



ADULT EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Adult education is a multidisciplinary process which favours to lifelong education for all, as well as efficient learning throughout the life. It targets in providing the knowledge needed to improve professional abilities and to achieve civic, social, moral and cultural attitudes and skills for performing responsibilities and for progress in all spheres of life. In a time of constant socio-economic changes and scientific advances, national development is very important. Adult education as a field of study is indispensable in national development as its relevance cuts across all sectors. It leads to economic and social transformation. Using the various programmes and the policy guideline provided through different National policies on education, adult education is reformed a lot in the National development plan. There must be an improvement policy in the perception of Adult Education and to meet the target of the sustainable development goals at all levels of the government and the society at large. This paper examined the progress and the importance of adult education in the National Development programmes in India.

Keywords: Adult education, lifelong education, national development, social transformation, sustainable development.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is universally acknowledged that education is an essential component of development. Any developmental objectives cannot be fully achieved without education and that education in turn is influenced by developmental processes. Nevertheless, the inter-relationships between society and education are far more complex than they were assumed to be in the past. The contribution of education to the achievement of socio-economic goals is not easily measurable or identifiable. Nor does education contribute in all circumstances to development. In fact the concept of 'development' itself has under-gone a change and several of our traditional views about it are now being questioned.

Adult education programme in India has come a long way. It started with 3R's. Its entire stress was on acquisition of static quantum of literacy skills. Realizing the need of the time, functional literacy was introduced. Learning is a constant process. In technology driven society, one needs to update every time. Hence, the lifelong learning is implemented. In this, literacy is a means and not an end. The main stress is on implementation of skills in day to day living. Literacy needs change from individual to individual. For example, a person from rural area if migrates to urban area s/he has to learn various things to adjust to new surroundings. Lifelong learning gives these skills.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are -

1. To know the developmental pattern of Adult education in India.
2. To understand the role of Adult education in National Development.

II. METHODOLOGY

The present article is a qualitative research. Basically, it is narrative and analytical in nature. Different documents are analyzed critically for this study.

III. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 National Development

National development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people, to provide infrastructures such as good roads, functional hospitals, airport, schools and employment. Umeh (1987) noted that most nations of the world aspire for development and that development is only meaningful when there is total participation in the socio-economic and political life of the population.

3.2 Adult education and national development

The role of Adult education in any society is to provide an educational opportunity for people who want to upgrade their general education or learn specific skills that they did not learn before (Georgesson, 2018). Adult education is another word for high school upgrades; however, it can also be education for its own sake taken by adults. The role of adult development in any society is also instrumental for having a better informed citizenry. It empowers continual innovation. Adult education helps:

- to deliver lifelong learning to communities,
- to encourage adults to think clearly,
- to inform the citizenry about current affairs,
- to attempt to create an informal and intelligent electorate,
- to develop humanitarian attitudes and distinguish between ideology and reason.

3.3 Evolution of the concept of adult education in India

To understand the evolution of concept of adult education in India, one needs to know following five phases namely:

3.3.1 Concept of Basic Literacy (1882-1947)

This was a pre-independence era and Britisher's were rulers. The basis for evolution of concept of Basic Literacy was expansion of night schools. The curriculum of basic literacy included skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Duration of the programme was for two years. Separate curriculum was prepared specially for adult education purpose. Apart from imparting skills in 3R's that is reading, writing and arithmetic, the curriculum also included stories of historical importance, lessons giving information on health, hygiene and first aid.

The concept of basic literacy remained the same throughout the British period. In 19th and 20th century, a variety of attempts by national leaders, social reformers, etc. were made to educate illiterate people. For example, Keshub Chandra Sen, great champion of Mass Education and Devendra Nath Tagore, an eminent intellectual, set up a society namely "Sangat Sabha" in 1859. Sangat means together and Sabha means meeting. The objective behind this establishment of Sangat Sabha was people will come together and discuss on current social problems and spiritual things. In 19th century, the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal took leadership to educate illiterate women.

It is noteworthy to mention here the ideas of Swami Vivekananda in the 19th century, on Adult Education. He strongly believed that education should be given in vernacular language. According to him education should build life of a person. In early period of 20th century, social reformers through their organizations organized a number of literacy classes to educate masses. To sustain literacy, libraries were also set up.

