

INDENTIFIABLE TRENDS IN ADULT EDUCATION

BY

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These days we are fortunate enough to find ample written material like books, journals, magazines, bulletins, articles, reports etc. on almost all the aspects of 'Education of adults' which covers a multitude of diversified activities in its wide sense, of all education for persons aged eighteen and above (Lowe, 1970, P-23). The agencies, national as well as international, and the scholars look active on the deliberation every now and then on the theory and practice giving thrust to the buzz of activities, seen today. 'Certificate courses in university extra-mural departments, cake-icing classes in evening institutes and the work done by libraries and museums may be given as examples of the education of adults'.¹ But, has any body pondered over the point as to what was thought of adult education at the dawn of this century and what status and position does it enjoy these days? Actually there exists a long passage of about eight decades of years in between the two periods, which depicts itself in the shape of change and colour. With the passage of time, things change slowly and gradually. When we pause for a while some where, in order to see what general course or movement, direction or tendency or style in the course of time of a statistically detectable change has subtly been sought by that particular thing, seemingly called a 'trend'. The main purpose of writing this article is also to identify the present world trends in the field of 'adult education'.

The main World Trends in Adult Education can be identified as follows:

1. THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF ADULT EDUCATION

The first decade of this century found adult education mostly in its limited, traditional form, encompassing itself near about the boundaries of literacy or teaching of 3Rs with some knowledge of religious and daily-life affairs. However, the sporadic efforts of that time as indicated from the 1919 Report or little later the World Conference 1929, gave a lead to the cause of adult education which in the following years captured keen attention of the educationists and particularly of the world-renowned agency Unesco. With the incessant efforts and endeavours of Unesco, the term 'adult education continually, went under the thinking of educationists and passed through different titles as, 'Adult Education.....the Elsinore 1949, 'Adult Education in a changing world.....the Montreal, 1960,'The Education of Adults.. 1970, and so on and so forth. According to Dr. P.Ahuja, 'Adult Education

Grassroots

should educate the minds of the people and train them for better work, better rest and better recreation.'²

In about mid-sixties Roy Prosser sums up adult education as, 'In a nutshell adult education is concerned primarily with the dissemination of knowledge, the training of mind in objective reasoning, and the teaching of skills to enable the individual to fulfill himself and play a full part in the development of society to which he belongs'.³ Also integrating itself with the emerging concepts of life-long integrated education, education permanence, education for rural and community development etc., it reached the world consensus for its meaning, scope and significance when in Tokyo Conference 1972, 'for the first time, there was sufficient common ground to make it possible to assure and not have to declaim many basic principles. One key result of the Tokyo gathering had been the adoption by the Unesco General Assembly in 1976 of a recommendation on the development of Adult Education, which included a generally acceptable definition of adult education and which has had world-wide currency'.⁴

The latest world-wide accepted conception of adult education has been treated as a life-long process of learning for mature men and women. 'From the Unesco perspective it is seen as an integral part of life-long education.....as a part of a global pattern including education for the young, whether formal or informal, and enabling all persons to learn anew at all stages of life.....every person, whether or not they went to school, still needs new knowledge and new skills. The person who did not go to school needs the skill of literacy but, it has to be built on with other skills as well'.⁵ Hence, Adult Education has to make provision for Adult Basic Education alongwith the skills needed not only to survive in the modern world, but to go beyond that into helping a person to the possibilities of constant personal development and consequently enabling him to function effectively in that world. Thus, the concept of Adult Education, as seen today, reveals itself as:

'A process whereby persons who no longer attend School on regular and full-time basis (unless full-time programmes are especially designed for adults) undertake sequential and organized activities with a conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, understanding or skill, appreciation and attitudes, or for the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problems.'⁶

2. THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF ADULT EDUCATION INFORMATION

Another trend which has been marked these days pertains to the explosion of adult education information. In the remote past we had only some text books and the information sought through instructions from the teacher or instructor. Expanding its scope, now-a-days, 'Adult Education is seen both as an instrument for solving problems of development and as

an instrument for involving individuals in economic, social and cultural life'.⁷ The problems of development and individuals participation need to have basic scientific knowledge, ideas and information. The active role of Unesco has tremendously helped in providing opportunities for organizing and convening study groups, meetings, seminars, conferences and thereby resulting into a flush of written material and ever-increasing outburst of adult education information. 'The methods, the new communication technologies have encouraged adult educators to look at mass media as a means of disseminating new ideas and knowledge'.⁸

