

INDIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT EDUCATION
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Explaining Educational Inequality in India

• Binod Bihari Jena¹

• Manoj Kumar Roul²

• Rabinarayan Patra³

Abstract

Educational inequality has been a seriously discussed topic in academic and policy circles globally. In this regard, an attempt has been made to examine the level of inequality in educational attainment by using NSS unit level data. The study shows the existence of significant inequality amidst a perceptible declining trend. Inequalities in educational attainment are also found across sector and socio-economic classes. Socio-economically deprived groups such as Muslim population, females and rural population are facing the dual challenges of low average educational attainment and higher educational inequalities. A strong inverse relationship between mean years of schooling and educational inequalities is found across states and union territories. Household economic status appears as one of the key determinants of mean years of schooling, therefore suggesting the need for boosting public expenditure on education. A more grounded prioritisation of need based educational development programmes for vulnerable sections are suggested to achieve the desired result.

Keywords: *Education, inequality, mean years of schooling (MYS), gini index.*

Backdrop

Historically and contemporarily, the development of a country hinges on its people and resources. People are pivotal in making the optimum use of all resources and introducing innovation. However, people's ability to use resources efficiently is contingent upon their skill and dexterity which, in turn, is determined by the level of their education and training. Thus, in the ultimate analysis, education is the foundation for shaping a person and influencing the rate and pattern of development of a nation. The theoretical foundations of connectedness between education and the economy are found in the 'human capital theory' which evolved in the 1950s and after. It

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posits that education is a prime determinant of a country's human capital. In this construct, education is seen as an investment enhancing wages and contributing to long term economic growth (Schultz, 1961).

It leads to productivity growth (Becker 1993) and an instrument of economic and social change (Schultz, 1988). Education produces multiple substantial positive external non-market and social benefits (Tilak, 2008). Psacharopoulos & Patrinos (2018) found high social returns, particularly for women, and higher returns in low-income developing countries compared to developed ones. Education helps in poverty alleviation, health promotion, gender equality, social cohesion, and inclusion. It also enhances understanding and awareness of climate change and environmental issues (World Bank, 2023) and in fact, sustainable development begins with education and accessible quality education is essential for achieving all the goals (UNESCO, 2014).

Educational Inequality - Concept and Relevance

Education is essential for the success of an individual, a nation's prosperity, and equality. Hence, education itself ought to be equitable and inclusive in terms of condition, resources, opportunity, participation, quality, and outcome. However, the field of education presents marked inequalities all over the world. Educational inequality is fuelling global problems of unemployment, poverty, crimes, ill health, extremism, technological backwardness, gender inequality, environmental crises, etc., and resolving educational inequality will solve these problems as well as confer benefits on the wider society in terms of stable inclusive economic growth (Nelson, 2022). According to Farquharson et al. (2022), today's education inequalities are tomorrow's income inequalities and equality in education sector can lower the 'disadvantage gap'.

The terms 'inequity' and 'inequality' are often used interchangeably, but there are notable differences. Inequity in education refers to a lack of 'equity' as 'justice and fairness' as reflected in absence of creating an educational system that caters to all kinds of students in accordance with their learning capabilities and needs for developing their education to achieve their desired educational goals. On the other hand, 'inequality' in education refers to the unequal distribution of educational opportunity, resources and outcome. Inequities are avoidable and they cause inequalities. Inequality in education is harmful to the equity and it can be a driver of unequal outcomes amongst different groups in society and low social mobility across generations. Its very presence stands in the way of bridging the opportunity and achievement gap for underprivileged and underserved students.

Educational Inequality - International and Indian Scenario

Inequity is perhaps the most serious problem in education worldwide (Schmelkes, 2020). Learning is poor in low income countries than in wealthier countries (*World Bank, 2018*), and within countries, learning results are almost always much lower for those living in poverty. Parental inputs of money and time (for education of children) have become more unequal across the income scale in different countries (Doepke et al., 2019); and both financial resources and education of parents are causing educational inequality (Fuchs-Schündeln et al., 2021). India's education system, despite notable progress in recent years, continues to face significant inequalities (Yennamaneni, 2023); it is grossly uneven in terms of access, completion and quality (Taneja, 2020).

Tilak (2015) observed grave inequality in education in terms of per pupil expenditure differences, infrastructure, and quality, as well as large inter-group inequalities between the sexes and the castes in India. He also observed inequality in higher education in India and found unequal family incomes as the root cause of unequal access to higher education. Rural India lagged far behind the urban India in educational attainment (Asadullah and Yalonetzky, 2012). Basing on the distribution of population by educational level and using the 'gini index' approach, studies have noted gender, geographic location, and social and religious affiliations as the main causes of educational inequality in India (Asadullah and Yalonetzky, 2012; Agrawal, 2014). Poor physical infrastructure, school distance, quality of teaching, teacher absenteeism, and low teacher-student ratio (Chatterjee et al., 2018); parents using their kids in agriculture during the busy seasons (Ramachandran, 2009) have been the principal factors of poor educational attainment in rural India.

Objectives

1. To estimate the inequality in educational attainment
2. To identify the factors affecting years of schooling

Materials and Methods

This paper uses the unit level data of 71st (2014) and 75th (2018), rounds of National Sample Survey (NSS) on 'Social Consumption on Education' with a total sample of 65,925 and 1,13,757 households, respectively covering all the states and union territories of India. The objectives of these rounds were to estimate various characteristics and indicators of social consumption on education at national and

state/union territories levels. This paper estimates educational attainment rate, mean years of schooling and inequality in educational attainment for the population aged 15 years and above which is widely regarded as a measure of a country's human capital. Educational attainment rate is defined as the percentage of population with a particular education level and is assessed by classifying 15 years & above age population into seven levels: (i) non-literate, (ii) below primary, (iii) primary, (iv) middle, (v) secondary, (vi) higher secondary, and (vii) graduation and above. The following mathematical formula has been used to calculate the gini index for education (Agrawal, 2014).

$$G_E = 1/2\mu \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n p_i |y_i - y_j| p_j \quad (1)$$

Where $\mu = \sum_{i=1}^n p_i y_i$ is the mean years of schooling (MYS), p_i, p_j are the proportions of population, y_i and y_j represent years of schooling for persons with educational levels i and j , respectively, n is the number of educational levels and $i=1,2,3,\dots,7$. The years of schooling assigned to the seven corresponding educational levels are: 0, 2.5, 5, 8, 10, 12 and 15.5 years. Gini index ranges between 0 and 1; 0 representing perfect equality and 1 symbolising perfect inequality. Following Thomas et al. (2001), education gini has been calculated by considering the zero valued observations denoting non-literate population. To analyse the impact of socio-economic factors on years of schooling, the following ANOVA model is used:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 D_{1i} + \beta_2 D_{2i} + \beta_3 D_{3i} + \dots + \beta_k D_{ki} + u_i \quad (2)$$

Where, Y_i is the year of schooling, α is the mean value of reference category; D_S are dummy variables; $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3 \dots \beta_k$ are coefficients attached to dummy variables, known as differential intercept coefficients. In this model the regressand is 'years of schooling' and the regressors are sector (rural/urban), social group, religion, monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE), household size and gender.

