

ADULT EDUCATION TEACHERS: CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING

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Abstract. India has initiated different Adult Education Programmes viz., Literacy, Post Literacy and Continuing Education for promotion of literacy, functional skills and awareness to convert the vast masses as human capital and to invest them in the economy to accelerate the pace of its development. The success of the programs not only depends on the effective planning, material support and financing but depends on the adult education teacher who is the actual doer of the programme at the grass root level. The performance of the teachers depends on their background characteristics and training received by them. In the light of the above, the present paper examines the background characteristics of the teachers involved at various levels of adult education programmes and the nature of training received by them.

Keywords: adult education programmes, teachers, training, characteristics

Literacy is considered as a key element for accelerating the pace of socio-economic development of the individual and the country as a whole. The relationship between literacy and development was strongly established. Recognizing its role, a number of developing countries including India, have initiated programmes for promotion of literacy especially among adults. Adult Education in India is not a new phenomenon; it has been in existence for the centuries in different forms. However, after independence, a massive National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was launched on 2nd October, 1978 to cover 100 million illiterates in the age group of 15-35 years within a span of 5 years. The programme was conceived at two levels, viz. literacy and post literacy and continuing education. In the literacy phase, the programme has three components viz., literacy, functionality and awareness. The Post Literacy and Continuing Education was aimed to strengthen and retain the literacy skills. However, the programme could not achieve its objectives within the time frame. Later, the programmes of Adult Education have been reviewed and National Literacy Mission was established in 5th May, 1988.

The National Literacy Mission has conceived and implemented the Total Literacy Campaign in the District of Ernakulam, Kerala State on experimental basis. The success of the campaign has paved a way for adoption of campaign mode for eradication of illiteracy in the country. This has led to the genesis of an integrated programme of adult education with three phases, viz. Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), Post Literacy Programme (PLP) and Continuing Education Programme (CEP). Further, in order to strengthen the programmes, the Government of India has strengthened its flagship programmes, viz. State Resource Centres (SRC) and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (Institute of

Peoples' Education) for providing resource support to the programmes and vocational training programmes respectively.

Adult education teachers

The performance of any education programme largely depends upon the teachers. In the case of adult education, the functionaries involved at the grass root level are considered as adult teachers. Different nomenclatures were given to these functionaries at different levels of the programmes. In the case of literacy programmes, they are known as instructors (NAEP), volunteers/volunteer teachers (TLC). They are the actual “doers” of literacy at the grass root level. As a follow up of the literacy programmes, post literacy programmes were organized. The nomenclature of the functionary involved in the Post Literacy Programme is monitor, voluntary teacher, prerak etc. They are the organizers of the Post Literacy Centres known as Jana Chaitanya Kendras under TLC and Jana Shikshan Nilayams under PLP. The third phase of the adult education programme is Continuing Education Programme which is being organized through Continuing Education Centres. These centres are managed by preraks. All the functionaries starting from literacy centre to Continuing Education Centre are expected to teach literacy, functionality and awareness at various levels. In other words, they are the teachers of the adults at various levels.

Characteristics of the adult teachers

The functionaries of adult education programme, i.e., the adult teachers are volunteers drawn from various sections of people with different levels of education and backgrounds. They are heterogeneous in their background. However, the adult education programmes have specified the characteristics of the adult teachers differently from time to time and programme to programme.

Literacy programme

In the case of National Adult Education Programme, the instructor is the frontline worker in the NAEP, he/she is the actual doer of the Adult Education in the community. The quality and success of the work in any centre depends on the capacity and sincerity of the instructor. The report of the review committee on the NAEP (1980) has emphasized that the programme of adult education vitally depends on the initiative and skills of the instructor. Hence, recommended that greater emphasis has to be laid on attracting the best possible persons as instructors and to provide them with good training and satisfactory conditions of work and service.

