

# Adult Education in India

**Anand Singh**

Principal & Director,  
Deptt. of Education,  
S.M.C.L. Kaka Girls P.G. College,  
Sikandrabad, Bulandshahr (U.P.)

**Prite Yadav**

Lecturer,  
Deptt. of Education,  
S.M.C.L. Kaka Girls P.G. College,  
Sikandrabad, Bulandshahr (U.P.)

**Abstract**

Through this careful study of Reviews of Researches from Journals, Books, Research dissertation and other sources of information, the investigator has attempted the problems, matters, factors or conditions that are existing in the Adult Education in India. Many educational programmes has been started in this Direction. This chapter focuses on Adult Education and related policies, programmes. Part of a solution is to advocate for participatory and locally-adopted programme and activities in a transparent and professionalised environment. The finding of the studies were found extremely useful to develop strategics policies and schemes that are necessary to eradicate illiteracy form the land of Indi

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**Introduction**

Adult education (AE) is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self educating activities in order to gain new form 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, AE 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 (AL) is affected by demographics, globalization and technology. The learning happens in many ways and in many context just as all adults lives differ. Adult learning can be in any of the three context i.e.

**Formal**

Structured learning that typically takes place in an education or training institution. Usually with a set curriculum and carrier 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).

**Characteristics**

Defined as the science and art of helping adult learn, the practice of AE is referred to as andragogy, to distinguish it from the traditional school-based education for children pedagogy. Unlike children, adults are see as :

1. More self-directed, rather than relying on others for help
2. Mature and therefore experienced with the experience providing a rich source for learning
3. An Adult's readiness to learn is linked to what one needs to know.
4. Adult orientation to learn is problem centered rather than subject centered
5. Adult motivation to learn in internal.

Educating adults differs from educating children in several ways given that adults have accumulated knowledge and work experience which can add to the learning experience. Another difference is that most AE is voluntary, therefore, the participants are generally self-motivated, unless required to participate, by an employer, for example. Adults frequently apply their knowledge in a practical fashion to learn effectively. They must have a reasonable expectation that the knowledge they gain will help them further their goals. For example, during the 1990s, may adults, including mostly office workers, enrolled in computer training courses. These courses would teach basic use of the operating system or specific

application software. Because the abstractions governing the user's interactions with a PC were so new, many people who had been working white-collar jobs for ten years or more eventually took such training courses, either at their own whim (to gain computer skills and thus earn higher pay) or at the behest of their managers.

In the United States and many areas in Canada, a more general example is when adult who dropped out of high school return to school to complete general education requirements. Most upwardly mobile positions required at the very least a high school diploma or equivalent. A working adult is unlikely to have the freedom to simply quit his or her job and go "back to school" full-time. Public school systems and community colleges usually offer evening or weekend classes for this reason. In Europe this is often referred to as "second-chance", and many schools tailor-made courses and learning programs for these returning learners. Furthermore, adults with poor reading skills can obtain help from volunteer literacy programs. These national organizations provide training, tutor certificate, and accreditation for local volunteer programs. States often have organizations which provide field services for volunteer literacy programs.

#### **Principles**

The principles of andragogy flow directly from an understanding of the characteristics of adults as learners and can be recognized when we understand the characteristics of adults, and see the way those characteristics influence how adults learn best. Teachers who follow the principles of andragogy when choosing materials for training and when designing program delivery, find that their learners progress more quickly, and are more successful in reaching their goals. The Canadian Literacy and Learning Network outlines the 7 key principles of adult learning. In other words, these 7 principles distinguish adult learners from children and youth.

1. Adults cannot be made to learn. They will only learn when they are internally motivated to do so.
2. Adults will only learn what they feel they need to learn. In other words, they are practical.
3. Adults learn by doing. Active participation is especially important to adult learners in comparison to children.
4. Adult learning is problem-based and these problems must be realistic. Adult learners like finding solutions to problems.
5. Adult learning is affected by the experience each adult brings.
6. Adults learn best informally. Adults learn what they feel they need to know whereas children learn from a curriculum.
7. Children want guidance. Adults want information that will help them improve their situation or that of their children.

#### **Adult Education Programme (AEP)**

Philosopher and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm once asked the following question: "Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of all adults of every age?" (Thinkexist.com, 2007). Indeed, many in American society believe that education begins at kindergarten, proceeds through high school and, for

those who can afford it, forward through four years of college. However, education is a never-ending part of life, for those who fail to keep their minds open to learning new concepts are doomed to remain stationary in life.

Upon leaving elementary and secondary education levels, the student moves into the collegiate level, not only honing the skills he or she developed in prior years, but focusing them on a career path. After graduating from an undergraduate university or college, the student may even move further along an educational path, entering law school, medical school, or other graduate schools for a Master's degree or Ph.D.

Still, many adults who have traveled along with path, even those who receive juried doctorate degrees, or doctorates of medicine, have much to learn, particularly when they are employed and using their skills in a particular workplace. Teachers, for example, may need training on new teaching techniques or technical resources that were not available to them during their schooling. An individual with a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree may need to learn a foreign language in order to use his or her skills under the employment of a multinational corporation.

For some, however, the path of structured education may not be as long as that of the medical doctor, lawyer or MBA-trainee businessman or businesswoman. For some, furthering an education after the secondary level entails receiving vocational training, such as machine and automotive repair, real estate certification or the culinary arts.

Many others may have reached the apex of the professional training that they may receive for their originally chosen path, but have decided to chart a new course along their careers. These individuals may have received training in one field, but developed an interest in another field. For them, they may have to return to school to recapture vital information and training to help them transition to their new workplace.

