

The Importance of Adult Education in India and Its Present-Day Relevance

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Abstract – Though the concept of Adult Education is not given much weightage, the impact of Adult Education in any nation cannot be denied. The role played by adult's education cannot be said to be very straight and direct; however, indirectly, it influences various different factors. The adult population in any nation cannot be denied, and having a condition where adults have the knowledge and skills to take upon any tasks will undoubtedly boost the economy in a longer run. And not just the economic part which is under the limelight, but it is also the crime factor which comes into play. When analytical research is given as to why a certain country records a higher crime rate, one important reason is the illiteracy of people which instigates crime. The paper thus wants to highlight primarily the importance of adult education and the factors which are directly affected positively. The author also takes us through its historical development and explains as to where and how the concept of adult education grew. As a concluding remark, the author also stressed on the importance of Social Education among adults which can even be called as the need of the hour.

Keywords: Adult Education, Economy, Social Education, Adults Skills, Crime Rate, Literacy

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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the key themes which always find a place in any country. The more educated the population is, the more developed would the country be. The whole process of getting an education is not age barred and is a lifetime process. The concept of Adult education, though, is a little different from general education. Adult education is the procedure where adults who are barred from school or college due to any reason which may be financial, personal and are unable to continue even the same through anyway, are brought under a single uniform practice of empowering them by providing education.

It is very important to define the scope of Adult Education to understand its true meaning. According to Lindeman,[1] adult education is that chance which is considered as a last resort to people who did not get a good opportunity to continue or pursue it at the right time. The three main characteristic features according to the definition includes – education even among the deprived class, comprehensive training in certain skills and post a vocational form of education.[2]

Another important definition to be looked is the one given by Reddy. According to him “adult education is part-time or full-time education for men and women of all ages either organized by themselves or provided by schools, learning centres, or other

agencies which enable them to improve their general or professional knowledge, skills and abilities by either continuing their education or resuming their initial or incomplete education of previous year.”[3]

The definitions give rise to the existence of objectives of adult education.[4] The main objectives can be categorized broadly as:

1. Delivering different types of literacy

Adult education paves in a way for different types of literacy and not just something which is limited to a certain subject or skill. More the higher-level skills are taught, more is the opportunity with the person to learn more.

2. Creating awareness on many subjects

Adult education provides an opportunity to create awareness on not just on one concept or subject but opens an array of opportunities to learn something new at all stage. This includes awareness about one's self, community, society, health, medicine, hygiene, family and peace and welfare etc.

3. Providing ways to enhance functionality

This encompassed application of individuals, collective, community, skills and knowledge, corporate, national and international knowledge, cultures, attitudes, practices, resources, etc. for addressing the felt needs, for solving the problems, for promoting larger public participation in various activities and for bringing out social, economic, cultural, political transformation for raising general level or standard of living of the individual, community, nation and the world.

To understand the present value and the true importance of Adult education, it is important to note the historical development of the concept which is covered comprehensively below.

ADULT EDUCATION IN INDIA: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

The concept of adult education is ironically an old-time concept and not a new one as thought by many brilliant minds. The presence of a need to educate adults was felt long before and thus, tracing history is evident to draw a comparison between how the conditions were and how it is now. The historical evolution could be said to be divided between three main periods as follows:

a. Vedic Period

Adult education is a concept which can be traced from the vedic era. During the vedic time, there were a wide range of educational types which came into place and there was a concept of Gurukuls where different subjects were taught for different age groups. The education at that time majorly revolved around moral and social duties and did not accrue the need for a degree.[5]

The overall time frame can further be divided into four major periods involving the early vedic period, where learned scholars spoke and people listened and learnt things. The next period would be Upanishad period where the scope of education changed and based on the learnings of the Upanishads, skills and knowledge was imparted. The next period was the Dhannasastric era. The Dhannasastric period witnessed the development of art, literature, mathematics and theatre and Sanskrit had become a classical language. But then, the language of popular communication was Prakrit. The 4th classification is the puranic period where already universities like Nalanda and Vikramshila were in place and the main language was Pali. Gurukuls now changed to Ashrams and the technique of education also changed to technicalities.

b. Medieval Period

The beginning of the medieval period was marked by the emergence of Muslim rulers in India. The

Muslims had two types of institutions-Maktabas and Madrassas. The former one was similar to schools and was concerned about elementary schooling, whereas the latter one was the one concerned with higher education. When ruler to ruler changed, the adult education system changed too. It was only during the reign of Akbar that Hindus too got a chance to develop their education system.[6] The adults of that era were open to discuss their issues with the teachers and the subjects were open to being taught to people of any age group, which definitely helped everyone to learn.

