



Present status of adult and continuing education in tow Backward Districts in West Bengal

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Abstract

Reported was a descriptive study to analyse the problems on Adult and continuing Education and the possible remedies of the problems. A valid and reliable questionnaire was developed, standardized and administered on a sample of 2000 persons of various sections in the two districts of west Bengal – Birbhum and Murshidabad. These two districts, the researchers considered the most backward district in West Bengal. The researchers also took interview on these subjects. Besides, their Socio-Economic Conditions were also determined by Socio-Economic status scales. The study was conducted in two steps. The first part of the study was diagnosis of the backwardness of the Adult people of the regions and their effect on education and the second part of the study was for the remedial measures to enhance the progress of Adult and Continuing Education in the region. For this purpose, at first the researchers took information from government personalities. Thereafter, they took the opinions of the various personalities of the area. The researchers also requested their suggestions regarding the problems and their remedies. Groupwise measures of central tendency, variability and divergence from normality were determined. Groupwise differences in the area were subjected to t-test. The researchers came to the conclusion that the problems of Adult and Continuing Education could be solved by the proper intervention of the Government. Besides, public and private institutions should also be involved.

Keywords: backward district, Indian education commission, NPE-86, NLM, JSN, NAEP, NBAF, SBAE, NIAE, TLC, adult and continuing education

Introduction

The term national development is very broad and comprehensive. It includes all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation- cultural, democratic, emotional, economic, intellectual, material, moral, physical, spiritual and social. The united nation Decade report defined it as, "National Development is growth plus change. Change in term is social and cultural as well as economic and qualitative as well as quantitative." The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) observed, "If the pace of national development is to be accelerated, there is need for a well-defined, bold and imaginative educational policy and for determined and vigorous action to vitalize, improve and expand education."

According to National Policy on Education (NPE)'86, different roles of education are: (i). Increasing production, (ii). Modernization of society, (iii). Promoting social and national integration, (iv). Developing democratic values, (v). Establishing socialistic pattern of society, (vi). Developing secular outlook, (vii). Promoting international understating and (viii). Suggesting cultural and scientific values. In Indian constitution free and compulsory education is ensured. For this purpose, the constitution directed that 10% of the central annual budget and 6% of GDP of the country should be marked for the development of education.

The proportion of persons who have so far been able to receive education is very small. Till 2005, total adult literacy rate was 61% in India (of which male -78% and female- 48%). This will have to be increased. It is very essential to produce educated and skilled citizens and train an adequate and competent intelligentsia to modernize society quickly. The literacy rate in rural and backward areas is much lower. Besides, there is the problem of wastage and stagnation. The problems of development of the nation cannot be solved unless the education for the entire people is ensured. For this purpose, adult and continuing education should be promoted. It must always be remembered that worthwhile results from the programmes of adult education can be achieved only when they are built upon the felt needs of the adults. The maxim should be, 'Find out what the adults really needs.' In India, the adult education termed in two names – 1. Adult Education and 2. Social Education.

The normal culmination of the education process is adult education. Literacy training is only a "moment", an element in adult education. So strong literacy campaign must include in wide spread literacy programmes. Every individual must be in a position to keep learning through his life. The idea of life-long education is the key stone of the learning society. The adult education is an important factor in the growth of an individual as well as the nation. The poor and backward persons can rise to their own liberation through literacy, dialogue and action. The aims and objectives of adult education are to transform the society. This education will bring out the best that is

in the individuals and foster the habits of healthy life. The scope of adult education depends upon competent administrative machinery. An effective programme of adult education in the Indian context should envisage liquidation of literacy, continuing education, correspondence courses and libraries, role of Universities in adult education; and organization and administration of adult education.

National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched in May, 1988 to impart Functional Literacy to 80 million persons in 15-35 age group – 30 million by 1990 and additional 50 million by 1995. The NLM will concentrate on the 15-35 age groups which is crucial for country's development. The focus of NLM would be on rural areas, particularly women and persons belonging weaker sections. Jana Sikshan Nilayams (JSN) includes programmes which were being organized as part of farmers' training programmes, rural radio forum, charchamondals, mahilamondals and village library system etc. A JSN is intended to serve a population of 5000 persons spread over a cluster of 4-5 categories of villages.

