

Importance of Adult & Continuing Education and It's Relevance in Contemporary India

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Abstract: *Adult & continuing education is an important part of education system of any country as well as India. The adult population in any nation cannot be denied, and having a condition where adults have the knowledge and skills and to take upon any tasks will indisputably boost the economy of any country in a longer run. This conceptual article argues that adult education is relevant only if it meets the personal and societal aspirations of adult learners and such relevant education is necessary for addressing contemporary national and global challenges. The study wants to highlight primarily the importance of adult & continuing education and the factors which are directly affected positively. The author also wants to discuss its historical development and explains as to where and how the concept of adult education grew. However, despite the commendable goal and objectives of adult & continuing education, there are usually problems in the implementation process. As a concluding remark, the author also emphasised on the importance of Social Education among adults. The **objective** of this paper is to examine the importance and relevance of adult & continuing education in contemporary India. The **method** employed for the present study is document based content analytical study. The paper however affirms that adult & continuing education remains a significant weapon for solving global challenges. It recommended that educational stakeholders should effectively manage this sector of education in order to maintain the global changes affecting humanity.*

Key Words: *Adult & continuing Education, Social Education, contemporary India.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Adult & continuing education is an important part of education system of any country as well as India. The adult population in any nation cannot be denied, and having a condition where adults have the knowledge and skills and to take upon any tasks will indisputably boost the economy of any country in a longer run. Education is one of the key themes which always find a place in any country. The more educated the population is, the more developed would the country be. The whole process of getting an education is not age barred and is a lifetime process. Education for relevance refers to the adequacy of learning opportunities for students of all types. It prepares students nationally and internationally for a positive future in society. It is directly related to the quality of what is learned, how it is learned and the effectiveness of the learning process. The implication is that any educational policy, in order to achieve its stated aim and goal, must have personal relevance and relevance to life. The question of the relevance of adult & continuing education has focused on the role and purpose of adult education for individuals and societies. The author of this article argue that adult & continuing education should serve both individual and collective goals, such as the preservation of cultural knowledge, the creation of an ideal state, which informs adult and future citizens, produces and energizes human capital for industry, promotes social development and reaffirms the important role of adult & continuing education.

1.1 OBJECTIVES:

- To know the importance of Adult & Continuing Education in India.
- To examine the relevance of Adult & Continuing Education in Today's India.

2. METHODOLOGY:

This article is analytical and interpretative in nature where qualitative data have been collected and analyzed logically. It is document based content analytical study.

2.1 ADULT EDUCATION:

The concept of Adult education, though, is a little different from general education. Adult education is the procedure where adults who are barred from formal education i.e. school or college due to any reason which may be financial, personal and are unable to continue even the same through anyway, are brought under a single uniform practice of empowering them by providing education. Relevant adult education is the most powerful weapon which can be used to change the world (**Nelson Mandela, 2013**). Merriam, Sharau and Brockett, (2007) maintained that adult education is the process whereby adults engage in systematic and sustained learning activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or values. **According to Lindeman**, adult education is that chance which is considered as a last resort to people who did not get a good opportunity to continue or pursue it at the right time. The three main characteristic features according to the definition includes – education even among the deprived class, comprehensive training in certain skills and post a vocational form of education.

Another important definition to be looked is the one given by Reddy. According to him “adult education is part-time or full-time education for men and women of all ages either organized by themselves or provided by schools, learning centres, or other agencies which enable them to improve their general or professional knowledge, skills and abilities by either continuing their education or resuming their initial or incomplete education of previous year.”

2.2 The main objectives of adult education can be categorized broadly as:

- **Delivering different types of literacy** Adult education paves in a way for different types of literacy and not just something which is limited to a certain subject or skill. More the higher-level skills are taught, more is the opportunity with the person to learn more.
- **Creating awareness on many subjects** Adult education provides an opportunity to create awareness on not just on one concept or subject but opens an array of opportunities to learn something new at all stage. This includes awareness about one’s self, community, society, health, medicine, hygiene, family and peace and welfare etc.
- **Providing ways to enhance functionality** This encompassed application of individuals, collective, community, skills and knowledge, corporate, national and international knowledge, cultures, attitudes, practices, resources, etc. for addressing the felt needs, for solving the problems, for promoting larger public participation in various activities and for bringing out social, economic, cultural, political transformation for raising general level or standard of living of the individual, community, nation and the world.

2.3 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ADULT & CONTINUING EDUCATION IN INDIA

To understand the present relevance and the importance of Adult & continuing education, it is important to know the historical development of the concept of Adult education.

During the **Vedic** time, there were a wide range of educational types which came into place and there was a concept of Gurukuls where different subjects were taught for different age groups. The education at that time majorly revolved around moral and social duties and did not accrue the need for a degree. In vedic period, the overall time frame can further be divided into four major periods involving the early vedic period, where learned scholars spoke and people listened and learnt things. The next period would be Upanishad period where the scope of education changed and based on the learnings of the Upanishads, the next period was the Dhannasastric era. The Dhannasastric period witnessed the development of art, literature, mathematics and theatre and Sanskrit had become a classical language. The 4th classification is the puranic period where already universities like Nalanda and Vikramshila were in place and the main language was Pali. Gurukuls now changed to Ashrams.

In India, the beginning of the **medieval period** was marked by the emergence of Muslim rulers. In this period there were two types of institutions-Maktab and Madrasah. Maktab was similar to schools and was concerned about elementary schooling, whereas the Madrasah was the one concerned with higher education. In this period, when ruler changed, the adult education system changed too. It was only during the period of Akbar that Hindus too got chances to develop their education system. The adults of muslim era were open to discuss their issues with the teachers and the subjects were open to being taught to people of any age group, which definitely helped everyone to learn.