The instructor should be from the local area with similar background of the learners and be a resident of that locality. The maximum education qualification should be completion of the middle school. This qualification is reliable, if the person has leadership qualities and/or no one else is available in that area. He should be at least 18 years old; this limit may be relaxed in special cases. It is preferable if, he/she has actually done some community work and is progressive in his/her views. An understanding and tolerance of other people's faith and beliefs and an attitude of hope and faith in the capacities of the people should be considered as an asset. The important consideration in the selection of the instructor is the candidate's standing in the community as a person possessing responsibility and concern.¹⁾

The characteristics of the effective adult education instructor are found to be mutual understanding between learner and instructor, capacity for organizing adult education programme, subject knowledge, good eloquence, honest and to have moral values and understanding of the learners.²⁾ The effectiveness of the adult education instructor depends upon his personal characteristics, his personality traits, his attitudes towards adult education and his exposure to various mass media agencies (Reddy, 1992). The instructors belonging

to women, younger, unmarried, other than coolies (Laborers) and agriculturists, cinema seeing behavior, more exposure to television, radio listening, newspaper reading, exposure to mass media, lesser the urban poor, higher achievement motivation, high positive attitude are found to be more effective instructors. Further, caste, level of education, size of land holding, income does not affected the instructor effectiveness. The personality traits exhibited by low scorers on factor C (Tolerance and changeable), E (dependent, learn from others, soft hearted), Q₁ (moderate) and Q₄ (calm, relaxed, composed and satisfied) and high scorers on factors G (strong in character, preserving, responsible, determined, planful, well organized) and M (sensitive, imaginative, ego-centric) appears to have desirable for effective adult education instructors (Reddy, 1992).

After launching the National Literacy Mission, the total literacy campaign model has been accepted as a dominant strategy of eradication of illiteracy in India. The literacy campaigns are area specific, time bound, volunteer based, cost effective and outcome oriented. The key functionary of the programme at the grass root level is the volunteer. The volunteer is the one, who volunteers himself to offer his services, time, energy etc., for providing literacy to the illiterates without expecting any returns. He should possess minimum of 8th standard of education. It was found (Reddy, 2003) that majority of the volunteers working in Total Literacy Campaign are women, less than 35 years of age, belongs to marginalized sections, less than 10 years of education, agriculturists, moderate income, joint families, married with two children and with some experience in adult education.

Post literacy

As a follow up of literacy programme, the Post Literacy Programmes were organized at different intervals of time under different programmes. The Post Literacy and Continuing Education Centres under NAEP, Jana Chaitanya

Kendras and Jana Shikshana Nilayams under TLC and Post Literacy Programmes respectively are established to provide facilities for retention, strengthening of the literacy learnt and to make use of the literacy in their day-to-day life. These centres are headed by the functionary with different nomenclatures viz., post literacy instructor, monitor, voluntary teacher, prerak etc., These functionaries are selected from the local area having leadership qualities with ten years of schooling, having aptitude to serve the community. These functionaries are volunteers with heterogeneous background. The findings of a research study³⁾ shows that majority of the monitors are men, marginalized, agriculturists, middle income, less than two years of experience, less than SSC qualification and married. The profile clearly shows that they are the true representatives of the community where the Post Literacy Centres are being organized under the aegis of NLM.

The Post Literacy Functionary should be a resident of the village, belonging to local community, should have 21 years of age, relaxable in the case of non-availability (18+), preferably, women with a qualification of 10th pass.⁴⁾ According to the Report⁵⁾ of the functioning of Jan Shikshan Nilayam, 1993-94, the preraks are the most important role players in the entire JSN programme. The report identified that in most cases, involvement of community members was not there during the selection process of preraks and names have been finalized by the Sarpanch (Village President). The training of preraks has been one time activity held at the inception of the programme and nearly half of the preraks not having received any training at all.

Continuing education

The third phase of the adult education programme is the Continuing Education which is being operationalized through Continuing Education Centres. The in-charge of the centre is Prerak. The Prerak is expected to discharge a number of functions such as literacy teaching, post literacy, maintenance of

library and reading room, discussion group, organizing sports, games, cultural and recreational activities, disseminates information on developmental programmes etc. The Prerak is also a volunteer with 10 years of schooling, with leadership qualities, acceptable to the community, aptitude for community work etc., However, the profile of the working Preraks reveals that mostly they are belong to women, forward caste, labour, more income, more experienced, high educated, married, elders with more positive attitude groups are found to be more effective preraks. However, the caste of the preraks is closely associated with his effectiveness (Reddy, 1999). In a similar study, it was observed that majority of the working preraks belongs to women, middle aged, SC/ST, inter/PUC qualifications, miscellaneous occupations, high income, nuclear families, married, two or more children, more than three years of experienced (Reddy & Devi, 2005).

