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Importance of Adult Education & Life-long learning in India in view of NEP 2020

Abstract

The present paper deals with the importance of adult education and life-long learning in India in view of NEP 2020. Adult education means an education for the complete man. It gives him literacy so that knowledge of the world may become accessible to him. It teaches him how to harmonise himself with his environment and make the best use of the physical conditions in which he subsists. As rightly remarked in Dictionary of Education, "Adult Education is any process by which men and women either alone or in groups try to improve themselves by increasing their knowledge, skill or attitudes."

The function of adult education in a democracy is to provide every adult citizen with 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. In view of NEP 2020, the opportunity to attain foundational literacy, obtain an education, and pursue a livelihood must be viewed as basic rights of every citizen. Literacy and basic education open up whole new worlds of personal, civic, economic, and lifelong-learning opportunities for individuals that enable them to progress personally

and professionally. At the level of society and the nation, literacy and basic education are powerful force multipliers which greatly enhance the success of all other developmental efforts. Worldwide data on nations indicate extremely high correlations between literacy rates and per capita GDP.

Meanwhile, being a non-literate member of a community, has innumerable disadvantages, including the inability to: carry out basic financial transactions; compare the quality/quantity of goods purchased against the price charged; fill out forms to apply for jobs, loans, services, etc.; comprehend public circulars and articles in the news media; use conventional and electronic mail to communicate and conduct business; make use of the internet and other technology to improve one's life and profession; comprehend directions and safety directives on the street, on medicines, etc.; help children with their education; be aware of one's basic rights and responsibilities as a citizen of India; appreciate works of literature; and pursue employment in medium or high-productivity sectors that require literacy. The abilities listed here are an illustrative list of outcomes to be achieved through adoption of innovative measures for Adult Education.

Keywords: Adult Education, Lifelong Learning, Literacy.

“Literacy is neither the beginning nor the end of education it is only one of the means of education.” -Mahatma Gandhi.

Introduction

Education is the foundation for the progress of the individual, society, and nation. All the progressive countries in the world owe their progress to education. In democratic countries, the importance of education is immense. In every democratic country, efforts are being made to educate infants, children, youth, women, men, and adults. Until the voter of the country understands the importance of his vote and tax, our democracy cannot sustain. There is a fear of its misuse by unqualified and trained people. After the attainment of independence, a great test of democracy is taking place in India as well. Political, social and economic reform cannot take place in India until the land is prepared for it. Adult education can be an effective tool in this direction. In every country, there are also a large number of people who, despite being uneducated, are engaged in earning a living. They do not have enough money and time to study regularly. In our country, the number of such adults is very high; they cannot even sign their names and are engaged in various works to make ends meet. Arranging the education of such people has become a huge educational problem. Education has been conceived as the basic essential of ensuring the dignity of human life. It is a basic human right and also the key which opens many economic, social and political doors for people.

Former President APJ Kalam also said that “Education is the most important element for the growth and prosperity of a nation. India is in the process of transforming itself into a developed nation by 2020.”

Adult education is needed to strengthen the foundation of democracy and inculcate the qualities of ideal citizenship.

Historical Background

For the first time in Baroda in 1910, Parent libraries were established, and after a few years, libraries for adults, and mobile libraries were arranged. Adult education in Punjab in 1911 was done. There were 223 night schools affiliated. In these schools, adults were taught to read and write, and arithmetic was taught. In 1901–02, night-school education was started only in Madras, Bombay and Bengal. According to the Government of India Act of 1919, a large number of Indians got the right to vote. The benevolent government also provided financial assistance for this work. As a result, night schools and night classes were organized in the United Provinces, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Bengal and Madras.