Exclusion of a vast majority of the people from the process of education is a most disturbing aspect of educational social planning. Indeed universalisations of elementary education and of adult literacy are mutually interdependent. So the government has resolved to wage a clearly conceived well-planned and relentless struggle against illiteracy to enable the masses to play an active role in social and cultural changes. For this, National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was launched on October 2, 1978. It was proposed to cover the entire population in the age group 15-35 by the end of 1983-84. The objectives of the NAEP were programme of literacy, creation of awareness and raising functional capabilities.

Before conclusion of the programme, preparation has to be made for organization of continuing education centers. These centers would provide library, training courses for functional development as well as group action and group organization activities. For this, National Board of Adult Education (NBAE) has been set up under the chairmanship of the Union Education Minister to periodically appraise the progress and implementation of NAEP and advise the government on various matters. In each state there is State Board of Adult Education (SBAE) to function as the agency of coordination and advice. National Institute of adult Education (NIAE) was established in 1991 under the societies Act, 1860. The Minister-in-charge of Education, Government of India, is as the Ex-officio President of the institute. The main objectives of the institute are: (i). to provide academic and technical resource support for the implementation of adult education programmes at different levels; and (ii). to develop and support State Resource Centers and District Resource Units etc.

Campaigns for Total Literacy (TLC) constitute the major thrust and initiative in the NLM. The objectives of the mission is to accord a new sense of urgency, seriousness and emphasis with fixed goals, clear time frame and age specific target groups. The goal of NLM for 2007 is to attain a sustainable threshold of 75% by imparting functional literacy to non-literates of 15-35 years, which is the productive and reproductive age group and constitutes a major segment of the work force. Almost all the 600 districts in the country have been covered under NLM.

In spite of huge expenditure incurred by the government and private agencies, adult education has not made much progress; it has only touched the fringe of the problem.

From the above state affairs, it is evident that various organizations, agencies were formed and various projects were under taken by the central Government as well as the state governments for the progress of adult and continuing education. But the efforts were very little in comparison with needs. Whatever efforts were taken, were not reached the poor and backward people. In most cases, money spent for the purpose was disappeared on the way. So, the result was more or less a failure one. Hence, the investigators had taken up the problem:

1. To find out the causes of failure of the adult education programme in the rural and backward areas.
2. To find out the differences (if any) of the achievement of the programme of male and female people belonging to different strata of the society;
3. To find out ways and means to solve the problem.

Procedure

The researchers worked particularly in the backward areas in two districts – Birbhum and Murshidabad. The researchers considered that these two districts are backward district in West Bengal. In these two districts there is no heavy industry. Most of the people are agricultural laborer. Besides, they do not always get jobs throughout the year. So, poverty is their eternal companion. They as well as their children are deprived of getting formal education. The adult and continuing education programme can provide them education. Here, lies the significance of the study. So, the researcher interested in enquiring the problems of people of these two backward districts for the progress of education and how these problems could be solved in shortest time. For this purpose the investigator applied a reliable and valid questionnaire (constructed and standardized by the researchers) on a sample of 2000 people in two districts. Two blocks in each district were randomly selected for application of the tool. Besides, the researchers also gathered their socio-economic condition with the help of standardized socio-economic status scales. The data were collected through written test and interview which were appropriate for respondents.

The selected two blocks in Birbhum district were Dubrajpur and Khairasole and the block in Murshidabad district were Khargram and Dumkal. Altogether 16 villages were randomly selected from four blocks (four from each block). The investigators also consulted the government surveys. It took 10 months to complete the survey. The survey was conducted in the year 2011. The respondents particularly of poor and backwards areas were

more cooperative than the economically and educationally develop areas. The respondents were much interested to give opinion. The researchers are very much pleased and satisfied with the behavior of the respondents.