The background characteristics prescribed by various adult education programmes for the adult teachers at the grass root level should be similar to the target. The research studies clearly demonstrate that the teachers are being selected from within the community, possessed similar characteristics of the target and the characteristics prescribed for them.

Training

Effective implementation of the literacy campaigns largely depends on the grass root level workers, mainly volunteers. Volunteers are actual “doers” of the programme and the quality of the programme largely depends on his performance. Training plays predominant role in shaping his capabilities in handling men and materials under his disposal. Hence, the training programmes should be formulated keeping in view of the training needs, roles to be performed and background of the volunteer.

The adult teachers working at different levels, i.e., literacy, post literacy and continuing education are volunteers with heterogeneous backgrounds.

However, the similar characteristics possessed by them are voluntarism, aptitude to serve the community and firm belief on the programme. In order to make use of the services of these groups of people, they were exposed to a short stint of the training programme to develop aptitude for the work, to bring change in their attitudes and to develop and promote the competencies and skills required to perform their functions effectively. The training programmes prescribed are of different durations, at different intervals. The pre-training programmes are aimed to create awareness about the programme, develops self-confidence and to bring change in their attitudes and to develop competencies and skills required to discharge their functions. The in-service training programmes organized at different intervals are aimed to review their performance and to infuse innovations to improve their performance. The training curriculum that was designed was based on the curricular content to be covered during the programme period, training needs of the functionaries and tasks to be performed and achieved.

The report of the evaluation of the literacy campaign in India by an expert group under the aegis of the National Literacy Mission identified that quality of training of the functionaries was poor. The training of the adult education functionaries at all levels lacked participatory and communicative techniques.⁶⁾

Instructors' training

The training has to be designed and conducted that the instructor can develop the necessary skills, attitudes and qualities of character to perform his work effectively and to maintain his own group.¹⁾ The report of the review committee on NAEP, 1980, clearly spelt out that no instructor should be permitted to start a centre without initial training of at least three weeks. This training should be supplemented by a refresher course of about 10 days after three or four months. The third training programme of two weeks should be

organized before the start of the second year and a similar programme each year thereafter. The idea of a monthly meeting for receiving honorarium and for exchange of ideas should be encouraged.

Training of the preraks

The prerak is the focal point of the Continuing Education Programme on whom, the entire responsibility of the implementation of the Continuing Education Programme and its activities will rest. In view of this, it is highly essential that prerak is imparted with an effective training about his roles and responsibilities with regard to running of Continuing Education Centres. The success of Continuing Education Programme depends upon the training of preraks. Training prepares a person to do his job with confidence and knowledge which develops the power of observation and equips him to face and solve his problems. It develops desired attitudes and values.

The training will be imparted in two spells. The basic purpose of the first phase of the training is to equip the preraks on preliminary knowledge and skills needed for the launching of the programme. The duration of the programme will be 11 days. The content of the first phase of the training includes meaning and concept of CE Programme, concept of CE Centre, materials and equipment and other resources, calendar of activities, functions of CEP and role of prerak, target specific programmes, survey, reporting of survey results, formation of self-help groups, search for innovative programmes, records and registers in the CEC, community participation and sustainability, monitoring and evaluation.⁷⁾

The functionaries of Continuing Education have been trained in two rounds of 7 days, i.e., 4 days during first phase and 3 days in second phase. During the first phase, the functionaries are expected to orient and motivate them towards the new features of the PLP, redefining the roles of voluntary teachers, conducting survey, teaching learning materials, role of State Re-

source Centres, organizing library, training programmes, skill development programmes, GSJRY (Employment Generation Programme), role of Jan Shikshan Sansthan, etc. The functionaries of the developmental programmes, adult education, JSS will act as resource persons. During the second round of training, there will be review of dropouts and replacement of Voluntary Teachers, progress of mopping up programme, review of library activities and maintaining the library, review of skill building activities, dissemination of awareness, empowerment etc.

The prominent training needs of the preraks includes to know more about different programmes of Continuing Education, ways and means of publicizing the activities of the centres, using local resources for the centre, promoting peoples participation, creating awareness among the community about the importance of education, teaching techniques to adults, maintaining records, understanding the participants etc. (Reddy & Devi, 2005).

NOTES

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