In British period, the British rulers brought with them the concept of Modern-day education and subjects. In 1836, British government initially took a survey of literacy rate in India, it was found to be 6%. However, the low rates never bothered the Britishers. They educated only certain sections of people on whom they could extend their domination. However, Britishers had a concept of night school, which inspired many learners and adults started to take part in the night schooling. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in its fourth meeting in December 1938, appointed an Adult Education Committee under the chairmanship of Dr Syed Mahmud, the then Education Minister of Bihar. The committee made sure to discuss all about the importance of adult literacy, requirement for training of literacy teachers, the motivation of adults, use of audio-visual media in teaching and efforts for retention of literacy and continuing education. Gandhiji considered illiteracy as a sin and shame and demanded solving the same at the earliest through concerted efforts. Gandhiji suggested in his constructive programme two forms of education viz. Basic Education and Adult Education.

After the independence of India, the government of India completely understood the true meaning of adult education. It was realized that the development of a nation at a whole is not possible unless the adults are equally educated. The five-year plans played significant roles. Further, a vast majority of the illiterate population was from poorer sections of the community, which could be reached only through non-formal adult & continuing education. The Government of India was enhanced the budget allocation for adult education in the country. The proportion of budget allocation for adult education to the total investment in education had steadily gone up though there were fluctuations in between plan periods.

2.4 ADULT EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

With the advent of the 20th century, the definition of Adult Education has widened bringing within its scope any type of learning process which helps the learner to develop a new skill and learning. The Concept of adult education not just changed in India but also globally. It includes reading, writing, arithmetic, internet-based courses, technical subjects, vocational courses, and much more. **Malcolm Knowles**, a renowned academician from the United States is known as the father of Adult Education. According to him, in the modern day the education & adult education system which has the following as postulates:

- **Fundamental Education**, It is called fundamental because it helps people to learn the easiest things which are handy in day to day activities and directly plays a role in developing the standards of living.
- **Out of School Education**, this is one common method which has found its place in the developing stages of adult education.
- **Lifelong Studies**, Lifelong education is a process aimed at effective learning throughout life that comprises all ages, all levels of teaching, all forms of education and all educational policies. Lifelong education approaches all dimensions of human life, all branches of knowledge, and all practical skills.
- **Social Education**, It was an initiative started by the Government of India in 1950s. With the advent of adult education, somewhere in the growth stages, a need to develop social education grew. There are a wide range of social issues prevailing in our country and the best way to be away from all those issues is to have the adults educated about all of them which will not just bring awareness but also help resolve the issues. The first major step was taken by Indian Adult Education Association (IAEA) which is a non-profit organization which reviewed the most important concept for adult education and developed the subject of social education. With the introduction of the Community Development programme in 1952, social education became a part of the process of community development. Another reason to have social education is the benefit that it helps reduce crime rate within the society and helps people educate their minds. Crime Rate is most of the times related to illiteracy. To educate the minds is to educate the entire society and social education among adults is one such way.

The next method connected with social adult education is the scheme of **continuing education** through which human resource development is achievable. Well-organized and coordinated infrastructure for continuing education can advance the course of literacy in India leading to the emergence of a learning society. The main principles covered under Adult & Continuing Education are:

- Being adaptable and applicable on all sections of people living in the society.
- Addressing the socio-economic situation for the development of a community and offering greater infrastructure development initiatives.

3. SUGGESTIONS :

Without a proper education among adults, developmental literacy is not a possibility, and everyone should work towards achieving the same. It is evident from the historical evolution that a trace of adult education was found from a very long time in our country. However, the steps at each level and the initiatives taken have either not been effective or have failed at the time of implementation. Though it is quite common that adults are allowed within college premises, yet when one adult takes the initiative and joins, he is looked down and made fun of. These things contribute a lot in reducing the confidence of oneself. When it comes to adult literacy and education, there are four main important areas where every adult should be educated. Those are **basic literacy skills** which involve reading, writing any language which comes under official language, **civil literacy** which teaches everyone the basics about surviving in any society, **functional literacy** which majorly revolves around teaching everyone the way a society functions, its political aspects and lastly **developmental literacy**. As the name suggests, this is a type of literacy which helps one's own development.

Adult & Continuing Education should be re-packaging to excessively lift the adults into the position they can respond positively to global changes and restore human security and progress through the following channels.

- The adult educators and learners should have adequate relevant digital literacy and skills.
- Education stakeholders should massively expand the scope of generating revenues that will adequately finance all segments of the adult education programmes
- Adult education should promote and intensify teaching and learning in a culture of peace and harmony.
- The open and distance learning component of adult education should comprehensively be able to cater for the educational needs of refugees and internally displaced persons.
- Environmental adult education should be designed to be able to mitigate the consequences of the climate change crisis.

4. CONCLUSION :

The author argue in this article that an individual who is considered in a given society as an adult, can be regarded as such, and that any education provided to such an individual in whatever form it may take can be regarded as adult education. Like General Education, Adult Education can only attain its stated goals and objectives only if it is made relevant to adult learners personally and the entire society in which such an adult belongs including the workplace environment. It is evident from the historical evolution that traces of adult education were found from a very long time in our country. However, the steps at each level and the initiatives taken have either not been effective or have failed at the time of implementation. This article also argues that the provision of education through setting up un-implementable policies is not relevant in contemporary society due to the emergence of national and global issues. The authors also call for flexibility in adult education policies and training in curriculum adaption for adult learners. Without a proper education among adults, developmental literacy is not a possibility, and everyone should work towards achieving the same. To bring a change in the society, one must bring a change in the mental thought process and if that happens to everyone, the day is not far when all adults of our country would be educated and contribute well towards the development of the nation.

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