Analysis of The Data

The data collected were tabulated properly. Appropriate statistical measures were taken to analyze the data, Groupwise measures of central tendency, variability and divergence from normality were determined. Groupwise differences in the areas were subjected to t-test. The presence of sex-wise and strata-wise differences were also determined. The differences of different categories were determined by graphical representation also. Mean and standard deviation of the scores of male people were 95.30 and 23.53 respectively and that for the female people were 63.70 and 23.48 respectively. Mean and standard deviation of economically developed people were 67.25 and 8.12 respectively and that for the poor and weaker people were 44.50 and 9.18 respectively.

The correlation between the scores of the people's opinion and the scores in Socio-economic status scale was found to be 0.742, which was highly significant at the 0.01 level.

The t-value for male and female literacy was found to be 8.29 and that for the economically developed people and poor people was found to be 5.25. Both the results were significant at the 0.01 level.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to analyze the actual picture of the progress of Adult and Continuing Education programme. So, the researchers collected the data from the people of the region along with the data from the government surveys. The researchers observed that the report of the people surveys and the government surveys had far differences. The government surveys showed that there was more or less no wastage and stagnation in education. But from the people surveys it was seen that there was 30% to 45% of wastage and stagnation in education in the region. From the government report, it was observed that the 80% of the adult was literate through adult education programme. But the real picture of adult literacy rate was quite different. The adult education programme covered only 20% to 25% of the entire population. Even in some villages the people did not aware of the programme. Besides, once the programme was completed, the programme was not continued for feedback. So, the neo-literates become illiterate again. Form the analysis, it was seen that the adults of the economically uplift people were more advanced in education than that of the economically weaker persons. Though the male people in the region acquired some short of education through adult education programme, the contribution of the programme towards female was almost nil.

Limitation

Through the researchers worked on the study to their best, but they had some inevitable limitations:

- The researchers surveyed only two districts, four blocks and sixteen villages. They could have surveyed more districts, more blocks and more villages.
- The investigators' survey was based only on agricultural areas, the industrial and slum areas were left out of the study.
- They had taken only 2000 sample; in survey work, more sample should have been taken.
- Because the respondents were mostly laborer, their opinions were taken only before and after their working hours, i.e. in short times.

Recommendations

To promote the adult and continuing education the following suggestions are given:

1. The liquidation of mass literacy is necessary not only for promoting participation in the working of democratic institutions and for accelerating programmes of production, specially in agriculture, but for quickening the tempo of national development in general. Employees in large commercial, industrial and other concerns should be made functionally literate as early as possible. A lead in this direction should come from the industrial undertakings in the public sectors. Teachers and students should be actively involved in organizing literacy campaigns, especially as part of the social and national service programme.
2. Special emphasis should be given to the education of the young practicing farmers and to train the youth for self employment.
3. It is estimated that 250 millions of the adult population are illiterate. These are from mostly the poorest and the most neglected sections of the nation. Their contribution to national well being could be far greater than it is, if they receive some education. Their condition is such that they are not able to take advantage of the benefits available to them under the development plans and continue to be exposed to exploitation and social disabilities. The nation should deem it's solemn duty to impart education to them. The National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) should be implemented with urgency and sustained vigor.
4. Since the real problem of literacy exists in the rural areas, special efforts will have to be taken to involve the rural community and the teachers in the rural areas to conduct this programme.
5. Since the programme is not only meant for removing literacy alone but its aim is also create awareness about other problems such as, family planning, health and nutrition, child and mother care etc., so it would be desirable that the appointed instructors for this programme should be women as far as possible.

6. The adult education programme should include measures for continuing education to sustain the interest of those who have taken advantage of it and to enable them to develop knowledge and skills of their own.
7. The provision should be kept for the neo-literates to get admission in the open schools and open universities so that they could enhance their academic standards and get them employed in better organization. This will create interest among the learners.
8. There should be strong monitoring cells upto the block level so that adult education programme is properly maintained. In these cells village level persons should also be included.
9. The instructors should be paid with respectable amount of allowances for the work.
10. The more researchers should be carried out by the future enterprising scholars for this burning problem of the nation.
11. Finally, the researchers felt that the lacks of good-will of the state and the central government in this problem, there will be no permanent solution. So both governments should take this burning problem seriously and take appropriate measures with care and sincerity.

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