State of Educational Attainment

The current scenario of educational attainment in India is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Proportion of Population across Educational Levels in India by Rural-Urban and Gender

Educational Level	2014								
	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Non-literate	24.2	45.7	34.8	10.1	21.8	15.8	19.7	38.2	28.8
Below Primary	9.4	8.3	8.9	6.2	6.7	6.5	8.4	7.8	8.1
Primary	14.6	12.6	13.6	10.7	11.1	10.9	13.3	12.1	12.7
Middle	20.1	14.2	17.2	16.9	14.9	15.9	19.1	14.4	16.8
Secondary	15.8	10.3	13.1	19.4	16.4	18.0	17.0	12.2	14.6
Higher	9.9	5.9	7.9	15.4	13.0	14.2	11.7	8.1	9.9
Secondary									
Graduation & above	6.0	3.0	4.5	21.3	16.1	18.8	10.9	7.1	9.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Educational Level	2018								
	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Non-literate	22.2	41.2	31.5	8.8	19.3	13.9	18.1	34.5	26.1
Below Primary	7.1	7.4	7.3	4.1	5.7	4.9	6.2	6.9	6.5
Primary	14.1	13.0	13.6	9.4	10.2	9.8	12.7	12.1	12.4
Middle	19.8	14.4	17.2	14.6	13.4	14.0	18.2	14.1	16.2
Secondary	17.2	12.6	15.0	20.4	17.8	19.1	18.2	14.2	16.2
Higher	12.0	7.6	9.8	18.1	15.0	16.6	13.9	9.8	11.9
Secondary									
Graduation & above	7.5	3.9	5.7	24.6	18.6	21.7	12.7	8.3	10.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Authors' estimation from unit level data of NSS 71st & 75th Round

Table 1 shows that in 2018, more than one-fourth (26.1%) of India's population were non-literates with larger variations between rural (31.5%) and urban area (13.9%). Only 10.6 per cent of population had graduation and above level of education and it varied widely between rural (5.7%) and urban area (21.7%). Overall and sector specific gender disparity is also observed with respect to non-literate, graduation and above. In rural areas 41.2 per cent of females were non-literates, which was double of males (22.2%). Wider gap was found in higher education among women between rural (3.9%) and urban areas (18.6%).

Table 2: Proportion of Population across Educational Levels by Social Groups and MPCE-Quartiles

Educational Level	2014				2018			
	ST	SC	OBC	Others	ST	SC	OBC	Others
Non-literate	40.6	37.6	30.1	17.5	36.2	32.8	27.3	16.1
Below Primary	9.7	8.4	8.4	7.1	8.4	6.7	6.7	5.5
Primary	13.3	13.3	13.0	11.8	13.7	13.8	12.6	10.7
Middle	16.5	17.3	17.0	16.2	17.0	16.9	16.4	15.1
Secondary	10.0	11.6	14.7	18.0	12.2	14.1	16.5	18.7
Higher Secondary	6.0	7.4	9.8	13.1	7.5	9.7	11.7	15.2
Graduation & above	3.9	4.4	7.1	16.4	5.0	6.1	8.7	18.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Educational Level	2014				2018			
	1st	2nd	3 rd	4th	1st	2 nd	3rd	4th
Non-literate	42.0	34.6	26.7	11.2	36.2	31.4	25.0	11.7
Below Primary	10.1	9.3	8.2	4.8	7.5	7.3	6.9	4.3
Primary	14.7	14.3	13.1	8.7	14.4	14.0	12.5	8.8
Middle	17.2	17.7	17.9	13.9	17.8	17.9	16.6	12.5
Secondary	9.5	12.9	16.5	19.8	13.0	14.9	17.5	19.6
Higher Secondary	4.5	7.6	10.5	17.4	7.4	9.5	12.7	18.0
Graduation & above	2.1	3.7	7.1	24.2	3.6	5.1	8.8	25.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Authors' estimation from unit level data of NSS 71st & 75th Round

Table 2 shows the disparity in educational attainment across social groups and economic strata, where population belonging to SCs, STs and OBCs and from lower economic strata were more vulnerable to low educational attainment. In 2018, the highest percentage of non-literates were among STs (36.2%), followed by SCs (32.8%) and OBCs (27.3%) as compared to others (16.1%). However, during the period 2014-18, the reduction of non-literates (in percentage point) was marginally higher among SCs (4.8), STs (4.4), and OBCs (2.8) as compared to others (1.4). Similarly, in 2018, the proportion of population with graduation and above was the least among STs (5.0%), followed by SCs (6.1%) and OBCs (8.7%). With regard to household economic status major proportion of non-literates was found among the first three MPCE-quartiles (36.2%, 31.4%, and 25.0% respectively), while it is just the reverse in case of graduation and above level of education (3.6%, 5.1% and 8.8 % respectively).

Mean Years of Schooling (MYS)

The MYS for India was 6.8 years in 2018 and it varied across states and union territories and sector (Table 3) and socio-economic groups (Table 4). In 2018, the highest MYS was observed in Delhi (9.6 years) followed by Kerala (9.2 years),

Punjab and Maharashtra (7.9 years each) and low MYS was observed in Bihar (5.4 years), Jharkhand (5.6 years), Rajasthan (5.8 years) and Odisha (6.0 years). Among smaller states and union territories, the highest MYS was observed in Chandigarh (10.6 years) while it was the lowest in Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh (6.2 years each). MYS was comparatively better in smaller states and union territories than in major states.

Table 3: Mean Years of Schooling (MYS) and Inequality in Educational Attainment across States & UTs

States and Union Territories (UTs)	MYS		Education Gini	
	2014	2018	2014	2018
Major States				
Delhi	9.7	9.6	0.29	0.29
J&K	6.1	6.8	0.46	0.42
Punjab	7.1	7.9	0.40	0.35
Haryana	7.0	7.8	0.43	0.39
Bihar	4.7	5.4	0.55	0.51
Jharkhand	5.4	5.6	0.52	0.48
Uttar Pradesh	5.9	6.4	0.51	0.47
Madhya Pradesh	5.6	6.0	0.50	0.47
Chhattisgarh	5.4	6.2	0.50	0.44
Assam	6.5	7.0	0.37	0.36
West Bengal	6.0	6.3	0.46	0.43
Odisha	5.6	6.0	0.48	0.45
Rajasthan	5.4	5.8	0.54	0.52
Gujarat	6.6	7.0	0.43	0.40
Maharashtra	7.4	7.9	0.38	0.36
Andhra Pradesh	5.3	5.5	0.54	0.54
Telangana	6.1	7.1	0.51	0.46
Karnataka	6.4	7.0	0.45	0.43
Kerala	8.5	9.2	0.27	0.25
Tamil Nadu	7.0	7.7	0.42	0.38
Smaller States & UTs				
Himachal Pradesh	7.9	8.4	0.34	0.32
Uttaranchal	7.9	8.8	0.35	0.32
Sikkim	6.9	8.0	0.37	0.31
Arunachal Pradesh	6.3	6.2	0.44	0.47
Nagaland	9.5	8.2	0.25	0.36
Manipur	8.8	9.0	0.29	0.28
Mizoram	7.8	8.4	0.25	0.21
Tripura	6.0	6.2	0.37	0.37
Meghalaya	6.6	7.0	0.35	0.33
Goa	8.5	9.5	0.28	0.24
Chandigarh	10.0	10.6	0.26	0.24
Daman & Diu	8.5	9.5	0.31	0.27
Dadra Nagar Haveli	7.2	6.6	0.42	0.41
Lakshadweep	7.7	8.8	0.30	0.25
Pondicherry	8.5	9.5	0.34	0.27
A&N	7.2	8.1	0.36	0.33
All Major States	6.1	6.7	0.47	0.44
All Smaller States	7.8	8.2	0.34	0.33
India	6.2	6.8	0.46	0.43