The administration of the provinces was handed over to the Indian ministers. The ministers started a nationwide movement against illiteracy. In the years 1939–40, there was a lot of spread of literacy, and the slogan ‘Each one teach one’ was also raised. In Punjab, the slogan ‘Educate and Educate’ was raised. This work was done in Uttar Pradesh and commendable work was also done in this direction in Assam, Orissa, Bombay, and Bihar. But in Uttar Pradesh, very satisfactory work was done in relation to adult education; new centres and libraries were opened in famous villages. Numerous night schools were organized and Literacy Week was celebrated every year. “The history of adult education during the last thirty years shows that many literacy drives have been organised on a state or local basis that were launched with considerable drive and enthusiasm but petered out in apathy and dissipated efforts a few years later.” Report of the Education Commission, pp. 423–424.

In the year 1930, the Department of Adult Education was established in this district, which did satisfactory work in the coming years. Adult education is complementary to free primary education. Therefore, due attention should be paid to the dissemination of both. 20-year plans should be made to spread companionship among adults, but the Sargent plan could not be implemented due to economic reasons.

Adult Education

According to Mr. S. N. Mukerji- “Adult education may be defined very broadly so as to include all instruction-formal or informal imparted to the adults. In India, adult education has two aspects (1) Adult Literacy education of those who never have any schooling, and (2) Continuation

education of adult literate.” Dr. V. K. P.V. Rao also said that an adult may be illiterate but his mind is grown-up and his interests are already cultivated. We are not writing on a blank slate when we are dealing with an adult.

Maulana Azad had said very clearly to the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1949, “The aim of education is to educate adults only. It is not only to make a person literate, but it includes all types of education, which makes every citizen a conscientious member of the democratic country.”

Adult education means an education for the complete man. It gives him literacy so that knowledge of the world may become accessible to him. It teaches him how to harmonise himself with his environment and make the best use of the physical conditions in which he subsists. As rightly remarked in the Dictionary of Education, “Adult Education is any process by which men and women, either alone or in groups, try to improve themselves by increasing their knowledge, skills, or attitudes.”

Mr. Humayun Kabir has written while explaining social education, “It is the curriculum by which the consciousness of citizenship is created in people and social feeling is increased in them. Adult education is complementary to free primary education. Therefore, due attention should be paid to the dissemination of both.

Adult Education After Independence

From the year 1947 until the present, after the independence of India, expected progress was made in the field of education. On May 20, 1948, the Union Education Minister presented a twelve-point plan to make illiterate adults literate. In 1949, a conference of provincial education ministers was held in Delhi, at which it was decided that within 3 years, about 52 per cent of the illiterates in the age group of 12 to 50 years should be made educated, but due to many obstacles, this target could not be fulfilled. Apart from this, an important thing happened: adult education was given the name of social education, whose objective was to make all adult women eligible and to make their lives complete in every way. In this way, the direct form of social education was made elaborate and comprehensive. Till 1949, the education of illiterate adults was prevalent in the name of adult education, but the Central Education Advisory Board presented a new approach towards education, and in its place, ‘Social Education’ seemed more appropriate. Social education is an advanced form of adult education. In social education, along with making people literate, efforts are made for their all-round development in such a way that they can become good citizens. In 1949, Maulana Azad, while explaining social education in the UNESCO Seminar on Rural Prod Education, had said, ‘By social education, we mean the education of the complete human being. It will give him literacy so that knowledge of the world becomes available to him. It will tell him

how to adapt himself to the environment and the natural conditions in which he lives.’

Along with the literacy program for adults in the age group of 15 to 35 years, a comprehensive program of continuing education has been prescribed under the national education policy. Under this, the establishment of continuing education centers in rural areas, education of workers by employers, and book and reading room programs will be organized by radio, Doordarshan, and films.

“The National Literacy Mission will be geared to the national goals such as alleviation of poverty, national integration, environmental conservation, observance of the small family norm, promotion of women’s equality, universalisation of Primary education, basic health care, etc. It will also facilitate the energization of the cultural creativity of the people and their active participation in development processes.” (National Policy on Education (1968), modified in 1992. p. 15).