As the freedom movement took shape, the national leaders realized the danger of handing over power to illiterate electorate. They realized the importance of literacy for political and economic reasons. Thus, various attempts were made in all parts of the country to educate illiterates. For example, night schools for illiterate people were organized by nationalists' leaders namely Lala Lajpat Rai and B.G.Tilak. Peasant schools were established in Guntur and west Godawari districts of Andhra Pradesh. To train local young leadership many schools were opened.

As the freedom movement took shape, the concept of Adult Education widened. The historical review shows that during 1920, adult education included awareness components as well. As stated earlier, three R's were given through night schools. To make adult education interesting, in addition to literacy, various awareness programmes on topics which were directly related to learners' life were organized through public lectures and discussions, film shows, etc. They focused on health issues, economy, etc. Libraries were opened to sustain the literacy skills achieved by people. In addition to this, community development projects were implemented. Till this time, adult education was a non-official activity. Due to the increasing intensity of freedom struggle and awakening of masses, adult education became official programme by 1940's (Shah, 1999).

3.3.2 Concept of Social Education (1948-64)

The concept of Social Education was conceived in 1948 and in 1952 it was integrated with Community Development Programme. Initially the concept was not clear. In 1963, a committee was appointed under the chairpersonship of Mohan Sinha Mehta. This committee developed the concept of social education. It emphasised more on social aspects and literacy was part of it.

After independence, India adopted the welfare approach for development. This required structural reforms in various fields. The successful implementation of Mass Literacy Campaign in pre-independence period (1938-47) had already awakened the masses. This also became a ground and need to formulate separate policy for adult education. At the time of independence, India had literacy rate of 12.2 per cent. In earlier programmes which were implemented in pre-independence era, concept of adult education was too narrow. In post-independence, it was decided to widen this concept. Thus, health and hygiene, recreation, upgradation of vocational skills, improvement in social, cultural and economic life and citizenship education were included in the concept and termed as social education (Dutta, 1986 p. 59).

3.3.3 Concept of Functional Literacy (1965-77)

This is the era where the government and policy makers realized that mere reading, writing and arithmetic skills are not sufficient and one need to go beyond that. Thus the concept of functional literacy emerged during the 1960s. Functional literacy was defined as "literacy integrated with the occupation of the learner and directly related to development". The functional literacy was translated into action in 1968. It was based on work-oriented literacy.

A series of international and national meetings and conferences took place during late 1950's. The First World Conference on Adult Education organized by the UNESCO in Denmark in 1949 discussed the role of adult education in the development of society, polity and economy. It focused on functional perspective of adult education. William Gray (1956) defined functional literacy as 'a person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group'. This definition was accepted by almost in all the countries.

The Second World Conference on Adult Education was held in Canada in 1960. It also emphasised on linkage in adult education and productivity, work and development. This was followed by the World Conference of Education Ministers on 'Eradication of Illiteracy' in Tehran in 1965. It also focused on functional literacy. All these factors had great impact on the concept of adult education in India.

Literacy is a means and not an end. Its purpose is to impart such knowledge which makes a person occupationally more efficient than before. It was realized that mere ability to read and write is not sufficient for

overall development of a person as well as the nation. Hence, it was decided to integrate literacy with the learners' occupation/production. Literacy was focused on increasing the functional efficiency of the person.

3.3.4 Concept of Developmental Literacy (1978-2008)

Early 1970's was the era of Paulo Freire's philosophy of conscientiation. It had a great influence on adult education. He emphasised on critical thinking and action which leads to change. He believed in active participation of learners in learning process. According to him, instructors of adult education class should become an instrument to carry the discussion and learners can learn themselves. With this philosophy, the horizons of functionality widened. The concept of development literacy evolved during this period. It was realized that literacy should not be confined as just a process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. It should go beyond that and contribute to the liberation and full development of human being. Importance of awareness about social reality was focused. During this transition period, National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was conceived in India.