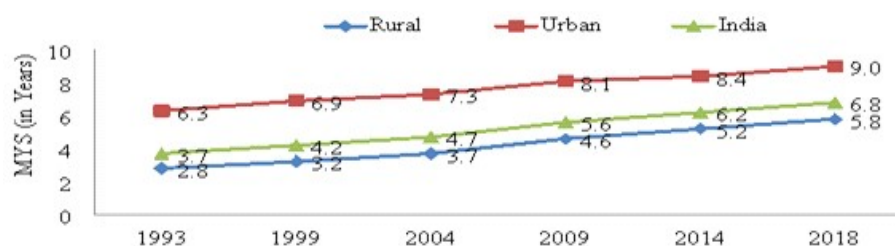
Source: Authors' estimation from unit level data of NSS 71st & 75th Round

Table 4: Disparity in MYS and Inequality in Educational Attainment by Background Characteristics

Background Characteristics	Categories	MYS		Education Gini	
		2014	2018	2014	2018
Sector	Rural	5.2	5.8	0.51	0.48
	Urban	8.4	9.0	0.35	0.32
Social Group	ST	4.6	5.2	0.56	0.52
	SC	5.0	5.7	0.53	0.49
	OBC	6.0	6.5	0.47	0.44
	Others	8.0	8.5	0.37	0.34
Religion	Hindu	6.3	6.9	0.46	0.43
	Muslim	5.1	5.7	0.50	0.47
	Christian	8.0	7.8	0.34	0.36
	Others	7.2	7.7	0.40	0.37
Household Size	<=4	6.6	7.2	0.45	0.41
	5-7	6.0	6.4	0.47	0.44
	>=8	5.9	6.5	0.49	0.44
MPCE-Quartile	1st quartile	4.2	5.1	0.57	0.51
	2nd quartile	5.1	5.7	0.51	0.47
	3rd quartile	6.3	6.8	0.44	0.42
	4th quartile	9.5	9.6	0.29	0.29
Gender	Male	7.2	7.7	0.39	0.36
	Female	5.3	5.8	0.54	0.50

Source: Authors' estimation from unit level data of NSS 71st & 75th Round

Disparities in MYS are clearly observed across sector and socio-economic groups. In social groups the MYS was low among SCs (5.7 years), STs (5.2 years) and OBCs (6.5 years) as compared to others (8.5 years). In religious group MYS was the highest among Christians (7.8 years) and lowest among Muslims (5.7 years), and it was significantly low among 1st quartile (5.1 years), and 2nd quartile (5.7 years) as compared to 3rd quartile (9.5 years) and 4th quartile (9.6 Years). MYS was around 2 years lower among female population and 3.2 years lower among rural population as compared to male and urban population, respectively. And over the last two and half decades (1993-2018), a slow increasing trend is observed across sectors (Fig-1).

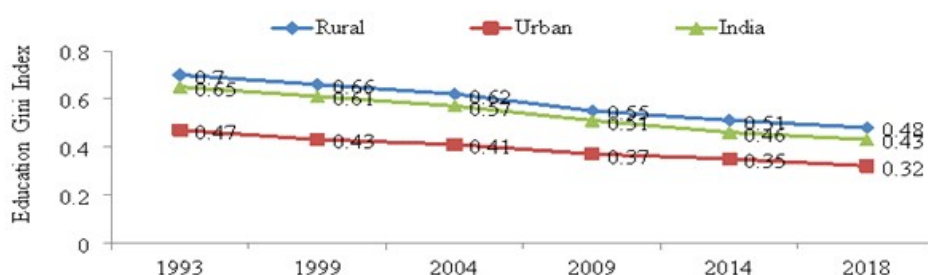
Fig-1: Trends in mean years of schooling -rural, urban, and total: 1993-2018

Sources: Agrawal (2014) and authors' calculation from unit level data from 71st & 75th NSS Rounds

Inequality in Educational Attainment

Inequality in educational attainment among states and union territories and by background characteristics are shown in table 3 & 4, respectively. In 2018 among the major states, the inequality in educational attainment was larger in Andhra Pradesh (0.54), Rajasthan (0.52), and Bihar (0.51) and the lowest inequality was observed in Kerala (0.25) followed by Delhi (0.29) and Punjab (0.35). Inequality was significantly higher in rural areas, among females, SCs, STs, and OBCs, among Muslims and population belonging to first three quartiles. During the last two and half decades the overall inequality has reduced from 0.65 in 1993 to 0.43 in 2018. A highly negative relationship is found between MYS and the degree of inequality across states and union territories ($r_1 = -0.907$ in 2014 and $r_2 = -0.909$ in 2018⁴) indicating that states with higher level of MYS have low level of inequality in educational attainment and vice versa.

Fig-2: Trends in educational inequality - rural, urban, total: 1993-2018



Sources: Agrawal (2014) and authors' calculation from unit level data from 71st & 75th NSS Rounds

Factors Affecting MYS

Table 5 shows the results of the dummy variable regression model. In 2014, MYS for the reference category was 4.9 years. Controlling all other factors, the MYS was 1.3 years higher among urban population as compared to rural population. In comparison to the ST population, it was 0.5 year lower among SC population, 0.3 year higher for OBC, and 1.4 years higher among others. Unsurprisingly, it was 0.7 years higher among Christians and others but 1.5 years lower among Muslims than Hindus. The MYS for those belonging to 2nd, 3rd and 4th quartiles was 1 year, 2 years and 4.3 years higher respectively, as compared to 1st quartile. The MYS among female population was 1.8 year lower as compared to their male counterpart. In

⁴ r_1 & r_2 indicates the correlation coefficient

2018 the MYS for reference category was 5.9 years and almost all differential coefficients are in similar directions and statistically significant. Significant gaps in MYS are also found across sector, consumption classes and gender. The difference in MYS between 1st and 4th quartile was 3.2 years. In social group, the highest gap is observed between ST and others. Of all the factors household economic status has a major impact on MYS as the gap between 1st and 4th quartile is found to be the highest in both the models.

Table 5: Factors Affecting Years of Schooling (Result of ANOVA): India

Factors	Categories	2014		2018	
		Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
Sector	Rural [®]				
	Urban	1.339547*	.020532	1.528851*	.017049
Social Group	ST [®]				
	SC	-.4989924*	.0372791	-.2154494*	.0288321
	OBC	.3280225*	.033352	.5799806*	.0259119
	Others	1.438755*	.0343621	1.581419*	.0269006
Religion	Hindu [®]				
	Muslim	-1.472766*	.0287396	-1.466167*	.0224103
	Christian & others	.70865*	.0350387	.7016997*	.0262349
Household Size	<=4 [®]				
	5-7	.2850169*	.02111	-.0633904*	.0161768
	>=8	.6783197*	.029578	.3242018*	.0245443
MPCE-Quartile	1st quartile [®]				
	2nd quartile	.9911975*	.0296635	.6548792*	.0235524
	3rd quartile	2.055622*	.0291138	1.507305*	.0229189
	4th quartile	4.328309*	.0310762	3.221842*	.0245051
Gender	Male [®]				
	Female	-1.867779*	.0188234	-1.79420*	.014696
	constant	4.886004*	.0385195	5.876572*	.0295105

Source: Author's estimation from unit level data of NSS 71st & 75th Round

Note: * statistically significant at 1% level, [®] indicates reference category.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Education significantly impacts health, economic opportunities, and standard of living (Dre'ze & Sen, 2013). This paper highlights that educational attainment in India is relatively low, with significant disparities among sub-groups of population. Rural areas have the double burden of higher percentage of non-literate population and low proportion of higher educated population. Socially deprived groups (STs, SCs, and OBCs) and lower consumption classes (first three MPCE-quartiles), Muslims, females and rural population are facing the dual challenges of low average educational attainment and higher educational inequalities. There was a gap of 5.2 years in mean years of schooling between the 1st quartile and 4th quartile and a

strong inverse relationship between mean years of schooling and educational inequalities are found. Educational policies must target these vulnerable sub-groups for the improvement in mean years of schooling as well as reduction of inequalities.