“The campaigns were too limited in scale to achieve a significant advance and generate enthusiasm for further efforts. They also tended to be sporadic and uncoordinated—government departments, voluntary agencies, educational institutions, and individuals working more in isolation than in active collaboration with other agencies.” (Report of the Education Commission.p.424). All the above-mentioned recommendations were analysed, and they influence the present education system. It has become the basis of adult education nowadays. It also helps to understand the importance of adult education in the modern education system.

Importance of Adult Education and Life-Long Learning

Yet we have 350 million people who need literacy and many more who have to acquire employable skills to suit the emerging modern India and globe. Thus, it is inevitable to reach the status of a fully literate nation, and consequently achieve the status of a developed nation. “Illiteracy as a mass phenomenon blocks economic and social progress, affects economic productivity, population control, national integration and security and improvement in health and sanitation.”(Report of the Education Commission. p. 4235 4- Ibid. pp. 665-666). Apart from this, an important thing happened: adult education was given the name of social education, whose objective is to make all adult women eligible and to make their lives complete in every way. In this way, the direct form of social education was made elaborate and comprehensive. Literacy makes an immense difference in the way life is led, and the National Literacy Mission was initiated for this core thought that emphasised adult education. It was launched in 1988 and was done voluntarily, which was a vital aspect of the mission, and it also addressed the main

issue like alcoholism. To facilitate community involvement in education and the betterment of all, National Education Policy 2020 has come up with a defined structure for adult Education. The Government of India has given adult education in the following forms:

- (a) The spread of literacy among adult illiterates,
- (b) To produce an educated mind in the mass of the population in the absence of literary education,
- (c) To create in the adult an awakened knowledge of the rights and duties of citizenship as an individual and as a member of a mighty nation.

NEP 2020 and Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

The Central government has approved the 'New India Literacy Programme' for financial years 2022-27 which will now cover all aspects of Adult Education in the country in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. 'Adult Education' will now be called 'Education For All'.

"As a progressive step, it has also been decided that from now onwards the term "Education For All" will be used in place of "Adult Education" by the Ministry in view of the fact that the terminology "Adult Education" is not incorporating appropriately all non-literates of 15 years and above age group," the Education Ministry said. The number of non-literates in the country in the age group of 15 years and above was 25.76 crore (9.08 crore male and 16.68 crore female) according to the 2011 census. Currently, an estimated 18.12 crore adults in the country are illiterate, the ministry said. The objective of the New India Literacy Programme is to impart foundational literacy and numeracy, critical life skills like financial literacy, digital literacy, commercial skills, health care and awareness, child care and education, and family welfare, as well as vocational skills, basic education and continuing education. The scheme will be implemented online. Three crore students from around 7 lakh schools registered under UDISE (Unified District Information System for Education) and around 50 lakh teachers from government, aided and private schools will participate as volunteers. Around 20 lakh students from teacher education and higher education institutions will be actively involved as volunteers. Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, PRIs; and around 50 lakh NYSK, NSS and NCC workers will extend their support to the programme, the ministry said. The estimated total outlay of the programme is Rs 1,037.90 crore, which includes the central share of Rs 700 crore and the state share of Rs 337.90 crore for FYS 2022-27. The Nation's Education Policy NEP 2020 aims to cover "Adult Education and Lifelong Learning". According to the government, this program under the national scheme aims to give

the opportunity to attain foundational literacy, obtain an education, and pursue a livelihood. It believes that volunteerism, community involvement and mobilization are key success factors of adult literacy programmes, in conjunction with political will, organizational structure, proper planning, adequate financial support, and high-quality capacity building of educators and volunteers. It aims to build an outstanding adult education curriculum framework by NCERT that is dedicated to adult education. The curriculum framework for adult education will include at least five types of programmes, each with clearly defined outcomes:

- (a) Foundational literacy and numeracy;
- (b) Critical life skills (including financial literacy, digital literacy, commercial skills, health care and awareness, child care and education, and family welfare);
- (c) Vocational skills development (with a view towards obtaining local employment);
- (d) Basic education (including preparatory, middle, and secondary stage equivalency); and
- (e) Continuing education (including engaging holistic adult education courses in arts, sciences, technology, culture, sports, and recreation, as well as other topics of interest or use to local learners, such as more advanced material on critical life skills).