c. Pre and Post-Independence Era

Britishers brought with them the concept of Modern-day education and subjects. When they initially in 1836, took the survey of literacy rate in India, it was found to be 6%.[7] However, the low rates never bothered the Britishers. They educated only certain sections of people on whom they could extend their domination. However, Britishers had a concept of night school, which inspired many learners and adults started to take part in the night schooling. Following World War 1, this concept further found interests in many hands as there were newer concepts of learning among people, especially men. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in its fourth meeting in December 1938, appointed an Adult Education Committee under the chairmanship of Dr Syed Mahmud, the then Education Minister of Bihar. The committee made sure to discuss all about the importance of adult literacy, requirement for training of literacy teachers, the motivation of adults, use of audio-visual media in teaching and efforts for retention of literacy and continuing education. Gandhiji considered illiteracy as a sin and shame and demanded solving the same at the earliest through concerted efforts. He suggested in his constructive programme two forms of education viz. Basic Education and Adult Education. Basic education, he said, links the children to all that is best and lasting in India. It develops both the body and the mind and keeps the child rooted to the soil with a glorious vision of the future.[8]

Finally, it was only after independence that the government completely understood the true meaning of adult education. It was realized that the development of a nation at a whole is not possible unless the adults are equally educated as smaller generations. The five-year plans played notable roles. Further, a vast majority of the illiterate population was from poorer sections of the community, which could be reached only through non-formal adult education. That was why the Government of India enhanced the budget allocation for adult education in the country. The proportion of budget allocation for adult education to the total investment in education had steadily gone up though there were fluctuations in between plan periods. During the 8th plan period, the allocation for adult

education was around 10 per cent of the allocation for education.[9]

EDUCATION IN TODAY'S WORLD

The Concept of adult education not just changed in India but also globally. With the advent of the 20th century, the definition of Adult Education has widened bringing within its scope any type of learning process which helps the learner to develop a new skill and learning.[10] It includes reading, writing, arithmetic, vocational courses, internet-based courses, technical subjects and much more. Malcolm Knowles, a renowned academician from the United States is known as the father of Adult Education. According to him, the adult education theory perfectly fits the modern day education system which have the following as postulates:

1. Fundamental Education

As the name suggests, this is the most basic and fundamental type of education which everyone should possess. It is called fundamental because it helps people to learn the easiest things which are handy in day to day activities and directly plays a role in developing the standards of living.

2. Out of School Education

This is one common method which has found its place in the developing stages of adult education. Any At first, the formula of out-of-school education was affected by the supposition that adult education is adult education-or "for adults"- instead of for participants in educational processes. Adult education now has some qualities which surpassed that out-of-school education.[11]

3. Lifelong Studies

Lifelong education is a process aimed at effective learning throughout life that comprises all ages, all levels of teaching, all forms of education and all educational policies. It approaches all dimensions of human life, all branches of knowledge, and all practical skills.[12] It tries to favour that they participate in the formation of it, and in the spirit of social progress, responding to the demands of development and the needs of society, forming in continual interdisciplinary fashion and accordance with the economic, cultural and social development of the community.[13]

Adult Education travels from all these stages and is a part of the same stages. It is necessary to realize the importance and take further actions on it.

CONCEPT OF SOCIAL EDUCATION

With the advent of adult education, somewhere in the growth stages, a need to develop social education

grew. It was an initiative started by the Government of India in 1950s. The first major step was taken by Indian Adult Education Association (IAEA) which is a non-profit organization which reviewed the most important concept for adult education and developed the subject of social education. As a result, different programmes were organized with the support of teachers and other literate persons in village schools, youth clubs, mahila mandals, voluntary organizations and community centres. With the introduction of the Community Development programme in 1952, social education became part of the process of community development.[14]

One another reason to have social education is the benefit that it helps reduce crime rate within the society and helps people educate their minds. Crime Rate is most of the times related to illiteracy. To educate the minds is to educate the entire society and social education among adults is one such way. There are a wide range of social issues prevailing in our country and the best way to be away from all those issues is to have the adults educated about all of them which will not just bring awareness but also help resolve the issues.

The next method connected with social adult education is the scheme of continuing education through which human resource development is achievable. Well-organized and coordinated infrastructure for continuing education can advance the course of literacy in India leading to the emergence of a learning society. The main principles covered under continuing education are:

- Acting as a best solution to basic literacy issues and enhancing coherent process of learning
- Being adaptable and applicable on all sections of people living in the society
- Addressing the socio-economic situation for the development of a community and offering greater infrastructure development initiatives.

With all such schemes and ideas at place, India is still behind in terms of adult education growth and the need of the hour is to look into more such schemes which are efficient and bankable.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

It is evident from the historical evolution that traces of adult education was found from a very long time in our country. However, the steps at each level and the initiatives taken have either not been effective or have failed at the time of implementation. Like the many universities and colleges we have for youth, special colleges and schools should be made even for adults. Though it

is quite common that adults are allowed within college premises, yet when one adult takes the initiative and joins, he is looked down and made fun of. These things contribute a lot in reducing the confidence of oneself.

When it comes to adult literacy and education, there are four main important areas where every adult should be educated. Those are basic literacy skills which involve reading, writing any language which comes under official language, civil literacy which teaches everyone the basics about surviving in any society, functional literacy which majorly revolves around teaching everyone the way a society functions, its political aspects and lastly developmental literacy. As the name suggests, this is a type of literacy which helps one's own development. Without a proper education among adults, developmental literacy is not a possibility, and everyone should work towards achieving the same. To bring a change in the society, one must bring a change in the mental thought process and if that happens to everyone, the day is not far when all adults of our country would be educated and contribute well towards the development of the nation.

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