Though the enactment of the Right to Education Act of 2009 has increased the gross enrolment ratio (GER) to 100.13 per cent at the elementary level, it declined at secondary (79.6%), higher secondary (57.6%) (UDISE+, 2021-22) and in higher education levels (26.3%) (MHRD, 2020). At the same time the overall dropout rate at higher secondary level is the highest (12.6%) followed by upper primary (3.0%) and primary (1.5%). Among the states, the drop-out rate at secondary level was the highest in state of Odisha (27.3%) followed by Meghalaya (21.7%), Bihar (20.5%) and Assam (20.3%) (UDISE+, 2021-22). So, the need of the hour is to increase the level of enrollment at secondary, higher secondary and at higher education level and reduction of drop-out rates at secondary and higher secondary level with special focus on states where it is a major concern, so that these steps will help in improvement of MYS and inequalities. In this regard, the national education policy 2020 has aimed to increase the gross enrolment ratio to 50 per cent in higher education by 2030.

It is also suggested that the RTE act should be expanded to secondary and senior secondary level. This study also identifies a significant proportion of non-literate population which is in the age group of 15 and above, pointing to the need for adult education and open learning platforms to enhance their mean years of schooling. India aims to becoming a developed nation by 2047, therefore universal access to quality education is deemed important. This paper reveals that women are in disadvantaged positions at all levels of education. Hence, there is a need to prioritise women's education for increasing their participation in the workforce. Along with this, increasing the legal age of marriage for girls and ensuring their marriage at legal age will help to increase MYS and reduction of inequalities among girls. This will also help in preventing child marriages and ensuring gender justice.

The study reveals that household's economic status significantly influenced educational attainment and inequalities suggesting increased public expenditure on education to reduce disparities and increase entry of disadvantaged groups into the labour market to realise sustained economic development. The conventional recommendation of raising government expenditure on education to at least 6 per cent of GDP is workable and must be implemented. This will help in improving India's global ranking in mean and expected years of schooling and ultimately the human development index which currently stands at 139th, 141st and 132nd position respectively (UNDP, 2022).

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Critical Pedagogy: A Critical Look from the Perspectives of NEP 2020 and NCF 2023

• Pankaj Das¹

Abstract

The current imperative is to increase our children's pedagogical subject knowledge and encourage them to participate critically in their social environments. They can develop their future jobs as law-abiding, socially conscious individuals there. Due to school children's critical engagement with their social environments, an innovative educational framework that is separate from the current one is required. Here, a teacher using a new curriculum model guided by critical pedagogy would be the only hope of transforming such an unhappy society into a desirable one. Within this framework, the policy documents NEP 2020 and NCF 2023 - which highlight creating a new curricular model, or critical pedagogy - are deemed essential. Therefore, our educators must foster in our students the ability to think critically and solve problems with the support of appropriate guidance, enabling them to better "prepare for life" in various dynamic settings.

Keywords: *School children, creativity, critical pedagogy.*

Introduction

One of the most reliable measures of a nation's level of progress is its high percentage of literacy. While emphasizing the various definitions of literacy, improving effective instruction at both the internal and external levels of the institution of schooling has not gotten enough attention in the present debate on education in India. We are just not aware that the bulk of our parents are still uneducated and that India's literacy rate is not all that high. The results of empirical research have shown a strong positive correlation between the nation's literacy rate and primary education. How can we explain the outstanding reading rate in the nation if children lack access to fundamental skills at a very young age? Approximately 50% of students

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from Uttar Pradesh who graduate from the government's primary and upper primary education programmes have extremely weak reading and numeracy skills (ASER, 2022). Because of this, India's school system has not even partially attained the primary objectives of education, which include assisting students in understanding what needs to be learned, allowing them to connect what they learn in the classroom to the reality of the outside world, and fostering critical thinking skills that could aid in their development as good citizens.

However, instead of the democratic discourse, "student-centered learning", empowerment, and liberation pedagogies proposed by great scholars and philosophers like "Paulo Freire," "Ivan Illich," and "John Dewey," our pedagogical practices are centered close to mechanical learning. Many problems about what education means for the general public are brought up in this speculation. How is pedagogy implemented in our educational system? What degree of relevance does critical pedagogy have, to the idea of a child's critical literacy? With the help of the National Curriculum Framework 2023 and the National Education Policy 2020, this paper seeks to critically analyse critical literacy engagement to implement pedagogy in school settings and establish the foundation for universal literacy in India.

Critical Pedagogy: A Theoretical Perspective

The common consensus is that education transforms a child's life in all respects. The fundamental ideas of Indian philosophy, "Sa Vidya ya Vimuktae", which hold that knowledge brings us from darkness to light, also quite obviously represent this. Nevertheless, it is still unclear if effective education can be sustained independently. Undoubtedly, the fundamental objective of all social and philosophical methods is to facilitate the child's understanding of life to establish and grow in their competency, based on instructional methods. To put it briefly, "pedagogy is the art and science of teaching". It establishes an instructor's manner of thinking and acting in an institutional setting that influences the opportunities and lifestyles of students. However, the phrase is more intricate and connected.

Henry Giroux (1997) describes pedagogy as a business. In opposition to or situated at the core of any political practice that tackles this issue, he feels that "pedagogy cannot simply be defined as what happens in schools. It is about how people learn, how knowledge is produced, and how topic positions are established" (Giroux, 1997: 103). Therefore, pedagogy signifies complicated historical and political modes of cultural reproduction.

This illustrates how routine teaching methods are changed to essential teaching methods. Furthermore, the field's primary works have been defined by the idea of critical pedagogy researchers and intellectuals from various backgrounds. In their writings, several influential scholars, such as Paulo Freire and Vygotsky, have described this critical approach from various social and psychological angles. Conversely, some theorists and educators, such as Ivan Illich, Raymer, and John Holt, are well-known for their de-schooling viewpoint and have conducted radical analyses of education pedagogy. Critical pedagogy has been identified in postmodern approaches by certain other theorists, including Giroux (1988), Gramsci (1971), Patricia Bizzell (1996), Berlin (1996), Butler (1991, 1997), and Ira Shor (1992, 1996).

Scholars such as Gandhi (1937), Tagore (1961), Yashpal (1993), and Krishna Kumar (1992) hold significant intellectual value in the Indian context. Critical pedagogy focuses on strategies that awaken students' critical minds about discriminatory societal realities and brutal de-humanising instructional procedures. Critical pedagogy provides a discerning student room to confront and examine prevailing and established views and practices. This environment is an experiment in giving pupils access to a critical place to develop critical consciousness.

Teachers are urged to investigate the actual circumstances of their students' lives and challenge attitudes and behaviours deemed oppressive in this tradition. The facilitator guides the class in encouraging individual and group responses to circumstances (Babu, 2007). The Frankfurt School's critical theory, influenced by the most critical educator, Paulo Freire, is the basis of critical pedagogy. It is consistent with the socio-political movements of the latter half of the 20th century in the West. The guiding principles of 'Freedom from Bondage' demonstrate this. The Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire, regarded as one of the most significant intellectuals to address significant issues, offered theoretical renewal to education. In order to challenge the cultures of laboratory practice, silence, and oppression, Freire promotes the idea of students thinking critically about their educational surroundings and the idea of dialogical communication between teacher and student. Students who think this way, discuss constructing identities about their social circumstances, personal issues, and experiences (Alana, 2003:126). In his theories on social emancipation, the most crucial innovative concepts are dialectics, empowerment, implementation, awareness, and essential dialogues discussed in Freire's critical literacy in the oppression pedagogy.