Due to the increasing number of methods- general as well as scientific- we at present find a lot of information regarding every facet of adult education in almost every country. 'Most of the information is disseminated through the pages of professional journals and news sheets, which devote much space to articles and comments on instructional methods. This has not only helped in the internationalization of adult education information but also in setting of standard and distilling of experience throughout the world.

3. THE MULTIPLICITY OF ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES, INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES

Since 1960, we find a great host of institutions, large and small, making diversified provisions for adult education and that also at an unprecedented growing rate, throughout the regions of the world. The number of the participants, the institutions, the associations and agencies have been increasing day-by-day and thereby expanding the programmes and provisions of adult education. For example, if we just want to enlist the institutions we can name the following easily which stand crystal clear and offer different programmes of adult education as per their specializations or specific needs of the individuals or community:

'Community schools, community colleges and post-school institutions, polyvalent centres, centres in factories, centri di lettura, community workshops, centres for field studies, industrial training boards, farmers' training centres and school forms, rural cultural centres, village polytechnics, inservice training centres, national youth services, evening secondary schools, people's and workers universities, multipurpose cultural centres, residential colleges and conference centres, the universities, special degree courses for adults, the universities and under-privileged, industrial and commercial enterprises, trade unions, agricultural extension services, cooperatives, correspondence schools and colleges, military services, prisons, political parties, religious bodies, libraries, museums and art galleries, open universities, the mass media, etc.'⁹

From the above un-ending list of institutions, we can easily realize ever-enhancing interest and endeavour of these institutions and agencies, govern

Grassroots

mental as well as non-governmental, in providing the unlimited number of programmes of adult education. An increasing interest among the innumerable number of participants, member states and non-governmental organizations can also be calculated from the International Conferences convened at suitable intervals by Unesco:

Place	Participants	Member States	NGOs
I-ELSINORE (1949)	106	25	21
II-MONTREAL (1960)	117	47	46
III-TOKYO (1972)	364	82	37
IV-PARIS (1985)	841	122	59

4. BREAKDOWN OF THE BARRIERS IN THE WAY OF ADULT EDUCATION

Firstly, in the past the teaching of literacy was thought of as the sole aim and achievement of adult education. The illiterates were to be treated as ignorant and ignoble. But, now, the German Adult Education Association upholds the nobility and dignity of even illiterates. Illiteracy actually has widened the gaps between the haves and havenots. 'We deplore the fact that many of our colleagues are increasingly referring to illiterates as ignorant, to illiteracy as an indignity to mankind, and at the same time assuming that illiteracy is the cause of all oppression, exploitation and further impoverishment.'¹¹ Hence, the present opinion is this that the illiterate should not be seen as ignorant, ignoble, useless or miserable one and as such creating indignity to mankind. It doesn't mean that we entirely deny the usefulness of literacy, but, should see that there are ways of acquiring wisdom without books. As a result, the narrow way of looking at illiterates as ignorant and useless people is being discarded these days. The literacy education and the whole of adult education should be seen as only one weapon in any strategy of social and economic development, if we are to heel the population.

Secondly, at present, the learners in almost every programme of adult education are to be given opportunities not only for learning passively but to 'participation' and thus leading to 'decision-making' too. Hence the policy-makers have not only to chalk out programmes and policies for the 'target groups' on their own, but should have to include people from those groups in 'decision-making' strategies. In this regard, the persons from

'disadvantaged target groups' should also be treated as subjects rather than objects since the disadvantage which is somehow attributed to them is not actually their own fault. Such barriers are being considered to be removed so that the kind of learning which is essential for them to overcome such handicaps makes every one of them to become a full member of the society of which he or she is a part.

