

# New Trends in Adult Education through Government Programmes

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**Abstract-** *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning set out the role of adult education as a vital component in a continuum of lifelong learning. It outlined the contribution of the sector in promoting competitiveness and employment, addressing inter-generational poverty and disadvantage, strengthening individuals, families and communities, and promoting democracy and social cohesion. Many institutions have realized the profitable market of adult undergraduate students, who may be returning to college for a number of reasons. Marketing to these diverse student groups and offering the appropriate programs and supports may allow an institution to significantly increase enrollment numbers and revenue. Adult Education aims at extending educational options to those adults, who have lost the opportunity and have crossed the age of formal education, but now feel a need for learning of any type, including literacy, basic education, skill development (Vocational Education) and equivalency. With the objective of promoting adult education, a series of programmes have been introduced since the First Five Year Plan, the most prominent being the National Literacy Mission (NLM) that was launched in 1988 to impart functional literacy to non-literates in the age group of 15-35 years in a time bound manner. By the end of the 10th Plan period, NLM had made 127.45 million persons literate (Population projection of MHRD). Presently, the provision of adult education is through the Saakshar Bharat Programme (SBP) which is a centrally sponsored scheme and also there are some other organizations, these are Directorate of Adult Education, NGOs for adult education and skill development, The State Resource Centre(s). These are the government organizations working for the future development and expansion of adult education for a strengthened focus on access, quality, flexibility and responsiveness.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The higher education market has seen an increase in non-traditional types of student enrollments, as it is widely recognized. As enrollments by all student groups in online learning increase, colleges and universities are focusing initiatives on enhancing distance education programs to meet this need. Further, many institutions have realized the profitable market of adult undergraduate students, who may be

returning to college for a number of reasons. Marketing to these diverse student groups and offering the appropriate programs and supports may allow an institution to significantly increase enrollment numbers and revenue. The information is designed to provide an overview of the strategies that may be developed for identifying the desires of adult learners and designing program marketing to address the wants and needs of this target population.

Contextualized instruction curricula are basic skills programs that allow adults to simultaneously acquire career training. Instead of teaching skills for their own sake, contextualized learning focuses on instructing adults in how to apply the skills they have learned to specific situations. The immediacy of skill use generally demonstrated by students at live work sites reinforces classroom instruction and makes the skills seem meaningful. Moreover, the skills taught in contextualized education programs are often not exclusively academic. Instead, they include soft skills and other personal habits that are required for success at work.

Gandhiji's idea of social service for college students during the vacation and, later on full time basis will prove invaluable in this regard. Young men and women taking up Adult education as a drive should be fired with a missionary zeal to eradicate illiteracy and ignorance from our country. The slogan should be "Each one, teach one. It is education and enlightenment that lifts a nation to the heights of progress and greatness. Unfortunately, the situation as it obtains in India in respect of education is not only distressing but disgraceful and deplorable. At present about 60% of the people in India are illiterate; they cannot differentiate a buffalo from a black mole.

Adult Education aims at extending educational options to those adults, who have lost the opportunity and have crossed the age of formal education, but now feel a need for learning of any type, including literacy, basic education, skill development (Vocational Education) and equivalency. With the objective of promoting adult education, a series of programmes have been introduced since the First Five Year Plan, the most prominent being the National Literacy Mission (NLM) that was launched in 1988 to impart functional literacy

to non-literates in the age group of 15-35 years in a time bound manner. By the end of the 10th Plan period, NLM had made 127.45 million persons literate of which, 60% were females 23% belonged to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 12% to Scheduled Tribes (STs). 597 districts were covered under Total Literacy Campaigns of which 502 reached Post Literacy stage and 328 reached Continuing Education stage (Population projection of MHRD).

2001 Census recorded male literacy at 75.26%, while female literacy remained at an unacceptable level of 53.67%. Census of 2001 also revealed that gender and regional disparities in literacy continued to persist. Therefore, to bolster Adult Education and Skill Development, Government of India introduced two schemes, namely Saakshar Bharat and Scheme for Support to Voluntary Agencies for Adult Education and Skill Development during the 11th Plan. Saakshar Bharat the new variant of earlier NLM set following goals to raise literacy rate to 80% to reduce gender gap to 10% and minimize regional and social disparities with focus on Women, SCs, STs, Minorities and other disadvantaged groups. All those districts that had female literacy rate below 50% as per census 2001, including Left Wing Extremism affected districts irrespective of literacy level are being covered under the programme.