In Freire's view, classroom instruction is a practice within the framework of forming 'critical consciousness'. It has evolved into a method that involves both

teachers and students in teaching reading, while also encouraging students to reflect on significant issues and take proactive steps to address them. Both pick up new skills, ask probing questions, ponder, and engage in meaning-making. Dialogue transforms into a compassionate and civilized tool of constructive social consciousness within the academic setting, strengthening communal justice and its broader societal ramifications. Known action becomes the ultimate objective of all teaching-learning processes, more relevant to the “pedagogy of the oppressed” or “pedagogy of hope”. Put in another way, the psychological study of children’s knowing relies heavily on a social constructivist lens to explain children’s critical thinking. Vygotsky asserts that it arises naturally through the interaction of two parties. The key finding of this theory is the inherent relationship between children’s social and cultural environments and their learning. In this perspective, the most crucial duty for the student is the autonomous development of the critical faculties through a critical analysis of the formation of social knowledge.

Another thing to consider is how “Nai Talim” of Gandhian critical education enables us to demonstrate a powerful opposition to the social hegemony that permeates the educational system. It offers a fundamental framework for comprehending the idea of social freedom (Sadgopal, 2019). Gandhi’s notion of Nai Talim aims to integrate information and enhance children’s critical senses. Therefore, it is generally acknowledged that using productive activity as a teaching tool is suitable for promoting the harmonious development of the “mind, heart, and hands” (Fagg, 2002).

Seven decades later, it still challenges the imagination of academics worldwide since it was conveyed in such a vital and groundbreaking way. It offered a tangible, scientific foundation for acquiring knowledge, instilling morals, and developing various abilities. Furthermore, connecting schools with the workplace and the natural world is a goal of Tagore’s educational philosophy and that of Gandhi. His humanistic philosophy and distinctive teaching approach, which emphasizes the development of the developing mind’s essential faculties, highlights the importance of having joy when teaching and learning, using real-world scenarios and objects, and having joy when perceiving and comprehending everything. Progressive education had these as its goals (Kumar, 2015). Tagore’s vision of emancipatory education opposed a rigorous and inflexible curriculum. He thinks that rigorous curricular systems simply stifle original and creative thought. In his 1993 report “Learning without Burden”, Yashpal conducted a thorough examination of the learning load placed on students in schools that failed to do it. “Much is taught, but very little is learned or understood”, he said emphatically. The survey noted that students in lower classes are particularly

affected, as are all schoolchildren, not just physically burdened but also “learning burdened.” The report advocates re-organising the school curriculum, arguing that a lighter curriculum load and active preparation of instructional strategies and resources will undoubtedly result in more effective instruction and critical pedagogy.

Similarly, Krishna Kumar (1992) poses the central question of what knowledge is in his explication of the nature and meaning of knowledge in critical pedagogy. What information is valuable to know? Which information is included in our school curriculum and presented to children? He believes that knowledge learned from textbooks is not all-powerful. “New knowledge is the reconstruction of knowledge that results from choices made in given social circumstances,” according to Kumar (1992: 8). Selection is a social process that takes place for the good of the community rather than in a vacuum. The highly educated elite create knowledge and instruction that make up the school curriculum. Therefore, all educators, independent of their subject area, yearn for critical pedagogy and political and ideological lucidity, that empowers them to examine prejudiced educational and social practices. This clarity is crucial if educators genuinely wish to give their pupils excellent instruction, safety, and support. This is also inescapable if educators work to develop students into critical thinkers who can actively alter people’s worldviews.

Critical Pedagogy and National Education Policy 2020

The recommendations made in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 are crucial, as they emphasize the need for critical thinking and flexibility in the curriculum instead of memorization. We consider critical thinking to be the foundation for true learning. The National Education Policy 2020 document’s subheading (4.4, on page 18), provides unambiguous evidence for the following claim: By drastically cutting the content covered in each topic, it has been made exceedingly easy. In order to provide critical thinking and comprehensive, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning the emphasis will be on the fundamentals. The main ideas, concepts, applications, and problem-solving will be at the centre of this text. To ensure deep and immersive learning, teaching and learning will be carried out in more interactive ways, emphasizing questioning and regular use of more engaging, creative, collaborative, and exploratory activities in the classroom. The goal of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is to instill “critical thinking” and “problem-solving” abilities in students starting in elementary school. This will foster a new generation of critical writers and creative thinkers better equipped to meet life’s challenges. It will also help to comprehend the uncertainties that lie ahead in life.

As stated in the NEP-2020, teachers play a critical role in this. It is implied in the NEP-2020 document that teachers will bear the brunt of responsibility. In the classroom, teachers play a crucial role in education. Will it generate such chances, including creativity and vision? NEP-2020's primary goals are to deliver high-quality instruction and position educators as social change and emancipation agents. Teachers must implement a two-stage approach to pedagogical learning in 2020 to make this a reality and develop critical thinkers in the classroom. Firstly, teachers had to employ a multidisciplinary approach when teaching the subjects covered by their pedagogy. Through the use of multidisciplinary teaching strategies, pupils will be able to comprehend and evaluate social issues from a variety of angles. They will be able to embrace an integrated learning strategy as a result. Teachers can be crucial in this process by incorporating interactivity into the curriculum, encouraging students to share their knowledge, and fostering critical thinking through discussions and debates. Secondly, educators should receive training as "lifelong disciples" instead of just regular class graduates. They need to be aware of their teaching methods to generate and prepare their students for future positions; teachers must always be involved in their re-skilling and up-skilling opportunities.

NCF-Pedagogy: An Effort to Change the Nature of Education

A policy document called the National Curriculum Framework-2023 (NCF) was created to direct the evolution of Indian school education. The NCF delineates the nation's pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and broad framework for critical literacy. The NCF (2023) was adopted to ensure that all Indian children, regardless of socio-economic status, may access high-quality education. This includes giving students from various socio-economic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds equal chances. Additionally, the NCF promotes technological integration in the classroom to improve learners' educational possibilities. The NCF (2023) seeks to guarantee that education is comprehensive and all-encompassing, that children's rights to high-quality education are upheld, and that the educational system is adaptive and flexible enough to change with the community's demands. The framework additionally aims to offer a curriculum that investigates various pedagogical approaches, fosters critical thinking, and considers the cultural and environmental milieus in which students are educated. The document describes how many parties can collaborate to guarantee that every child in India has fair access to high-quality education.

Additionally, the NCF outlines particular goals for every subject. For instance, the NCF strives to guarantee that all children, irrespective of their social, economic, or cultural backgrounds, have access to high-quality education under inclusion. It

aims to remove obstacles to educational possibilities and give every student access to a secure and supportive learning environment under the umbrella of equity. Ensuring excellent levels of instruction and learning in all Indian schools is the goal of the quality theme. The NCF guides assessments and learning procedures. It facilitates collaborative learning, supports student-centered learning strategies, and permits customized assessment procedures. It also motivates us to employ cutting-edge teaching strategies that meet the varied needs of our students. It concludes by outlining efficient assessment techniques that consider both academic and non-academic outcomes.

The NCF-2023 proposes several curriculum areas that go beyond traditional topic boundaries to create an inclusive and comprehensive learning experience, acknowledging the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to education as per the NEP-2020 guidelines. The NCF-2023 curriculum supports critical thinking, social awareness, creativity, and holistic development in learners, encouraging a well-rounded education beyond material knowledge.

