

Competencies of Adult Education functionaries in India.

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Abstract

The concept of adult education in India is as old as the Indian culture. It was there in oral tradition initially and gradually with the passage of time it started taking a more systematic shape. In post independent India, adult education programs were formulated, right from the first five-year plan by the erstwhile Planning Commission of India (1951-1956). Along with this, various time bound and targeted adult education programs were conducted from time to time with an objective of mitigating the humungous illiteracy that prevailed during that period. The present paper primarily talks about the adult education functionaries and their necessary competencies, how these competencies can be developed over time, the functionaries involved at each stage and the accessibility of functionaries of India. The idea was evolved out of a sustained engagement of a training program organized by the Department of Adult Continuing Education and Extensions, University of Delhi in the form of the "International Autumn School", where-in participants were drawn from several universities and countries.

Introduction

The Indian literacy rate was very low in the early years of post-independence period. Therefore, with an objective to increase the literacy rate, several other national level programs like NAEP (1978) and NLM (1988) were specifically designed to improve literacy level among the adults. These adult education programs have played a very crucial role in bringing the literacy rate in India from 18% in 1951 to more than 74% in 2011 (as noted by 2011 census data).

To run an adult education program a number of functionaries are involved at each stage and there are certain competencies that are required by the functionaries. These include the directors, mandals, educators, preraks (facilitators), supervisors, area coordinators and volunteers. Their competencies vary at each level. Competency is often confused with skill.

Competency vs. Skills

Skill is something that can be learnt and which is visible most of the time in work. For example, for a taxi driver, driving is a skill. Competency is a mix of skills, attitude, knowledge and behaviour. Now if the same taxi driver also knows basic repair works in the car and short routes to various places in the city then that's beneficial for the taxi driver as well as its customer. This is competency. *"Skills are the practical or cognitive things you can do. Competence is the proven use of skills, knowledge, and abilities to accomplish something"*- Taimo Toikkanen

"Competency refers to how well someone can do something. If someone is a competent carpenter, for example, he or she will be able to build structures out of wood that serve their purpose, are structurally sound, and don't have visible mistakes. A skill is some activity that takes physical dexterity or some other quality in order to perform well. A skill is usually something you can learn, and improve through practice."- Joe Devney

Objectives

These are some important questions on which the research is carried out. Since it is a research study based on competence and skills of adult education functionaries in India, it becomes essential to know about certain basic questions like who are the providers of adult education in India, what is the training structure, which are the main training institutes that are engaged in providing training etc. navigating through all this information, the main objective of the paper is to collect and organize information about the:

- Prescribed Academic Qualifications of Adult Educator
- Prescribed Competencies
- Source of Training of Adult Educators

Research Methodology

This paper is inspired by the academic engagements that took place in the “International Autumn School” which was conducted by the Department of Adult continuing Education, University of Delhi. There were participants from several Indian and foreign universities. Therefore, secondary data is used to carry out this research study. The information and data is mainly collected through internet, journals and research papers and some books published by various researchers and professors, these papers were read and analyzed to extract meaningful information for our research study.

Review of Literature

There are a lot of research papers and books written on this domain of adult education. Some of these studies were referred. Here are a few which were the most relevant to our study.

SY Shah in his paper titled “Mapping the field of training in Adult and Lifelong Learning in India”, 2009, published by DIY (German Institute of Adult Education) says that “Unlike the National Council for Teacher Education in India which prescribes the curricula for primary and secondary school teacher training programs and lays down job specifications and competencies, there is no such regulatory mechanism for teacher training in adult and lifelong learning in India. There are no exclusive institutions which offer teacher training program in adult and lifelong learning. While few of the universities which offer formal teacher training programs (Bachelor and Masters of Education), include a paper on adult education, there are no separate professional programs for training adult educators. The Post Masters Diploma Program in Adult Education offered by ten universities in India cannot be considered to be a professional pre service teacher training program as the curriculum lacks practicum and not tailored to the needs of the field. In the absence of a professional course for the teachers and trainers, only short term training forms a part of the regular activity of several adult education organizations in the country.”

A book by J.P. Dubey titled “University Extension in India- a Historical Perspective, 2009,” states that “Agriclinics have the potential of growing over a period of time, into a mechanism that can provide specialized services in crop production/protection, animal husbandry/veterinary services, and/or agricultural marketing and farm management services. This structure provides the Graduates in agricultural Sciences a chance to share their knowledge and skills with the farmers in the village and become an important human resource for the village economy.” Thereby emphasizing on how the adult education functionary, in this case, agricultural sciences graduate, can play a vital role in the village economy.