Lastly, one notable trend being seriously marked today throughout the world is the awakening among women creating several women's movements and leaving inevitable impact on the nature and practice of adult education. It should be marked at the very outset that "women often have a stronger interest than men in 'new starts' or 'second chance' education and in many countries there is an emphasis on such programmes. Further, women are beginning to ask for vocational education for non-traditional jobs."¹² This indicates that the barrier of society's attitudes which hinder different educative programmes for women and hinder them to become operators of every kind of technology from the simplest to the most complex and that the women can be and should be trained so as to help increase the productive manpower, is going to be broken down, very soon.

The present day curriculum of 'assertiveness training' describes training of women in overcoming barriers as shyness and society's expectations that women will be submissive to decisions made by men. Such curriculum includes 'Women's studies'- an attempt to revalue women's place in human history, to enable women learners to revalue themselves.¹³

5. THE RIGHT TO LEARN

The right of learning has always been recognised by all societies but with certain limitations- mostly limited to the concurrence with the teaching of 3Rs or the right of selected few, or men alone, so on and so forth. But, the Paris Conference (March 1985) made it plain, for the first time, on such a big stage that a right to learn is now taken for granted. This conference not only reaffirmed the importance of this right but also stressed that recognition of this very right to learn, at present more than ever, as a major challenge for humanity. The declaration which was unanimously adopted by the conference broadens the scope of this 'right to learn' as:

- 'the right to read and write;
- the right to question and analyse;
- the right to imagine and create;
- the right to read one's own world and to write history;
- the right to have access to educational resources;
- the right to develop individual and collective skills'.¹⁴

'Learn' being imperative has been declared as a key word for all

Grassroots

further developments- Individual, community and national as well. The present trend upholds the cause of such a right to learn. If the sanctity of this right is upheld and flourished in its true sense of the word and action it would certainly usher into a world of peace and tranquillity.

6. THE OPEN UNIVERSITIES AND MASS MEDIA

One recent trend that has distinctively been marked is the effective role of the Open Universities and mass media for mass-communication. The paradigm for the integrated use of variety of different media as printed back-up materials, broadcasts through radio, T.V., and the like, and other learning methods for adults basic education is that of distance learning. During the last ten or fifteen years, the distance learning methods have so much developed and perhaps become best known in the fields of higher and advanced education (for example Britain's Open University and Pakistan's Allama Iqbal Open University). In many other developing countries such methods have been successfully used for many years.

Today, the broadcasts by radio and T.V., knock at the doors of almost all the adults to realize their right of learning. Those who missed education during their school days on one account or another, those who can't go to schools and colleges because of their business, or they can't find time during day hours or because they live in far-flung areas can now take advantage of multi-media and distance education methods, if they are so interested, e.g., through the courses of Allama Iqbal Open University, by listening to radio and by viewing the T.V. programmes especially designed for such target groups whereby they can increase their knowledge, skill and understanding.

Such a trend has made to increase the enrollment to about 1,18,935 students for various learning programmes of Allama Iqbal Open University as compared to about 23,000 some four years back. In the Northern areas of the country the number of students has increased to 1819 as compared to 13 only in 1983.¹⁵ At the time of emergence of this new kind of University, viz Open University, the people could hardly understand as to what was it? and what was it meant for? But today, such universities with the combined use of broadcasting, distance teaching methods and local tutorial and counselling provisions, are playing an effective role in disseminating knowledge, programmes and provisions to the target groups.

Above indicated are some of the trends which have notably contributed to the promotion of the cause and ethics of adult education. Adult education is now out the shackle of barriers of the traditional past. Now there are well-renowned forums like Unesco for its cause and prestige. Now there are demands for its position and sanctity. There are demands for sanctions,

Grassroots

provisions, programmes, for learning, for training and all the more for active participation by all-- the mature women and mature men. Today, we have not only to find out 'the forgotten people' (The Tokyo-1972), but, through the dynamic means and methods of the day, we have to knock at their doors to realize their 'right to learn' (The Paris-1985).

The ethics of education are based upon the idea of 'respect for persons'. But the ethics of adult education today carry this a stage further with a 'Special respect for the status of adults.'¹⁶ They should be autonomous, they should be free.

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