



Continuing education as a tool for community development

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Abstract

The paper aims to explore the scope of continuing education in the Indian context. The impact of continuing education on common people is delved into, highlighting the scope of the public educational institutions to take the responsibility on their shoulders apart from the various NGOs already committed to the task of imparting education to adults across various forms of the country. The scope of collaboration between educational institution and Gram Panchayats and the subsequent impact on continuing education is analyzed in the course of the paper. It becomes comprehensible that continuing education has the potential of being one of the most effective tools of inclusive development in the country. It can function as an effective means of bridging the gap between various sections of the society by empowering the masses with non-formal education to pave the way for economic independence.

Keywords: continuing education, adult education, inclusive development

1. Introduction: Continuing Education in India

While India is on a path of development after years of colonial oppression, the economic disparity and hardship of a lot section of the society has come to impede the process of imparting education in a systematic manner. It goes beyond saying that a huge number of people have to drop out from the schools or colleges order to find employment or any other mode of earning money for the purpose of supporting themselves and the dependent members of the family. The United Nations has notified that quality education is one of the preconditions for ensuring sustainable development for the underprivileged people of the society. Now, it is comprehensible that the country of India is faced with the challenge of ensuring and ambiance of holistic development if it fails to educate the masses in a proper manner.

It would be wrong to undermine the need of the human individual to start earning at the junction of life when the need to support others financially. The dichotomy between education and employment brings to question the basic tenets of development in the social-economic sphere of India. Taking the contextual matter into cognizance, the Department of School Education & Literacy under the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India has promoted the public policy of adult education across the country with all the impetus. It needs to be reckoned that adult education is aimed at providing educational options to those adult individuals who go on to lose their opportunity of gaining education, or have crossed the age stipulation of formal education, but feel the need to learn new things why are formal training for betterment of the their lives and opportunities. Thus, one can gauge the level of effectiveness of adult education in the Indian context with a huge population not having the scope of gaining formal education and opportunities.

2. Scope of Development

Apart from engaging NGOs for the purpose of spreading adult education among the common people of the country,

the government also went on to encourage the public universities to start adult education programs in a systematic manner for reaching out to the maximum number of people possible. So, many public universities took the responsibility of announcing the inclusiveness of education system of India through adult education programs. It has been the primary aim to generate optimism among the common what are the various programs undertaken. For the purpose of including more people into the programs offered, various public universities have opted to reach out to the rural areas through community partnership.

There are certain pros related to the cooperation between the educational institution and the community. Institutions of higher education can intervene in issues related to the grass-root of the society. Intellectual, technical and technological resources of universities can revitalize the backward section, and can empower them to sustain in a better way. It goes beyond saying that having an association with an educational institution of repute can have impact on the perspective of common people. Being a part of a university has the potential to import a sense of pride in an individual. A university with all its resources can be extremely helpful to the marginalized section of the society.

3. Partnership with Gram Panchayat to Enhance Outreach

It needs to be noted that Gram Panchayat is the lowest tier, but involved with day to day necessities of the rural people. Being the base of decentralization of power structure in our country, Gram Panchayat works in the closest association of the rural people and their basic priorities. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, on Panchayat Raj provided the necessary powers to the Panchayati Raj institutions to function as institutions of local self-governance and plan and implement schemes for economic development and social justice. Beside the regular known activities, the Panchayat's activities involve poverty alleviation program, technical training and vocational education, adult and non-formal education, setting up and maintenance of libraries, women and child development. As

such, the partnership between the university and Gram Panchayat is a unique combination for addressing all these probabilities and possibilities.

The socio-economic and cultural scanning of the targeted community has to be done periodically by the university. Apart from this, information has to be collected about the peoples' interests, education, their needs and priorities, social customs, cultural practices, etc. These details can be helpful in identifying suitable developmental program for the community. It needs to be reckoned that the beneficiaries of development programs must be involved in selecting specific and limited number of objectives which would mark the behavioral changes in people through the economic and social betterment. Teaching in adult education can be described as the process of arranging situations in which the things to be learnt are brought to the notice of the targeted people in a community. After successfully passing through the previous two phases mentioned, the interest of the target group gets developed, and they become aroused with desire for change, i.e., they get stimulated to action. It is extremely important to create effective learning situations with good empathetic teachers, focused learners, planned development activity, physical facilities, and proper teaching materials.

4. Future Prospects

The collaboration between the university and the Gram Panchayat has paved the way for imparting adult education among the common people of the targeted area in West Bengal, India. The programs empower a substantial section of the rural population, the majority of who come from the socio-economically marginalized section of the community. It can be comprehended that the model of spreading adult education can pave the way for inclusive development of the community that has remained disconnected from the mainstream society for long. Both state and central universities are committed toward making India tread on the path of holistic development and inclusiveness. It is only through uplifting the rural masses that the country can think of a better future.

Imparting education to the adults who might have had to leave studies for certain reasons is surely one of the primary ways to instill confidence, skills, and resolution among the people to make their lives better. While the central government has involved many NGOs to conduct programs of adult education, more and more educational institutions of repute should take the responsibility on their shoulders to involve the excluded masses into the process of development, and thereby contribute to the cause of empowerment of the population and bridge the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged people of the Indian society.

5. References

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