#### **New Trend in Adult Education :-**

The programme aims to provide education that will enable young as well as mature adults to improve or supplement their knowledge and skills within general subjects. It also aims to enhance adults' ability to improve their future job and educational possibilities. 'Formal adult education' is commonly understood to mean learning activities leading to diplomas and certificates equivalent to those which may be obtained in the school or higher education system. It is important to recognize that the term 'formal adult education' can include a wider range of learning activities.

Electronic media have become increasingly important in education and accordingly in adult education as well. The Internet is an inexhaustible source of knowledge and information. Moreover, it can be a tool to communicate knowledge and practice skills and as such, is instrumental for learning and work. Distance education or distance learning delivers education to learners who are not physically "on site" as in a traditional classroom or campus. The source of information and the learners are separated by both time and distance. In its original version, the distance education was designed through correspondence and it implied that the learner and instructor interacted through the mail as the only means of communication. Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

is a modern version of Correspondence Education, which has been enhanced by the explosive growth of the Internet and the myriad possibilities of innovations in making education a lifelong experience. Sometimes the fix can be as straightforward as offering programs on nights or weekends. Other institutions have developed more complex curricular innovations. Some of the more popular alternatives to traditional adult education include bridge programs, which combine basic skills training with vocational preparation, and career pathways, which break long programs into smaller, more readily achievable pieces that provide meaningful occupational credentials along the way.

## **II. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES AND MAIN ASSOCIATIONS**

### **National Literacy Mission Authority :-**

Adult Education is a Concurrent Subject with both Central and State Governments being required to contribute to its promotion and strengthening. At the national level, National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) an autonomous wing of MHRD is the nodal agency for overall planning and management and funding of Adult Education Programmes and institutions. Its inter-ministerial General Council and Executive Committee are the two policy and executive bodies.

Presently, the provision of adult education is through the Saakshar Bharat Programme (SBP) which is a centrally sponsored scheme. The National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) is the Nodal Agency at the National level. The Joint Secretary (Adult Education) is the ex-officio Director General of NLMA. It was set up in 1988 with the approval of the Cabinet as an independent and autonomous wing of the Ministry of HRD (the then Department of Education). The Cabinet vested NLMA with full executive and financial powers in the sphere of work.

### **Saakshar Bharat :-**

The Central and State Governments, Panchayati Raj Institutions, NGOs and Civil Society need to work in union to realize dream to create a "literate India". Saakshar Bharat has been formulated in 2009 with the objective of achieving 80% literacy level by 2012 at national level by focusing on adult women literacy seeking to reduce the gap between male and female literacy to not more than 10 percentage points. The mission has four broader objectives namely imparting functional literacy and numeracy to non-literates acquiring equivalency to formal educational system; imparting relevant skill development programme and promote a learning society by providing opportunities for continuing education. The

principal target of the mission is to impart functional literacy to 70 million non-literate adults in the age group of 15 years and beyond. The mission will cover 14 million SCs, 8 million STs, 12 million minorities & 36 million others. The overall coverage of women will be 60 million. 410 districts belonging to 26 States/UTs of the country have been identified to be covered under Saakshar Bharat.

Home Ministry has declared 35 districts as left wing extremism affected districts. However, 30 left wing extremism affected districts also had adult female literacy of 50 per cent or below. Therefore, 370 is the net number of districts that qualify for coverage under the programme. Since 2001, several eligible districts have been bifurcated or trifurcated. This has raised the total number of eligible districts to 410 out of which 35 are left wing extremism affected districts. Programme provides for coverage of only rural areas in the eligible districts.

#### **Directorate Of Adult Education :-**

Directorate of Adult Education originated from National Fundamental Education Centre (NFEC) which was set up by Govt. of India in the year 1956. This Centre was renamed as Department of Adult Education and made part of the National Institute of Education under the N.C.E.R.T. in 1961. Following the Government thrust on adult education resulting in substantial increase in adult education activities/programmes in the country, this department separated from N.C.E.R.T. and was given an independent identity in the year 1971. For some time it was also known as Directorate of Non-Formal (Adult) Education and ultimately the Directorate of Adult Education. Over the years, the Directorate has considerably expanded both in size and coverage of activities in the field of adult education literacy. At present this Directorate enjoys the status of a subordinate office under the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India.

