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MAJOR CHANGES IN ADULT EDUCATION OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Adult education is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values. It can mean any form of learning adults engage in beyond traditional schooling, encompassing basic literacy to personal fulfillment as a lifelong learner. In particular, adult education reflects a specific philosophy about learning and teaching based on the assumption that adults can and want to learn, that they are able and willing to take responsibility for that learning, and that the learning itself should respond to their needs. Driven by what one needs or wants to learn, the available opportunities, and the manner in which one learns, adult learning is affected by demographics, globalization and technology. The learning happens in many ways and in many contexts just as all adults' lives differ. Adult learning can be in any of the three contexts, i.e.

- *Formal – Structured learning that typically takes place in an education or training institution, usually with a set curriculum and carries credentials;*
- *Non-formal – Learning that is organized by educational institutions but non credential. Non-formal learning opportunities may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organizations and groups;*
- *Informal education – Learning that goes on all the time, resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, community or leisure (e.g. community baking class.*

KEYWORDS

adult education, self-educating activities.

INTRODUCTION

Notwithstanding the implementation of a variety of adult and lifelong learning programmes in India during the last 50 years, not much attention has been paid to the preparation of professional manpower, especially teachers and trainers. It is argued that one of the reasons for slow progress of literacy in the country has been due to the poor quality of trainers and teachers in this field. Their role assumes considerable significance in view of the increasing importance of lifelong learning in the knowledge society. What is their current professional status in India? What kind of training programmes and certifications are available in India? This paper aims at critically reviewing the current training policy and programmes in adult and lifelong learning in India mainly based on the study of primary sources, participant observation of selected training programmes and interviews with stakeholders. It is attempted in four sections. The first section provides an overview of the policy and programme matrix of adult and lifelong learning in India. By examining the institutional contexts of training, the second section presents a taxonomy of teaching and training institutions and a professional profile of teachers and trainers. A critical review of the four methods of training adopted by governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), universities and open distance learning institutions is presented in the third section with a view to studying the content, competencies and lacunae. The paper concludes by identifying the factors that impede the process of professionalising training and discussing the salient features of an innovative professional development programme developed recently: the Participatory Adult Learning, Documentation and Information Networking (PALDIN).

FUNCTIONS

1. Identify appropriate target areas and target groups by developing socio-economic profiles.
2. Identify and procure the list of neo-literates from Zilla Saksharata Samitis and ensure that at least 25% of the clientele of JSS is neo-literates.
3. Organise training programmes for Key Resource Persons, Master Trainers and Trainees in vocational courses and for neoliterates.
4. Identify and ascertain a variety of educational and vocational needs of different categories of clientele groups.
5. Plan and organise polyvalent educational programmes and other activities including literacy, post-literacy, and continuing education to suit the learning requirements of target groups.
6. Explore, innovate, work out alternatives and try new methodologies to meet the needs of different target groups through programmes of education and training.
7. Cooperate with educational, cultural and other social organisations involved in organising programmes and activities to meet educational, vocational, social, cultural and welfare needs of target groups.
8. Act as a coordinator, facilitator and catalytic agent by developing a system of net-working in collaboration with other educational and technical institutions, development departments, welfare agencies, employers and workers' organisations, voluntary agencies and economic enterprises.
9. Undertake training and orientation of Resource Persons/instructors involved in planning and implementation of various programmes.
10. Organise equivalency programmes through Open Learning Systems.
11. Organize library and reading room facilities. The libraries will have literature suitable for neo-literates and sale counters for distribution of literacy material at subsidised rates to the neo-literates and other interested readers.
12. Provide consultancy services to agencies and enterprises planning to organise programmes for training and education of similar target groups.
13. Organise educational and vocational training programmes with special concern for deprived sections, women/girls and unemployed youth to provide new skills, refine/sharpen/upgrade the existing skills leading to employment, self employment and income generation.
14. Promote organisation of forums such as co-operative societies, mandals and associations of women, youth and workers with a view to undertake collective activity for socio-economic development.
15. Provide follow-up services to beneficiaries of the JSS.

CONCEPT

India is the second most populous country in the world with a population of 1,028 million (Census Report 2001). According to the Human Development Report (UNDP 2008), India ranks 128 out of 177 countries. In spite of having the third largest education system in the world with 358 universities, 153 institutions of national importance and research, 2,019 teacher training colleges (Selected Educational Statistics 2009) and an increase in literacy rates from 52.11% to 64.84% during the decade 1991 to 2001, there is a massive backlog of 304.11 million non-literates in the country which comprises nearly 30% of global non-literates (National Literacy Mission 2005; Premchand 2007). Moreover, it is estimated that there are 110 million neoliterates in the country (Planning Commission 2007). The Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education is only 10%. The demographic data show that 68.9% of the Indian population is below the age of 35 (Census Report 2001). Mainly because of these factors, the focus of India's adult and lifelong learning programme continues to be on adult basic literacy and continuing education

for the younger age group. However, the scope of adult education policy and programmes in India is not limited to imparting basic literacy and post literacy to learners, but includes skills training, inculcation of civic values of national integration, environmental conservation, women’s equality, and observance of the small family norm (Government of India 1988). Several policy documents have stressed that education does not end with schooling but is a lifelong process. As observed in the Report of the Indian Education Commission in 1964:

Adults need an understanding of the rapidly changing world and the growing complexities of society. Even those who had the most sophisticated education must continue to learn; the alternative is obsolescence. Thus viewed, the function of Adult education in a democracy is to provide every adult citizen an opportunity for education of the type which he wishes and which he should have for his personal enrichment, professional advancement and effective participation in social and political life.