In his book titled “Literacy and Adult Education in Independent India”, 2014, Sugan Bhatia opines that the “Maharashtra Gram Shikshan Mohim and National Adult Education Program were the nearest to developing a system based approach to the acquisition of literacy and spread of adult education through various functionaries of adult education in India”.

Aggarwal (2002) puts forth “The competency level of functionaries in discharging their duties in total literacy campaigns depends upon the quality of training that they have been exposed to. It is through training that a better understanding of the concepts values and importance of the campaign, motivation of the learners, method of teaching primers and evaluation of the campaign programs, immunization, forestation, mother and child care nutrition rights and duties, legal knowledge, scientific temper, etc, and provide the same to post-literacy centers. The universities can organize simple and short term training camps directly and also in collaboration with other agencies like banks, agricultural extension centers, cooperative societies, government departments of health, animal husbandry, etc. for the benefit of the neo-literates”.

Providers of Adult Education in India

There have been various agencies both governmental as well as well non-governmental, which have been actively engaged in providing adult education in India. The table below illustrates these agencies.

Organisations	Channels
Government	Various ministries, for e.g.: Human resource development, tribal welfare, rural development, health welfare, social justice and empowerment tourism, food preservation, agriculture, women and child development, textiles etc.
Academic	Academic staff colleges, department of adult continuing education and extension, community polytechnics, community colleges, open University and national institute of open learning.
Non-Governmental Organizations	YMCA, Rakakrishna Mission, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Pratham, Vivekananda Kendra, DAV, and other Indian and International NGO’s.
Business Organizations	NIIT, APTEC, etc.
Professional Associations	Medicine, engineering, agriculture, adult education etc.
Mass media	Television, Gyandarshan, Radio, FM Channel, Gyan-Vani.

Source- Shah SY, 1999, *An Encyclopedia Of Indian Adult Education*.

Adult Education Functionaries in India

The operational definition of an adult education functionary working in university system as “Functionaries are those members of the university who are engaged in the planning and implementation of extension program drawn from the Departments / Centers of Adult, Continuing Education and Extension or from other Departments of the University”—JP Dubey, *An analysis of the background of the beneficiaries and functionaries of the university extension*, 2006.

There are various adult education functionaries working in India at various levels. They are working in university system, then there are specific project based adult education functionaries, extension education functionaries etc.

Every adult education program becomes a very difficult task because of the sheer population of the country. Therefore, there has to be adult education functionaries at all levels to ensure smooth working of the program. These functionaries are as follows:

- Director, deputy director, assistant directors, project officers, Preraks (facilitators) assistant Preraks, supervisors, mandal coordinators, area coordinators and educators (volunteers) etc.

These are all adult education functionaries. They all have different prescribed qualification depending upon the level they work.

Prescribed Qualification of Adult Education Functionaries

In India adult education functionaries are working at various levels. There are various functionaries; therefore, the prescribed qualification varies from high school (10+2) to higher education (i.e. graduation and post-graduation further depending upon the level the functionary is working on) and experiences. Other than education, knowledge like computer functional knowledge, area and community knowledge and soft skills are also required, again depending upon the level the functionary is working on.

Serial number	Rank at which the functionary works	Prescribed Qualification
1.	DIRECTOR	Ph.D with minimum 10 years of experience
2.	DEPUTY DIRECTOR	Ph.D with minimum 10 years of experience
3.	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Master degree or higher. Preferable Ph.D with 5 to 10 years of experience
4.	PROJECT OFFICERS	Graduation/Masters
5.	PRERAKS (Facilitators)	Graduation
6.	ASSISTANT PRERAKS	10+2 and higher
7.	CONSULTANTS	Master degree with 3 to 5 years of experience
8.	MANDAL COORDINATORS	Graduation and above
9.	SUPERVISOR	Post Graduate
10.	EDUCATORS(VOLUNTEERS)	10+2 and higher

Sources:- 1. Directorate of Adult Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. 2. Department of School education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. 3. A study on Impact of Continuing Education Program: An Impact Study- prepared by Planning Commission, Government of India. 5. "Literacy and Adult Education in Independent India- Dr. Sujan Bhatia.

Prescribed Competencies

Although, there are no formal specified competencies for the functionaries of adult education in India like there is for primary school teachers and secondary school teachers. However, there are certain competencies which an adult education functionary is expected to have for successful and effective consummation of any adult education program. These competencies are as follows:

- Knowledge of the subject
- Training management
- Assessment and evaluation of learning
- Motivation and counseling
- Personal and professional development.
- Adult educator's reflection on his or her own performance
- Supporting a learning environment
- Taking student's prior learning into account.