NCF Pedagogy: An Integrated and Multidisciplinary Education Framework

In order to increase student engagement and promote holistic development, the NCF pedagogy supports cutting-edge and novel teaching techniques. In order to develop critical literacy, these pedagogical concepts seek to establish an inclusive, student-centered learning environment. The NCF-2023 outlines constructivism, experiential learning, integration and multidisciplinary learning, inclusiveness, and differentiated instruction as its central pedagogical tenets. The NCF pedagogy promotes constructivist methods of instruction, in which students actively create their knowledge through teamwork, problem-solving, and practical experiences. It focuses on educators' roles as mentors and facilitators. The policy document encourages experiential learning, in which students gain knowledge through working on projects, conducting experiments, and visiting fields. It emphasizes combining theoretical and practical knowledge. It facilitates the integration of several courses and multidisciplinary education. Students can find links across different topics, which emphasize the interconnection of knowledge domains. The policy document emphasizes inclusive education, addressing students' diverse learning needs.

Additionally, it motivates teachers to use varied instructional methodologies, modifying their approach and materials to better support the unique learning styles of each student. In a nutshell, it is viewed that the most recent framework, NCF-2023, aims to advance an approach to education that is inclusive, meaningful, and

student-centered. This entails encouraging critical thinking, equity, inclusivity, and experience-based learning.

Conclusion

Four decades ago, Freire proposed the “banking concept” of education. Much discussion existed, but the Indian educational system could not implement the anticipated shift. The intended kind of social transformation could not be made evident in the absence of constructive education. To break free from inactivity and overcome thoughtlessness in the teaching-learning process, we must modify the current practice tradition under our school’s current teaching, learning, and evaluation system. At the elementary school level, it is necessary to maintain the knowledge gained from tradition in both the classroom and outside it, while enhancing practical abilities through critical thinking. We must work hard to reach this aim before we can count on having more students, teachers, and ideological allies with original ideas.

Within the framework of National Education Policy 2020 and NCF-2023, there has been a shift in the focus of education and the direction of critical thinking and problem-solving techniques. A fundamental shift in how education is approached is suggested by discussing a creative and multidisciplinary perspective by focussing on how innovation is organized, how life skills are improved together with other relevant measures, etc. The National Education Policy has also acknowledged that teachers alone are responsible for helping students develop their personalities. The teacher contributes significantly to our understanding of how to achieve success. To do this, it is necessary to establish an atmosphere where the teacher can satisfy both the concept of critical thinking and the demand for education.

We can sum up by saying that teachers should apply critical pedagogy in their classroom, which entails using all its constituent parts. The instructor should ensure a democratic atmosphere in the classroom where students feel free to discuss ideas and think critically about issues. By employing critical pedagogy, we prepare students for future circumstances in which they may either become the object of harassment themselves or cease to be harassed by others. This suggests that living in a democracy then, ought to be possible for everyone.

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Youth Engagement in New India Literacy Programme: Scope, Opportunities and Challenges

• Saigita Chitturu¹

Abstract

This article discusses the journey and evolution of adult learning from 1951. It highlights some milestones achieved in different phases. It also introduces the newly formulated New India Literacy Programme (NILP), which talks about the paradigm shift from the earlier targeted adult learner beneficiaries to all and any non-literates above 15 years. In addition, the relevance of youth participation and engagement in developmental work, particularly in every literacy effort from the past to the present, is discussed. In addition, the scope, opportunities, and challenges of young people involved in achieving the literacy goal in India is presented in the paper.

Keywords: *New India Literacy Programme (NILP), youth engagement, adult education, education for all.*

Trends and Changing Contours of Indian Adult Education

Adult education has been significant in the country since ancient times, both before and after independence. Various programmes have been developed with the primary goal of enhancing adult education. Simply put, adult education involves providing educational opportunities to adults. This field encompasses a wide range of subjects and interests. Adults typically choose areas that interest them and offer substantial benefits. Adult education is particularly advantageous for those who never attended school or have dropped out early. Efforts in continuing education support personal and professional growth, offering opportunities to showcase their skills and abilities (Kumar, 2019).

The concept of adult learning has witnessed numerous recent transformations. It continues to develop as we encounter fresh demographics requiring assistance,

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uncover novel educational objectives, and innovate modes of service provision. The phrase ‘Adult Education’ was first introduced in the year 1851. In India particularly, the concept of adult education has constantly changed and developed under various nomenclatures. It has come a long way, from basic literacy, functional literacy, political & social awareness, continuing education to lifelong learning. It played a vital role in the development of the socio-economic condition of people. It helped in improving literacy rate, agricultural productivity, political & cultural awareness and providing continuing learning opportunities to adults. Although, its entire stress was on the acquisition of static quantum of literacy skills (Narayan & Goswami, 2021).

The Notion of Basic Literacy

Nineteenth Century focused on imparting basic literacy skills. So, night schools whenever possible were established allowing for flexible school hours. The primary aim of these night schools was to promote basic literacy. Although the notion of basic literacy persisted throughout the British colonial era, many leaders, individuals and organizations made numerous efforts to educate illiterate adults during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Many leaders advocated for extending such education to the masses, particularly India’s most marginalized and vulnerable populations.

The realization that adult education was instrumental in the nation’s socio-economic development gave rise to four significant events in the 1920s. These events included the establishment of night schools, awareness programmes through media and cultural forms, talks, and discussions organized by different organizations, encouraging the advancement of libraries and initiatives within the community (Vasudev, 2005). Adult Education Programme was established as an official programme during the 1940s. By initiating literacy campaigns throughout India and engaging notable Indians, a favourable atmosphere was established to foster the growth of the adult education movement, resulting in the establishment of professional organizations (Shah, 1999: 15).

India’s rise as a sovereign and democratic country led to notable transformations in adult education policies and initiatives. The Indian government not only assessed the existing colonial approach to adult education but also formulated fresh programmes to cater to the evolving requirements of a democratic nation, influenced by diverse socio-economic and political elements. The emergence of India as an independent and democratic nation brought about specific fundamental changes in the policies and programmes of adult education. Not only was the prevalent colonial policy towards adult education reviewed by the Government of India, but new programmes

were also developed to cater to the changing needs of a democratic nation necessitated by various socio-economic and political factors. Social education was introduced which was related to people's lives and held real meaning for people. Social education involved education for a better life in all aspects - work, rest, and recreation. It became part of the community development programmes.²

During the 1950s, India received foreign support for developing and expanding activities in the domain of adult education; however, this programme remained centre-based and did not gain much popularity. The increase in primary education garnered significant attention and led to a growing emphasis on tackling illiteracy through the widespread adoption of free and mandatory education for everyone.

During the 1960s, the concept of functional literacy emerged and gained endorsement in the Fourth Five-Year Plan. Functional literacy entails integrating literacy skills with the learners' occupations, directly contributing to their development. Agricultural programmes were organized primarily for farmers under this initiative. While programmes implemented through official channels succeeded in enhancing skills and spreading knowledge of improved agricultural methods among farmers, they were limited in reach, mainly benefiting relatively affluent and entrepreneurial farmers who were interested in adopting new practices. This period also saw the establishment of institutions like the National Board of Adult Education and the Directorate of Adult Education, along with the rise of informal education initiatives. Additionally, innovative ideas emerged, such as facilitating multiple entry points, part-time and correspondence education, and designing functional literacy programmes tailored to various developmental schemes suitable for both rural and urban contexts (Shah, 1999).

