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Research Paper

ADULT EDUCATION: A STEP FORWARD TO COMBAT ILLITERACY AND TO PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Today, when are on the threshold of a new era, it is all the more necessary to have this goal clearly before us. For, a greater India is in the making and it is on the thought, care and attention bestowed on the illiterates, so that to ensure the welfare of the future generation. In India, illiteracy is one of the fieriest problems that require much care and attention because it is very crucial in its significance and broader in its scope, than any other social problem. It constitutes a considerable proportion of the total population.

KEYWORDS: illiterates, generation, Education, continuing education

DISCUSSION

According to a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), India constitutes the utmost population of illiterate adults at 287 million. The illiteracy levels from the year 1991 to 2006 have increased to a gigantic 63 percent. In India, illiteracy is more or less associated with different forms of discrepancies. It is one of the most concerted problems in India having multifaceted dimensions attached to it. India possesses the largest illiterate population. At present, after the 2011 census, India's literacy rate is at 74.04 percent, where the female literacy rate is 65.46% while the male literacy rate is over 80%. This low female literacy leads to the formation of a vicious circle and is also responsible for the dependency of women on men. This census report also focuses on one very important fact that youth literacy rate is about 9 percent higher as compared to that of adult literacy rate.

For any nation, there is an essential requirement of a higher literacy level, so that to bring the country at equality on an international platform. Education, in India, is a fundamental right which is ensures the guarantee of

compulsory education by the Indian constitution to its every citizen. Literacy is traditionally understood as the ability to read, write, and use arithmetic. It is an ever changing multi-dimensional concept which keeps on adding new parameters and today, has been expanded to include the capability to use language, numbers, images, computers, and other basic means to understand, communicate, gain useful knowledge and practice the leading symbol systems of a culture.

According to the UNESCO, "Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals to develop their knowledge and potential and to participate fully in their community and wider society".

Thus, it shows that illiteracy always throw a bad impact on the future life of peoples of the country and the only way that can ensure the development and social transformation is the increase in the numbers of community-based programmes, especially, adult and lifelong learning.

Literacy is considered as a source to provide education to those who are unable to complete their school education. That's why, literacy is considered as one of the major component of Adult education. By the period of time, concept of adult education broadened and today adult education is taken as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective". According to Kundu, "adult education is a development oriented education which can be planned and designed by others as well as the learner themselves. The adult learner, to a great extent can assert in regard to content, methodology, place and time of learning."

Today with the changing period of time, the emphasis on adult literacy has drastically increased and the involvement of different international associations since 2000 has revolved around two goals expressed in the Dakar Framework of Action, "ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes, and achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults".

Adult education is a life-long process of an organized educational learning aimed at providing education to any person of any age group, who dropped the school or have not got a chance to receive proper basic education in his/her young age. Adult education provides some disadvantaged ones, a last chance of learning, reading and writing. In other words, adult education is a way of providing endless and continuing education throughout life to all those whether literate or illiterate, so as to well-inform recent knowledge for their existence and progress.

Adult education is a form of education which is very different from children's learning because adults already have much larger amount of accrued knowledge and experience. It is a sought of practice that could be provided at the workplace or otherwise in a classroom through continuing education process because adults only needs practical knowledge and skills that they could employ in their daily life. Today, the approach of adult education has shifted towards lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is a continuous process of add-on experience and learning from everyday life, both in official and casual circumstances. It is imparted institutionally by universities and other

institutions and the activity is completed based on the assumptions and idea of self-directed learning.

Since the independence, promotion of literacy, especially among the adults is one of the major concerns of the nation and since then various policies and programmes have been taken up to eradicate illiteracy among adults. Some of those programmes and policies are as follows:

- **Social Education Programme**

The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) suggested for social education programme as an inclusive approach to educate adult illiterates and directly rejected the term "adult education" as it was merely limited to literacy work. Conveying basic literacy skills was not the priority concern of the social education programme. The prime objective of this programme was to generate awareness among all the citizens, whether illiterate or literate, regarding their rights and responsibilities for building a democratic nation.

- **The Farmers' Functional Literacy Project (FFLP)**

In the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74), The Farmers' Functional Literacy Project, also known as Kisan Saksharata Yojana basically aimed at promoting human resources to expand agricultural efficiency of the farmers. It was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme in 3 districts as an experimental project under the Experimental World Literacy Project of UNESCO. The focus of this programme was on providing basic literacy skills along with practical and technical agricultural information.

- **National Adult Education Programme (NAEP)**

National Adult Education Programme was launched on October 2, 1978. It was a massive programme which aimed at expansion of non-formal, flexible and need-based professional educational programme for non-literate adults, youth who have completed their primary education and school drop-outs. It aimed at encouraging continuing education as an essential instrument not only for human resource development but also for the formation of a literate society.

- **Rural Functional Literacy Project (RFLP)**

This was the leading project of National Adult Education Programme, which was started as a centrally sponsored scheme in 1978 for rural areas. In 1979, the programme of Functional Literacy for youth in the age group of 15-25 years was merged with the Farmers' Training and Functional Literacy Project to constitute 'Rural Functional Literacy Programme'. This programme aimed at developing the abilities of learners in reading, writing and computing, raising their capability and generating awareness among them regarding their personal and social difficulties.

- **Total Literacy Campaign (TLC)**

The thrust of this campaign is to provide functional literacy through a variety of means and with the active involvement of all sections of society. These campaigns are area-specific, time-bound, volunteer-based, cost-effective and outcome-oriented. The measurement of learning outcome is continuous, informal, participative and non-threatening.

- **Continuing Education Programmes**

The continuing education programme came into force in 1996. The main objective of the programme is to educate peoples on new advancements or to build upon a person's expertise in a given field. This programme is envisaged to link literacy with actual life situations by imparting relevant technical and vocational skills.

- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is one of the government's flagship programme for

achieving the lengthy unforgettable goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner for making free and compulsory education for the children of 6-14 years of age group. SSA has been operational since 2000-2001 in partnership with state government to provide quality elementary education including life skills.

CONCLUSION

Thus, it can be easily concluded that adult education is an important and useful instrument of positive improvement in the quality of education and skill so as to elucidate the problem of unemployment. With the period of time, the focus of adult education is not only on eradicating illiteracy but also on providing professional education, training and skills, so that to ease the inclusion of citizens in scientifically progressive world.

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