The framework would keep in mind that adults in many cases will require rather different teaching-learning methods and materials than those designed for children.

Infrastructure for Adult Education

For this initiative to be a success, infrastructure has to be provided that is easily accessible to all. Schools will be used as after-school centres and public libraries for the courses. Sharing resources in all types of education will be beneficial to all and will create synergy in the community.

Suitable infrastructure will be ensured so that all interested adults will have access to adult education and lifelong learning. A key initiative in this direction will be to use schools and school complexes after school hours and on weekends and public library spaces for adult education courses, which will be ICT-equipped when possible, and for other community engagement and enrichment activities. The sharing of infrastructure for school, higher, adult, and vocational education, as well as for other community and volunteer activities, will be critical for ensuring efficient use of both physical and human resources as well as

for creating synergy among these five types of education and beyond. For these reasons, Adult Education Centres (AECs) could also be included within other public institutions such as HEIs, vocational training centres, etc.

Instructor and Educators for Adult Education

Dedicated instructors and educators will be delivering the curriculum framework to mature learners to keep them in sync with the thought process. Volunteers are welcomed from the district, state, and national levels. Additionally, qualified community members can take a short training course so that they can serve others in this program. These instructors will be trained by the National, State, and district level resource support institutions to organize and lead learning activities at Adult Education Centres, as well as coordinate with volunteer instructors. Qualified community members, including from HEIs as part of each HEI's mission to engage with their local communities will be encouraged and welcomed to take a short training course and volunteer, as adult literacy instructors, or to serve as one-on-one volunteer tutors, and will be recognized for their critical service to the nation. States will also work with NGOs and other community organizations to enhance efforts towards literacy and adult education.

Participation in Adult Education

Encouraging people to take up this course is a challenge, and social workers travelling through communities will play a major role in convincing people to take up adult education. Dropouts can also take up education through this policy. Local organizations and NGOs will make announcements through events and initiatives so that enrollment can be maximised. All efforts will be undertaken to ensure the participation of community members in adult education. Social workers/counsellors travelling through their communities to track and ensure the participation of non-enrolled students and dropouts will also be requested, during their travels, to gather data from parents, adolescents, and others interested in adult education opportunities both as learners and as teachers/tutors. The social workers/counsellors will then connect them with local Adult Education Centres (AECs). Opportunities for adult education will also be widely publicized, through advertisements, announcements, and events and initiatives of NGOs and other local organizations.

Accessibility and availability of resources

Improving the availability and accessibility of books is essential to inculcating the habit of reading within our communities and

educational institutions. This Policy recommends that all communities and educational institutions - schools, colleges, universities and public libraries - will be strengthened and modernized to ensure an adequate supply of books that cater to the needs and interests of all students, including persons with disabilities and other differently-abled persons.

Monitoring of Adult Education

Close monitoring of this program is very important, and NGOs, and volunteers play a great role in the success of adult education. In coordination with Adult Education Centers (AEC), governments will work closely with community organizations and support to make people educated and a positive effort towards literate India. With Adult education implementation in the National Education Policy 2020, society will surely be a new world where they wish to be educated and support their family on a better path. One can enroll in such initiatives by the policy and can get benefitted plus a volunteer of education can always get in touch with local organizations and give support to the education system.

The effectiveness of adult education depends heavily on NGOs and volunteers, and careful monitoring of this programme is crucial. Governments would collaborate closely with community organisations and encourage efforts to educate people and create a literate India in conjunction with Adult Education Centres (AEC). With the inclusion of adult education in the National Education Policy 2020, society will undoubtedly be transformed into a place where people want to further their education and enhance the lives of their families. By following the rules, one may participate in these activities and get benefits. In addition, a volunteer in education can always contact regional organisations and help the educational system.