### **III. NGOS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

The Programme of Action (POA) to operationalise National Policy on Education, 1986, inter-alia, envisaged development of a genuine partnership between the Government and non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and stipulated that government would take positive steps to promote their wider involvement in eradication of illiteracy by providing due support to them. To promote Adult Education, particularly in 15-35 age groups, through voluntary sector, the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, has

been providing support to Voluntary Agencies (VA) through two separate schemes, namely (i) Assistance to Voluntary Agencies in the field of Adult Education and (ii) Jan Shikshan Sansthan. The former is conceptualised as an overarching programme to encourage innovation and creativity in literacy and continuing education. It includes establishment of State Resource Centers for technical and academic support to adult education. Jan Shikshan Sansthan, on the other hand, provide vocational education skill development training to those having no or rudimentary level of education.

The Government has now decided to merge both the schemes and rename the modified scheme as "Scheme of Support to Voluntary Agencies for Adult Education and Skill Development" and continue to support the Voluntary Agencies on project to project basis. Thus the new scheme subsumes the erstwhile NGO based schemes of the National Literacy Mission. Besides revised parameters, enhanced financial assistance has been provided under some of the components of the revised scheme. The scheme will be administered through a new set of guidelines and terms & conditions, as specified by the Government from time to time.

#### **The State Resource Centre :-**

The State Resource Centre(s) (SRCs) are mandated to provide academic and technical resource support to adult and continuing education through development and production of material and training modules. In addition SRC would be required to conduct motivational and environmental building, action research and evaluation and monitoring. The State Resource Centers based on the workload and the size of their programme in the area of their jurisdiction is categorized into two categories namely Category 'A' and Category 'B'. Different quantum of assistance has been provided for each category.

#### **The Indian Adult Education Association :-**

Probably the oldest organization dedicated to the cause was established in 1939. Dr. Zakir Hussain, former President of India, who served on the committee of the IAEA for 10 years as its Vice President is quoted as saying, "The history of the IAEA is the history of adult education in India," from which it can be concluded that very little was done in this space prior to the IAEA's formation. IAEA organizes conferences and training programmes for adult educators in the country, as well as functionaries in the Government and enrolls high profile Government officials, educators and social workers. The International Institute of Adult and Lifelong Education (IIALE) were set up by the IAEA in 2002.

#### IV. SUGGESTIONS

One other major issue that has to be addressed is that of participation in adult education and literacy programmes. There is a general low level of participation in non formal adult education especially literacy education in the country. “Only about 30.2 per cent of the adult population was aware of the existence of the literacy programmes in the country (Literacy survey 2011). This is because some literacy Centres are located far away from people who needed them”. To address the issue, the survey recommended that the level of literacy education of adults in the formal and non-formal education should be raised. Intense awareness campaigns are therefore needed to mobilize for quality participation

#### V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of adult education in the form of college or university is distinct. In these institutions the aim is typically related to personal growth and development as well as occupation and career preparedness. Another goal might be to not only sustain the democratic society, but to even challenge and improve its social structure. It is important to note that although the certificates and diplomas related to different qualifications often remain valid for the duration of a person’s working life, the knowledge, skills and competences needed in the labor market and in society at large are evolving rapidly. Therefore formal certificates and qualifications, once achieved, are often no longer enough to ensure continued employability throughout one’s working life. In other words, the completion of a formal qualification should now be seen as a step on the lifelong learning ladder rather than an end in itself. On the practical plane, however, there are some difficulties that confront a Social education planner or worker. Some of the main difficulties and problems are : isolation of adult education in education, accommodating difficulties, age structure of the adults, the family circumstances and background of learners, occupational grouping, cultural background, socio-economic background, geo-graphical location of the social education centre, level of the social education worker teacher, lack of proper knowledge of adult psy-chology, paucity of leisure lack of equipment, lack of motivation, fatigue of adults and their constitutional and temperamental lethargy, lack of proper publicity, hostility from certain vested interests, poor supervision of centres and half-hearted implement-ation.

Happily, greater emphasis has been laid on Adult Education in the Seventh Five-Year Plan. The tenth point in Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's 20-point Programme- 'Expansion of Education'-also makes special mention of stimulating Adult literacy. Sizeable funds have been allocated

and separate staff, including the block and Aanganwari people has been deployed to foster Adult education. Adult education officers have been appointed in each college and they supervise the running of adult schools by student volun-teers. The programme of Adult education has to be undertaken on war-footing.

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