Concept of Developmental Literacy

By the early 1970s, Paulo Freire's writing had brought a new direction to the changing aspects of adult education. It was now realized that literacy was not restricted to gaining reading, writing, and arithmetic skills instead it led to empowerment and overall development of humans.³

During the 1980s, higher education for adults in India experienced growth as new departments specializing in adult education were established, including the

²<https://teachers.institute/understanding-adult-education/adult-education-expansion-post-independence-india/>

³<https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/essay/adult-education-programme-for-literacy-in-india/43977>

introduction of Ph.D. programmes in this field. The National Education Policy of 1986 aimed to address all kinds of inequalities through adult education, emphasizing the nation's commitment to providing necessary support. Notably, two significant occurrences were the initiation of the National Literacy Mission in 1988 and the remarkable achievement of Ernakulam becoming India's first fully literate district.⁴

Saakshar Bharat: The scheme was launched on September 8, 2009, and further extended for implementation during the 11th and 12th Five-Year Plans and concluded in 2018. The major objective was to impart functional literacy to 70 million nonliterates.⁵ The Saakshar Bharat programme had four main aims: firstly, to provide practical literacy to adults who lacked reading and numeracy skills; secondly, to empower those who had recently learned to read to further their education beyond the fundamental level and reach a comparable level with formal education; thirdly, to offer skill development opportunities to individuals who were not literate or had limited literacy, thereby enhancing their income-generating abilities and overall quality of life.⁶ Additionally, the Saakshar Bharat initiative aimed to foster a culture of continuous learning by offering avenues for ongoing education to individuals who had recently acquired literacy skills. Through this programme, approximately 76.4 million individuals who were previously non-literate successfully attained literacy certification since 2009.⁷

Padhna Likhna Abhiyan: Amidst the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the plan received approval on April 25, 2020, for execution in the fiscal year 2020-21. It was allocated a budget of Rs. 142.61 crore to provide functional literacy to 5.7 million individuals aged 15 years and above, residing in both rural and urban regions of the country. The scheme was rolled out across 33 states/Union Territories during the fiscal years 2020-22, and its implementation was extended for an additional year, concluding on March 31, 2022. Based on the 2011 Census, India's overall literacy rate stands at 72.98%, with male literacy at 80.88% and female literacy at 64.63%. In the age group of 15 years and above, there are approximately 257.6 million non-literate individuals, comprising 90.8 million males and 166.8 million females. Considering the achievements of the Saakshar Bharat initiative, which had

⁴[https://drprasenjitdeb.wordpress.com/2015/11/17/national-literacy-mission-2/#:~:text=The% 20 NLM%20initiated%20its%20first,in%20the%20continuing%20education%20phase.](https://drprasenjitdeb.wordpress.com/2015/11/17/national-literacy-mission-2/#:~:text=The%20NLM%20initiated%20its%20first,in%20the%20continuing%20education%20phase.)

⁵https://dsel.education.gov.in/adult_education). <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/saakshar-bharat-mission-india>

⁶<https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/saakshar-bharat-mission-india;> (<https://www.theindianiris.com/income-generating-program-in-rajasthan/>)

⁷<https://pib.gov.in/newsite/relcontent.aspx?relid=42161>

certified around 76.4 million individuals as literates from 2009-10 to 2017-18, it can be deduced that the current estimate of non-literate individuals in India is around 181.2 million.⁸

Initially, adult education was often associated with basic literacy and vocational skills. However, the focus has expanded to include a broader range of subjects, including personal development, lifelong learning, and even higher education pursuits. It recognized the importance of catering to various groups of adults, such as individuals seeking career advancement, older adults pursuing new interests, immigrants adapting to new environments, and those seeking to improve their quality of life. It also acknowledged the value of informal learning experiences outside traditional classroom settings. This includes self-directed, experiential, and learning through online platforms and resources. Advances in technology have led to the development of various delivery methods, such as online courses, blended learning, and mobile learning, making education more accessible and flexible for adult learners.⁹ The field of adult education has benefited from research on andragogy, which focuses on the unique characteristics of adult learners. This has led to the development of teaching strategies that consider adult learners' experiences, motivations, and self-directed natures. This emphasizes recognizing and respecting adult learners' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles. It has taken on a global dimension, addressing adults' educational and training needs in various cultural, economic, and social contexts.

Overall, adult education has evolved from a narrow focus on basic skills to a more comprehensive and inclusive approach that aims to empower adults to pursue learning throughout their lives. This evolution is driven by societal changes, technological advancements, and a deeper understanding of how adults learn and develop.

NILP - The What and Why of It

The Government of India has sanctioned a novel centrally sponsored initiative, named the "New India Literacy Programme (NILP)", which replaces the former Adult Education programme. This new programme is in line with the recommendations outlined in the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020). The primary objective of NILP is to address the educational needs of all individuals aged 15 years and

⁸<https://iascore.in/current-affairs/mains/new-india-literacy-programme-the-changing-need-of-education-in-india>).

⁹<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/econometrends/the-rise-of-online-education-and-its-impact-on-traditional-learning-institutions-52621/>

above who lack literacy skills. The programme is structured into five main components: *Foundational Literacy and Numeracy*, *Critical Life Skills* encompassing financial, digital, legal, healthcare awareness, childcare, and family welfare, *Basic Education* that includes preparatory (grades 3 - 5), middle (grades 6 - 8), and secondary stage (grades 9 - 12) equivalency, *Vocational Skills* with a focus on skill development for local employment opportunities, and *Continuing Education* offering comprehensive adult education courses covering a wide array of subjects such as arts, sciences, technology, culture, sports, and recreation. The programme also encourages the formation and active participation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), voluntary and user groups, as well as other community-based organizations.¹⁰

The execution of this initiative relies on voluntary participation. Learners will be motivated to access localized educational content online using the DIKSHA platform developed by NCERT. The implementation of the scheme takes place in government/ aided schools that are registered under UDISE and managed by the respective State/UT Governments. The programme is carried out through volunteerism in an online format. While training, orientations, and workshops for volunteers will be conducted in person, all necessary materials and resources will be digitally provided for the convenience of registered volunteers. These resources will be easily accessible through various digital channels such as television, radio, cell phone-based free/ open-source applications, and online portals.¹¹

As a forward-thinking measure, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is considering the adoption of the term “Education for All” instead of “Adult Education” by the Ministry. This change is being pursued because the term “Adult Education” does not fully encompass the entire group of individuals aged 15 years and above who lack literacy. The term “Adult Education” typically implies a focus on adults, elders, or the elderly population. Therefore, going forward, the preferred terminology to replace ‘Adult Education’ could be “Education for All.”¹²

Relationship between EFA, NEP 2020 and SDGs

EFA and SDG 4 are part of the broader international effort to promote education as a fundamental right and pathway for sustainable development. NEP 2020 reflects India’s commitment to achieving these global goals by providing a framework for educational reforms that align with quality, equity, and access principles. EFA’s

¹⁰<https://dsel.education.gov.in/scheme/nilp>

¹¹<https://dsel.education.gov.in/scheme/nilp>

¹²<https://nilp.education.gov.in/nilp/#/>

emphasis on reducing disparities in education and SDG 4's focus on inclusive and equitable quality education resonates with NEP 2020's objectives of ensuring that education reaches all segments of society, especially marginalized groups. SDG 4 and NEP 2020 share a common goal of providing quality education. The Policy's emphasis on holistic, experiential, and interdisciplinary learning aligns with SDG 4's call for relevant, practical learning outcomes. NEP 2020's emphasis on lifelong learning and skill development resonates with SDG 4's call to promote technical and vocational education. It is essential for preparing individuals to meet the demands of the modern workforce and promote economic growth. While EFA, SDG 4, and NEP 2020 outline ambitious goals, scholars and practitioners often highlight the challenges in their implementation. These challenges may include issues related to funding, teacher training, infrastructure, curriculum design, monitoring, and evaluation.

The relationship between Education for All, the National Education Policy 2020, and Sustainable Development Goal 4 is characterized by a shared commitment to providing quality, inclusive, and equitable education. While each concept has its unique focus and context, it collectively shapes educational policies and practices that align with global aspirations for a more educated and sustainable future.