Role of Technology

Technology will be leveraged to strengthen and even undertake the above initiatives. Quality technology-based options for adult learning such as apps, online courses/modules, satellite based TV channels, online books, and ICT-equipped libraries and Adult Education Centres, etc. will be developed, through government and philanthropic initiatives as well as through crowd sourcing and competitions. In many cases, quality adult education could thereby be conducted in an online or blended mode (NEP 2020). The whole country has to make a sincere commitment to eradicate illiteracy, especially illiterate people in the age group of 15-35 years. There has to be a commitment to make literacy programs successful. Teachers, youth, students, voluntary organizations and employers etc. will have to be

involved in this work on a large scale. Concrete efforts will be made to improve educational aspects with the help of research institutes. Apart from literacy, development of functional knowledge and skills and inculcating among the learners an understanding of the socio-economic reality and making them aware of the possibility of changing this situation will be part of adult education.

A comprehensive program of adult and continuing education will be implemented using various methods and media. The following types of programs will come under this-

- i. Setting up ongoing learning facilities in rural regions.
- ii. Workers' education facilitated by employers, trade unions, and relevant governmental bodies.
- iii. Advancement of continuous education by higher educational institutions.
- iv. Encouraging extensive creation, publication, and access to books, along with the establishment of libraries and reading spaces.
- v. Utilization of radio, television, and films for widespread instructional and collective learning purposes.
- vi. Creation of learner groups and associations.
- vii. Implementation of remote learning initiatives.
- viii. Providing support for self-directed learning endeavours.
- ix. Development of vocational training programs catering to identified needs and interests.

The aforementioned measures will be strengthened and even carried out with the help of technology. Through government and philanthropic initiatives, as well as through crowd-sourcing and competitions, high-quality technology-based adult learning options, such as apps, online courses/modules, satellite-based TV channels, online books, and ICT-equipped libraries, Adult Education Centres, etc., will be developed. Thus, effective adult education might often be delivered online or in a hybrid format (NEP 2020). To completely eliminate illiteracy, particularly among those between the ages of 15 and 35, the whole nation must commit. To ensure the effectiveness of literacy programmes, a commitment must be made. This initiative will need extensive participation from a variety of groups, including educators, youth, students, non-profit organisations, and companies. With the aid of research institutions, real attempts will be made to enhance educational features. Adult education will include, in addition to literacy instruction, the development of practical knowledge and skills, as well as teaching learners about socioeconomic realities and the potential for change.

Utilising a variety of tools and media, a comprehensive programme of continuing and adult education will be put into action. The programmes listed below will fall under this:

Conclusion

It is said in our ancient texts: Sa vidya ya vimuktaye, education is that which brings freedom from ignorance and oppression. Under this concept of education, every person should know how to read and write because, in today's era, this is the main medium of learning. For this reason, literacy and adult education have lots of importance. The important issue of development today is how to continuously upgrade skills and prepare the kind and quantity of manpower that society needs. Adult education will be linked to national goals. These national goals include all of these: the removal of poverty, national unity, environmental protection, promotion of the cultural creativity of the people, adherence to the ideal of the small family, and equality of women. The present programs of adult education will be reviewed and strengthened. Mr. Humayun Kabir has written while explaining social education, "It is the curriculum by which the consciousness of citizenship is created in people and social feeling is increased in them. Many times, adults have to keep education aside and take up other tasks in life, and many could not get the opportunity to brush up on their hands-on education system. In such scenarios, adult education plays a major role. Age is no bar for education, and the NEP 2020 policy has focused on it very closely. The importance of education is well-known to all, and heading on its path at any time is the right time. In life, one may not find opportunities to complete his/her basic education but if resources are available and you have a spark in yourself to be educated, then the lightened path is showcased by educators.

Suggestions

NEP 2020 has designed a program for adult education, where people will be made literate and study the key areas according to their profession. Firstly, let us look at how adult education can help an individual in life.

- A person can carry out their financial transactions on their own.
- Fill out forms for the opportunities in their interested field.
- Teach children.
- Improve one's life through the right Education.
- Follow instructions and safety measures in times of emergency.
- Appreciate literacy and promote it.

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