IV. NATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME (NAEP)

On 2nd October, 1978, GOI announced National Adult Education Programme (NAEP). This was first adult education programme implemented by the government throughout the country. Actual implementation of literacy classes started in the year 1979. Objectives of this programme were literacy, awareness and functionality. It was centre based approach, where 30 learners were taught by one instructor. Age group of adult illiterates was 15-35 years. Initially, the duration of the programme was for 10 months (300-500hours), which was extended to three years. Later again it was reduced to two years. During the first year of the programme, basic literacy was given for 300-500 hours. In this period basic literacy skills were given to learners. In addition to that other awareness components such as information on health, family life, and vocational education were also included in the curriculum. This was followed by post literacy of 150 hours and 100 hours. Reinforcement of literacy was done in the second phase. A large number of poor illiterates, school dropouts attended this programme. Along with government department of adult education, other institutions such as universities and colleges, voluntary organizations, Nehru Yuvak Kendras were also involved in implementation of NAEP. Thus, students and non-student youth participated in this nation building activity.

V. NATIONAL LITERACY MISSION (NLM)

The concept of Functional Literacy included achieving not only mechanical literacy skills but also a dynamic grip on implementation of these skills in day-to-day life for smooth adjustment in a changing society. Such an integration between knowledge and its implementation was almost absent in the earlier approaches of Adult Education programmes.

To overcome these lacunas of earlier programmes, National Literacy Mission (NLM) was established in 1988. It aimed to impart functional literacy to 80 million illiterates in the age group of 15-35 years by 1995. It was realized that achievement of self-reliance in literacy and numeracy is not sufficient. Thus, the earlier concept of functional literacy was redefined. According to NLM, the achievement of functional literacy included:

- Achieving self-reliance 3 R's
- Becoming aware of the cause of one's deprivation and moving towards amelioration of conditions through organization and participation in the process of development,
- Acquiring skills to improve the economic status and general wellbeing and,
- Imbibing the values of national integration, conservation of the environment, women's equality, observance of small family norms, etc.

This all aspect inclusive concept of functional literacy was termed as developmental literacy. Thus, functional literacy includes creation of right attitudes, promotion of rationality and denial of superstition and awareness of social obligations.

5.1. Concept of Lifelong Learning (2009 onwards)

Globalization has entered in all walks of life. It has brought world more closely than ever before. It has created more opportunities as well as many challenges. Realizing the new challenges of globalized world and

importance of functional literacy in it, Government of India launched the Saakshar Bharat Mission on the International Literacy Day in September 2009. Its aim is ‘to significantly reduce the number of non-literate adults in India and foster an environment within communities that encourages lifelong learning’.

It is different than earlier programmes in many aspects. The curriculum includes Core Content (CC) based on the broad National Curricular Framework for Adult Education, and Locally Relevant Content (LRC), which are produced in the locally dominant language. Learning material is developed from identifying the needs and interest of learners to ensure material is relevant. Content is linked to the learner’s livelihood and socio-cultural realities, involving issues such as health and hygiene, agriculture, animal husbandry and local self-government. Curriculum for literacy (Primers) is prepared by State resource Centres (SRCs). The core content in lessons encourages awareness of values such as democracy and gender equality. Actual teaching is for 300 hours to reach basic literacy.

Along with basic literacy/basic education, it covers vocational education and skill development, applied science and sports. Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs) organize various need based skills/vocational training programmes for the learners and neo-literates. To sustain the literacy skills achieved by the learners, library facilities are made available.

VI. TYPES OF ADULT EDUCATION AND THEIR ADVANTAGES

Adult Education can basically be constituted into three types. These are: formal adult education, non-formal adult education and informal education.

6.1 Formal Adult Education

In Formal Adult Education, a classroom type environment is provided under the guidance and supervision of trained professionals. Some examples of formal education, are schools and colleges. But Formal Adult Education typically refers to the enrollment of experienced adults into various certification or learning programmes for their career growth. It refers to a program which provides formal academic credentials to the adults who are already employed or never had formal education, but are willing to be employed., Depending on the choice of the adults, the program may include a diploma or a certificate course.