The discussion during the workshop highlighted a number of key challenges that must be addressed when performance assessments are used for accountability in the federal adult education system: (1) defining the domain of knowledge, skills, and abilities in a field where there is no single definition of the domain; (2) using performance assessments for multiple purposes and different audiences; (3) having the fiscal resources required for assessment development, training, implementation, and maintenance when the federal and state monies under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 are limited for such activities; (4) having sufficient time for assessment and learning opportunities given the structure of adult education programs and students’ limited participation; and (5) developing the expertise needed for assessment development, implementation, and maintenance. This chapter discusses these challenges and their implications for alternatives identified by workshop presenters.

Although the importance of lifelong learning was never overlooked in Indian education policy documents, and the policy statement on the National Adult Education Program (1978) considered continuing education as an indispensable aspect of the strategy of human resource development and of the goal of creation of a learning society, there has been practically no shift from the exclusive emphasis on adult literacy. Despite the changing concept of adult education from basic literacy to civic literacy, functional literacy and developmental literacy and various short-term programmes undertaken during the second half of the 20th century, the thrust of the adult education programme in India continues to be on the eradication of illiteracy among adults (see Table 1).

CHANGING CONCEPT OF ADULT EDUCATION IN INDIA

Approaches	Cycles and periods	Key concepts	Main programmes
Traditional and religious	First Cycle (1882–1947)	Basic literacy	Night Schools, Social Reform Movements
Life-oriented	Second Cycle (1948–1966)	Civic literacy	Social Education
Work-oriented	Third Cycle (1967–1977)	Functional literacy	Farmers’ Education and Functional Literacy Program, Vocational Training, Workers’ Education
Social change	Fourth Cycle (1978 to date)	Developmental literacy	National Adult Education Program, Mass Program of Functional Literacy, Total Literacy Campaigns, Continuing Education, Skills Training, Workers’ Education

The present system of education in India, which follows the National Policy on Education 1986 (as modified in 1992), considers lifelong education as the cherished goal of the educational process. This presupposes universal literacy and the provision of opportunities for young people, housewives, agricultural and industrial workers and professionals to continue the education of their choice at the pace suited to them (Government of India 1992). The critical development issue is the continuous improvement of skills so as to produce manpower resources of the kind and the number required by society. It suggests that the future thrust will be in the direction of open and distance learning. These policies were translated into practice and a number of lifelong learning programmes were planned and implemented by governmental and non-governmental organisations and universities (Government of India 2008). Some of the current programmes include Continuing Education, Mahila Samakhya (Women’s Empowerment), Integrated Child Development Services, Vocational Training Programmes, Farmers’ Education and Training and a number of short courses offered by the university Departments of Adult Continuing Education and open and distance learning institutions (www.nlm.nic.in accessed: 03.06.2009). However, in all these programmes, not much attention has been paid to designing an appropriate professional development programme for teachers and trainers. Unlike the National Council for Teacher Education in India, which prescribes the curricula for primary and secondary school teacher training programmes and lays down job specifications and competencies, there is no such regulatory mechanism for teacher training in adult and lifelong learning in India. There are no exclusive institutions offering teacher training programmes in adult and lifelong learning. While a few of the universities that offer formal teacher training programmes (Bachelor and Masters of Education) include a paper on adult education, there are no separate professional programmes for training adult educators. The Post Masters Diploma Programme in Adult Education offered by ten universities in India cannot be considered to be a professional pre-service teacher training programme as the curriculum lacks practicum and is not tailored to the needs of the field. In the absence of a professional course for teachers and trainers, only short-term training forms a part of the regular activity of several adult education organisations in the country.

CONCLUSION

Our country has, as per 2001 Census, 259.52 million adults in the age group 15 years and above who are non-literates and therefore living a life of marginalization and utter deprivation. Most of them belong to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities and are women. They are also the invisible labor force participating only in the informal sector under exploitative conditions and as migrant labour constantly in search of work.

However, most of them can now be reached through the self-help groups or as job card holders under the MNREGA and also members of Gram Panchayats. Certainly all of them could participate better in their networks if only they had the skills to read and write and were empowered with knowledge and information about their own predicament as well as about the world around them. This might even enrich the capacities of the programmes which are meant for them.

All of them recognize that it is only through education that they can join the mainstream but due to compulsions of every day battles of survival they have given up on aspiring for education. Therefore, only a serious programme with a serious message that reaches out to them and enables them to adopt a new and different routine of accessing an education programme of their choice will fulfill their desire for learning.

An Expert Group was constituted to draft a National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education to meet precisely the above challenges. After intensive deliberations across the country, the group recommended that there should be sturdy institutions from the level of the Gram Panchayat to the National level established for provisioning of educational services for adults. It was felt that these institutions must be very much like the formal educational systems with predictability and multiplicity of paths. In fact considering that the learner is an adult it is felt that there is a need for a continuous education programme starting with basic literacy while simultaneously offering programmes of vocational skills; encompass information about the existing schemes and policies with emphasis on entitlements that adults can demand as a matter of right; enabling access to further knowledge, new scientific developments, if the adult learner shows interest in pursuing them;

and foster full citizenship participation of the learner. In a way it would be complex provisioning of services that would stimulate the learner to pursue continuous and lifelong education.

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