumstances. We will include studies with data collected at the individual level, to ensure that the study focuses on women.

Qualitative Evidence

The secondary research questions on barriers and facilitators will be addressed using quantitative evidence of the study designs listed above as well as and qualitative evidence from surveys, interviews, and focus groups with program participants. Studies that focus on the secondary research question will not need a comparison group for inclusion, but must report the methodology used, for example, by reporting the sampling strategy and the specific qualitative methods used.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Please give a brief description of content and methodological expertise within the review team. It is recommended to have at least one person on the review team who has content expertise, at least one person who has methodological expertise and at least one person who has statistical expertise. It is also recommended to have one person with information retrieval expertise. Please note that this is the *recommended optimal* review team composition.

- Content: María Balarin, Lorena Alcázar
- Systematic review methods: Marjorie Chinen, Thomas de Hoop
- Statistical analysis: Thomas de Hoop, Marjorie Chinen

FUNDING

Do you receive any financial support, and if so, from where? What are your deliverable deadlines for the review? If not, are you planning to apply for funding, and if so, from where?

External Funding: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

Deliverables	Due Date
Title Registration	January 2016
Protocol	March 2016
Draft report	November, 2016
Final report	February, 2017

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None of the proposed authors have developed studies that focus on the topic area. However, María Balarin and Lorena Alcázar are part of GRADE, an institution that has published several studies on the effectiveness of vocational and business training in the context of Latin-America. We will mitigate this concern by placing a greater emphasis on the assessment of these studies by the non-GRADE authors.

PRELIMINARY TIMEFRAME

- Date you plan to submit a draft protocol: February 2016
- Date you plan to submit a draft review: January 2017

AUTHOR DECLARATION

Authors' responsibilities

By completing this form, you accept responsibility for preparing, maintaining, and updating the review in accordance with Campbell Collaboration policy. The Coordinating Group will provide as much support as possible to assist with the preparation of the review.

A draft protocol must be submitted to the Coordinating Group within one year of title acceptance. If drafts are not submitted before the agreed deadlines, or if we are unable to contact you for an extended period, the Coordinating Group has the right to de-register the title or transfer the title to alternative authors. The Coordinating Group also has the right to de-register or transfer the title if it does not meet the standards of the Coordinating Group and/or the Campbell Collaboration.

You accept responsibility for maintaining the review in light of new evidence, comments and criticisms, and other developments, and updating the review every five years, when

substantial new evidence becomes available, or, if requested, transferring responsibility for maintaining the review to others as agreed with the Coordinating Group.

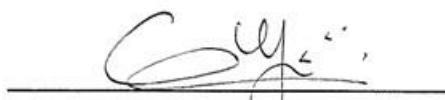
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Date: 15 January 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Kelly', is written over a horizontal line.