➤ Advantage of Formal Adult Education

The formal education system provides an edge to the adult learners who are already employed in various sectors, or those who never attended school, and seek formal employment. To make the adults employable or to improve their professional skills, the professional degree, diploma or certificate is awarded based on the credits

6.2 Non Formal Adult Education

Non Formal Adult Education is an education system which is provided at the workplace or at some community centre but not in a classroom. it doesn’t have a prefixed curriculum, but it is conducted under the supervision of trained professionals. It is very useful in developing specific skills and increasing the productivity of a person, though, it doesn’t allot a formal degree or diploma. The main focus of a non formal education is to develop learners’ skills and capabilities.

➤ Advantages of Non Formal Education

The main beneficiaries of this type of education are the individuals, who have never been to school and also lack of skills or qualities to be regularly employed. The adults go through the particular training courses like in trade, crafts, agriculture, computers etc, to enhance their skills which they can use to gain employment or start a small business of their own.

6.3 Informal Adult Education

Like Non Formal Education, Informal Education for Adults also have no curriculum or certification. It includes the knowledge which is gained through observation and experience without classrooms or books. It includes behavior, manners, moral judgments, traditions, culture etc. An educated person teaches basic calculation, reading, writing to his illiterate peers; is an example of Informal Adult Education. It is conducted through meetings, community get together and is usually informative in nature. The topics of Informal Adult Education may range from culture, language, day to day life experience, health and hygiene to knowing the fundamental rights.

➤ **Advantages of Informal Adult Education**

Informal Adult Education may include numerous issues of social or political concern. It aims at raising general awareness and personality development of the adults. It also makes people aware of the customs and rituals, other communities, methods to live a healthy and hygienic life, health facilities in a village or community, basic amenities and rights of citizens, etc.

VII. BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT EDUCATION POLICY

The purpose of the adult education policy is to develop appropriate conditions for adult education and the formation of an education and training systems for adults. The fundamental characteristics of adult education policy are: relevance, flexibility, efficiency and effectiveness, accessibility and sustainability (Despotovic & Pejatovic, 2005).

➤ **Relevance**

This system of education is relevant, if it makes provision of knowledge and skills, in accordance to the needs and requirements of the learners, labour markets, community or the greater society. Relevance is secured through the increased participation of the individuals in the adult education system. The participation of individuals is primarily depicted in policies, programs, finance, verification and so forth. The monitoring and identification of market needs and the institutional articulation of these demands and requirements lead to augmentation of relevance.

➤ **Flexibility**

Flexibility is referred to the ability to respond satisfactorily and in response to the demands for knowledge and skills. It is secured through modularization and the programs that are based on the needs of labour markets, job requirements and interests of the enterprises, specific groups and individuals.

➤ **Efficiency and Effectiveness**

Efficiency and effectiveness are primarily related to the utilization of adult education capacities to a major extent. The individuals need to possess awareness in terms of utilization of resources and management of the system of adult education through quality categories. These give emphasis upon the maximum utilization of educational institutions and adult education centres to promote well-being of the society. In order to promote well-being of the society and as well as individual, it is needed to formulate measures and standards in an appropriate manner.

➤ **Accessibility**

The tendency to establish a system based on the needs and demands includes the individuals, belonging to various categories and backgrounds. Adult education program strives to access the all in its periphery like the individuals with special needs, poverty stricken, refugees, unemployed persons for a long time, youth without educational qualifications, women, elderly persons, individuals who are overwhelmed by the fear of losing their jobs, primarily because of their old age, minority groups, well-educated individuals, who are losing jobs, such as, army staff and so forth. So, adult education is suitable to various categories of individuals.

➤ **Sustainability**

The above mentioned factors are the pathways towards sustainability of the adult education program. The sustainability of the adult education system is not based on traditional budget oriented financing of education and training institutions, but on development of the appropriate model of financial management at the national and local level. The adult education institutions have the possibility of functioning in accordance to the educational market. In addition, they should respond in accordance to the demands of the enterprises, public services, knowledge and skills and develop new forms of financial support to the educational programs, such as, grants and so forth.

VIII. IMPORTANCE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Adult education plays a crucial role in contributing to the overall development of a nation. It aims to address the needs and aspirations of adult learners by providing them with opportunities for lifelong learning and skill development. Here are some areas where adult education contributes to national development

➤ **Economic Development**

Adult education enables individuals to acquire new skills and knowledge, enhancing their employability and productivity. By upgrading their skills and improving their professional competence, adults can contribute to the economic growth of the nation. It emphasizes vocational training and entrepreneurship skills, empowering adults to enter new fields, change professions, or start their own businesses.