#### **Organizations Working for AE Government**

**The National Literacy Mission (NLM)**, launched in 1988, is the program undertaken by the Government for AE. It has been the topic of discussion at various United Nations forums, and was awarded the UNESCO Noma Literacy Prize in 1999. By the end of the 10th Plan Period (2002-2007) the NLM had made 127.45 million persons literate, of which 60% were females. To further bolster 'AE and Skill Development', the Government also introduced two new schemes, namely **Saakshar Bharat and Scheme for Support to Voluntary Agencies for AE and Skill Development**, during the 11th Plan. Saakshar Bharat is the world's largest AEP, which envisages making 70 million adults literate by 2017.

**Excerpt from the World Education Forum (UNESCO)'s Education For All Assessment Report:** "The goal of NLM is to attain full literacy (with the sustainable threshold level of 75 percent). NLM envisages that focusing on **imparting of functional literacy** to non-literates in the **15-35 age group** would help achieve this goal. This age group has been selected because they are in the productive as well as the reproductive period of life.

NLM seeks to bring non-literates to a level of self-reliance in the three R's (Reading, writing and Arithmetic). It also provides them facilities for skill development to improve their economic status and well-being. It enables them to imbibe value of national integration, conservation of the environment, women's equality and observance of small family norms. And finally, it facilitates their participation in the development process.

Functional literacy, encompassing all of the above, is the overall goal of NLM."

## NGOs and Other Initiatives

**The Indian AE 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 AE 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) was set up by the IAEA in 2002.

## NLM & NGO's

As part of the revision of the NLM programme in 1999, NGOs were given a major role in the plan for AE, either by partnership with the State Resource Centers, or by running their own continuing education programs, vocational training, etc. It was then expected that "NGOs would take up more innovative projects, which would serve as examples for making policy changes by the NLM. "For this, NGOs were invited to apply for grants from the NLM

## Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

A number of public sector enterprises have extended their support to the Saakshar Bharat Program. There are partnerships with the private sector as well, for example, Tata Consultancy (TCS) which has supported the campaign for literacy with its Computer Based Functional Literacy Program that has now been accepted as part of the 12th 5-year plan of the Government of India.

The PPP model is emerging as an important channel in development, especially through the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF).

## Indian Literacy Project (ILP) and Other Organizations

Formed in 1990 in the USA. ILP partners with local NGOs to "Play the role of a catalyst for literacy", ILP has supported nearly 100 projects since its inception, benefitting around 220,000 children youth and Adults. There are also NGOs working in this space, such as Tara Akshar, Nirantar and CORO for Literacy.

## Night Schools

There are around 200 independently functioning night schools in Maharashtra (150 of which are in Mumbai). The advantage of night schools is that they provide an opportunity for youth and adults who have to work during the day, to still pursue their education post work hours. Though the

concept of night schools is unique to only a few states (mainly Maharashtra), it would be beneficial to replicate the night school model across the country. Masoom is an NGO that works with night schools in Mumbai, and has developed a model for improvement of the night school education system.

## Ways to Support the Cause

While the current figures for illiteracy are still daunting, it is heartening to now that the Government through its Literacy Mission, as well as citizens through various forums and organizations, are not systematically approaching the issue and bringing down the adverse rates steadily. Measures such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Right of Education Act are wide-scale initiatives to ensure that the future generations of Indians will be given better access to education, and, therefore, not be as susceptible to illiteracy as their predecessors.

It is important to mobilize support for the promotion of literacy and AE, especially in the following ways:

## Public-Private Partnerships

Other organizations in the private sector can take the example of TCS and use their resources to develop valuable aids to assist the Government in imparting education to adults across the country. Technology-based solutions, especially mobile phone-based ones, are most likely to successfully

## Awareness & Fundraising

Partnering with NGOs to create awareness for the cause- for example the "Back-a-thon" (backwards walk) organized by the NGO Make a Difference (MAD) in 20 cities across the country to raise public awareness on illiteracy. Fundraising initiatives would also go a long way in providing NGOs with financial resources to implement their programs, as well as draw attention and support to their work. Companies can also consider options like "payroll giving" and regular NGO visits for their employees.

## Volunteering

Assisting NGOs by enrolling as volunteers to teach the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. Professionals from all walks of life can also volunteer their services to help build the capacity of the NGOs in areas such as strategy, financial management, human resource management, etc., Strengthening the NGO as an organization would help set a strong foundation and enable higher productivity and success of the program.

## Collaboration of NGOs

NGOs that are involved in similar causes would stand to benefit by collaborating their efforts and building on each other's learning and proven successes in the field. Endeavors must be made to identify such NGOs and find a way to synergize their programs for perhaps a more efficient and wider outreach.

AE programs ought to be treated slightly differently given the special needs of their beneficiaries. They should have more of a vocational training focus to them, to enable these adults to start making a living from their education as soon as possible. This will not only retain their interest in the program, but will also serve as examples to other non-literates in the community.

While NGOs may work towards these goals, programs in AE can only be truly successful with support from the Government and from other members in the community. Going by the progress made by the NLM and the growing support from the private sector, we can perhaps optimistically look forward to a literate India in the fairly near future.

#### Conclusion

This striking pattern which emerges from National Reports concern the intransigence of many participation and important issues in AE. In essence those who have least education continue to get least. As AE provision becomes increasingly diversified and decentralized, there is even greater need for co-ordination to secure, Resourcing, policy impact and public support.

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