Training

Training plays a very important role in shaping the capabilities and handling of any program. Especially training of volunteers, large number of volunteers works in Adult Education field in India. Volunteers are the doers of any program. The quality of program depends largely on volunteers. Adult functionaries and volunteers come from heterogeneous background. That's why it is necessary to formulate training programs depending on needs, the roles that are to be performed and the backgrounds of volunteers. Especially for adult educators it is very necessary to understand the pedagogic aspect and to be able to analyze social situations which can be learnt through trainings.

Capacity building trainings are provided to functionaries of Adult Education. These trainings are organized by State Resource Centers. Trainings are usually for full timers. There are model trainings for master trainers and even for preraks. Modules are designed on various levels in order to enrich knowledge and enhance skills. Such training programs help in management and implementation of Adult Education programs in a better way.

Sources of Training

Many organizations are involved in training programs for all levels of functionaries. Directorate of Adult Education, Directorate General of Employment and Training, Industrial Training, Teaching Training Programs, DIET, National Institute of Rural Development, NGO's like Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), IGNOU and other open learning institutes are some of the organizations that are involved in training programs for the functionaries.

Then there also some international organizations involved in the training process of the adult education functionaries who are as follows: UNESCO, WHO, UNDP etc. They also conduct training programs for fieldworkers and program managers along with teaching training programs. They also carry out workshops for functionaries to decide on content area and further training methodology.

Role of State Resource Centers (SRC's)

State Resource Centers provides academic and technical resource support and training to literacy programs and its functionaries. These centers functions under NGO's and Universities. The functions of State Resource Centers are:

- Material Development for Adult Education and Training
- Organizing Training Programs and Training Literacy Functionaries
- Production and Publication of Adult Education Materials
- Carrying out Innovative Projects, Research Studies and Extension Activities
- Evaluation and Monitoring of Projects

Training at state resource centers are carried out at FOUR levels which are follows:

- Training of Master Trainers
- Key Resource Person
- Resource Person
- Volunteers
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Methods of training and duration

There are various training methods used. The prominent ones are Direct Training Method developed by UGC in 1980 and Participatory Method developed by NGO's. In direct training method the student volunteers and non-student participants are trained. Student volunteers are trained for 10 hours whereas non student participants are provided with 70 hours training. A refresher course is also organized for 10 hours which needs to be done in every six months.

Participatory method focuses on experiential learning and people's participation in building one's future. PRIA played a key role in developing this method. This method does not just focus on literacy or knowledge but on skill development, awareness and improving internal competencies. Three phase training is organized in this method. In first phase 8 days long training program is held which is residential program. Second phase is 4 months long program while third phase is about assessing what one learnt during the first and third phase.

Possessed Competencies.

After going through the various aspects of the study, it was found that there are various competencies which a candidate lacked in order to work as an adult education functionary even after possessing the prescribed qualification. Hence, there was a need of filling this gap between prescribed competencies and possessed competencies. Therefore, certain training programs were designed scientifically to inculcate the competencies which were expected from an adult educator to have.

By exposing the functionaries to training, it helps them in effectively filling up the gap between prescribed competencies and possessed competencies.

Therefore, the possessed competencies after going through a training program are as follows:

- Aptitude for work.
- Change in attitude.
- Effective implementation of a program.
- Innovative approach.
- Knowledge of the subject.
- Training management.
- Assessment and evaluation of learning.
- Motivation and counseling.

Conclusion

The study presents an understanding of the scenario of competencies that are expected from an Adult Education functionary to have in India. There are various factors that influence the adult education practice in this country. Population is one major factor. India's population currently is estimated to be over 1.3 billion. Also, India is a developing country with a very high level of illiteracy among people even today.

The prescribed qualification of the adult education functionaries in India is not uniform. They vary depending upon the level or rank at which the functionary works.

Even after possessing the prescribed qualification for working as an adult education functionary, the person does not possess the prescribed competency to work in the field of adult education. Therefore, there is a gap between prescribed competency and possessed competency, though the candidate possesses the prescribed qualification. In such a scenario training becomes essential.

Training is an important part of building or increasing competency in India, as it fills the gap between prescribed competency and possessed competency of an adult educator. The experiences gained in developing a tiered training program for functionaries results in professionalization and it may further help in creating a background of disciplinary growth.

Adult education is a very important part of human resource development. India has been engaging in adult education practices since long. There have been numerous steps taken by government to impart literacy and education to the masses through various adult education programs. These programs have largely been successful in improving the literacy rate as well as in social development.

However, the goal of achieving one hundred percent literacy still remains unrealised. Therefore, consistent and enterprising efforts are required to be taken, not just for achieving full literacy but also for ensuring that the gains made after so much effort are not lost due to lack of follow-up activity.

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