➤ **Social Development**

Adult education promotes social inclusion and empowerment by providing equal opportunities for individuals from all backgrounds and communities. It helps marginalized groups, immigrants, and disadvantaged communities to integrate into society, overcome barriers, and improve their quality of life. By fostering social cohesion and cultural exchange, adult education contributes to building inclusive and harmonious communities.

➤ **Health and Well-being**

Adult education programs often include health and wellness components, educating individuals about nutrition, disease prevention, mental health, and healthy lifestyles. By improving the health literacy of adults, adult education indirectly contributes to reducing healthcare costs, increasing productivity, and promoting a healthier society. Healthier individuals contribute to the well-being of families, communities, and the nation as a whole. (Manninen. 2008).

➤ **Civic Engagement**

Adult education promotes civic engagement and active citizenship. By providing knowledge and skills related to social, political, and environmental issues, adult education empowers individuals to participate in community projects, social initiatives, and democratic processes. Informed and engaged citizens are more likely to contribute to nation-building, advocate for positive change, and promote social justice.

➤ **Attitudes Change**

It was found that adult learning is associated with more “open-minded” perspectives on race and authority’ It emphasizes greater understanding of people from different backgrounds, challenging previously held beliefs and with a sustaining effect on non extremist views. It helps to increase racial tolerance, reduce in political cynicism and a higher inclination towards democratic attitudes (Feinstein, et al, 2003).

➤ **Educational Progression**

Progression in education is an important outcome of adult education. There is clear a evidence that successful engagement in learning provides incentive for further learning (Manninen 2010).

➤ **Poverty Reduction**

Although inadequately understood, adult education has been cited as a key in reducing poverty levels around the world (UNESCO-UIL, 2009 in EAEA, 2010) as it has the capacity to positively affect may dimensions of poverty. Adult education has an important role to play in nurturing the skills and knowledge necessary to both reducing the risk of poverty and for providing the capacity to withstand poverty-inducing pressures. Therefore, it should be a part of any approach to reduce poverty and upliftment of people out of poverty.

➤ **Lifelong Learning Culture**

Adult education promotes a culture of lifelong learning, emphasizing the importance of continuous personal and professional development. Adult education plays a vital role in fostering this culture by encouraging adults to acquire new knowledge, skills, and competencies throughout their lives. A nation with a strong culture of lifelong learning remains adaptable, innovative, and resilient in the face of changing economic and societal dynamics.

The central government recognizes the importance of adult education and includes initiatives to address the specific needs of adult learners. They emphasizes the establishment of Adult Education Centers (AECs) in every district, provision of vocational education and skill training, recognition of prior learning, and integration of technology-enabled learning. These initiatives provide opportunities for adults to enhance their education, skills, and employability. By investing in adult education, nations can unlock the potential of their adult population, leading to sustainable development, social progress, and a better future for all citizens.

CONCLUSION

Adult education as a field of study is indispensable in national development as its relevance cuts across all sectors. Adult education is a multidisciplinary process oriented to favour lifelong education for all, as well as efficient learning throughout life. It is based on justice, on the disposition to favour the understanding of cultural aspects in human evolution and the cooperation of international peace, carrying out process of teaching-learning (UNESCO, 2006). Adult education pursues improvement in education to provide knowledge and to favour training that guarantees equal opportunities to life, adapting to the needs of individuals of all ages, with the aim of arming them with the capacity for a critical understanding of the world and its changes.

Adult education is not considered to be an entity by itself; it is regarded as an integral part of lifelong education. Lifelong education is a process aimed at effective learning throughout life that comprises all ages and all levels of teaching. It is oriented to achieve participation in reforms, educational measures and projects preparing the individual for their civic and social responsibilities and responding to their requirements, needs and aspirations, opportunities and ways to develop their personality, embracing individual, cultural, artistic creative and sensible development to dominate their changes. The adult education movement is needed in supporting the formal system of education to improve the literacy which is a key factor of the progress of any society.

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