History of Youth Participation in Literacy Efforts in India

Youth participation in literacy efforts in India has a rich history dating to various social and educational reform periods. During the pre-independence era, several prominent social reformers and leaders recognized the importance of education and literacy in the upliftment of Indian society. Figures such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Swami Vivekananda advocated for education to empower youth and eradicate social evils. However, widespread literacy efforts were limited due to colonial rule, limited resource access, and socio-economic challenges. After India gained independence in 1947, the government and various organizations focused on expanding education and literacy. The Youth All India Festival (YAIJ) was established in the early 1950s to encourage youth participation in cultural and educational activities. The National Service Scheme (NSS) was launched in 1969 to engage college and university students in community services, including educational initiatives.¹³

The 1980s and the 1990s witnessed a significant emphasis on adult literacy campaigns, in which youth volunteers played a crucial role in spreading awareness and facilitating literacy classes. The National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched

¹³<https://nss.gov.in/youth-affairs/national-service-scheme>

in 1988 to address illiteracy and provide functional literacy for adults. Youth volunteers were mobilized to teach literacy to adults in rural areas. Digital literacy has gained prominence with the advent of the 21st century.¹⁴ Youth play a pivotal role in bridging the digital divide by imparting digital skills to various sections of society. Numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and youth-led initiatives have emerged to promote literacy and education. These efforts often targeted marginalized and underserved communities, aiming to empower them through education.¹⁵

Recently, the Indian government has launched various skill development programmes, such as the Skill India initiative. These programmes aim to equip youth with employable skills, including literacy and numeracy, to enhance their socio-economic prospects. Beyond government programmes, numerous youth-led organizations and movements have emerged to address literacy challenges. These initiatives have focused on innovative teaching methods, digital education, and community engagement to improve literacy rates nationwide (French et al., 2023).

Youth involvement in literacy efforts in India includes volunteering as teachers, organizing awareness campaigns, creating educational content, and leveraging technology for educational purposes. Their contribution has been instrumental in reaching remote and disadvantaged communities with educational opportunities.

Overall, youth participation in literacy efforts in India has evolved from pre-independence advocacy to post-independence campaigns and modern digital literacy initiatives. The energy, enthusiasm, and commitment of young individuals continue to be the driving forces in promoting education and literacy across India.

Scope and Opportunities for Youth Engagement in NILP

The New India Literacy Programme (NILP) is a vital initiative to enhance literacy rates and promote education across India, keeping the larger goal of NEP 2020. Given the nation's youthful population, youth engagement plays a pivotal role in the success and sustainability of this programme.

¹⁴<https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/essay/adult-education-programme-for-literacy-in-india/43977>

¹⁵https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/document_viewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef_0000373684&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach_import_4778a61b-0a8f-4dfd-9b8e-fa694a311de6%3F_%3D373684eng.pdf&locale=en&multi=true&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000373684/PDF/373684eng.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A46%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C54%2C401%2C0%5D

Youth engagement within the NILP encompasses various activities, ranging from volunteerism and peer tutoring to technology-enabled learning platforms. The programme encourages young individuals to participate actively, leveraging their creativity, energy, and passion for social change. Through non-formal and informal learning initiatives, youth engagement can occur within formal educational settings, such as schools, colleges, and communities. Many opportunities are anticipated for youth engagement. Peer tutoring and mentorship programmes can significantly enhance learning outcomes. Engaging youth as tutors and mentors to fellow students fosters a collaborative learning environment where knowledge is shared and reinforced. With the increasing integration of technology in education, youth can play a vital role in promoting digital literacy among their peers and community members.

Initiatives that empower youth to teach digital skills can bridge the digital divide and enhance access to educational resources. Youth engagement can extend beyond classrooms to the larger community. Youth-led awareness campaigns, workshops, and seminars can raise awareness about the importance of literacy, encouraging participation from diverse age groups. Engaging youth in designing and developing curriculum materials and teaching methodologies can infuse fresh perspectives and innovative approaches into the education system. Youth engagement can involve researchers conducting studies to assess the impact and effectiveness of different aspects of the NILP. This ensures that the programme remains responsive to the evolving needs of learners. Through the NILP, youth can develop a sense of civic responsibility and social consciousness. This can lead to active participation in community development projects and initiatives beyond education. Investigating the long-term effects of youth engagement in the NILP on the educational outcomes of participants and the broader community is intended.

Though the New India Literacy Programme aims to address the issue of illiteracy by engaging youth in various educational initiatives, effectively engaging youth in literacy programmes can present several challenges. According to Smith, & Brooks-Gunn (1997), low-income families often struggle to prioritize education due to economic constraints, forcing youth to engage in income-generating activities. This challenge may impede participation of youth in the New India Literacy Programme, mainly if the programme requires significant time commitment or resources.

Kabeer (2005) talks about how cultural beliefs and societal norms can influence attitudes toward education. In some cases, traditional gender roles or prevailing attitudes towards certain castes or ethnicities might discourage youth engagement

in educational initiatives. The New India Literacy Programme must navigate these cultural dynamics to ensure inclusivity and encourage participation.

The perceived relevance of literacy skills among youth may affect their motivation to engage in the programme, says Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001). If the curriculum does not align with their aspirations, interests, or career goals, participants may lack the enthusiasm to participate actively. Tailoring the programme's content to address contemporary needs and challenges can enhance its appeal.

Technological access and digital literacy skills are crucial for personal and professional growth in an increasingly digital world. However, technological, and digital infrastructure access disparities can hinder youth engagement, especially in regions with limited connectivity or resources. According to Warschauer (2004), addressing technological inequalities is essential to ensure equitable participation.

Last, but not least, motivating youth to participate consistently can be challenging. Factors such as a lack of perceived personal benefits, competing priorities, and limited extrinsic rewards may impact sustained engagement. Incorporating interactive and experiential learning approaches, as well as recognizing and celebrating achievements, can boost motivation.

Discussion and Conclusion

A series of milestones and initiatives have marked the evolution of adult education and literacy efforts in India, each contributing to the broader goal of eradicating illiteracy and empowering individuals. The transition from primary to functional literacy and now to the New India Literacy Programme (NILP) reflects a comprehensive approach considering non-literate individuals' diverse needs and challenges. Moreover, including youth engagement in these initiatives has further enriched the landscape of adult education.

The historical context reveals a concerted effort by various stakeholders, including government agencies, social reformers, and youth-led movements, to promote literacy and education. The shift from a colonial perspective on adult education to a more inclusive approach aligns with global commitments such as Education for All and Sustainable Development Goal 4. The emergence of youth participation and engagement within literacy programmes signifies a recognition of India's youthful demographic dividend. Youth engagement contributes to improving literacy rates and holds the potential to shape nation's future by nurturing informed and empowered citizens.

The New India Literacy Programme (NILP) is a testament to India's dedication towards education for all. The programme's multi-pronged approach, encompassing foundational literacy, life skills, primary education, vocational skills, and continuing education, demonstrates a holistic understanding of individual development. By incorporating youth engagement, NILP taps into the energy and creativity of the younger generation, leveraging their enthusiasm to drive positive change. Youth can actively contribute to the programme's success through peer tutoring, mentorship, digital literacy advocacy, and curriculum design.

However, as with any ambitious initiative, challenges abound. Economic constraints, cultural norms, and perceptions of relevance could hinder youth participation. Ensuring inclusivity, particularly among marginalized groups, requires sensitivity to local dynamics. Bridging the technological divide is essential to ensure equitable access to the programme's benefits. Sustaining youth engagement over the long term demands careful attention to motivation and incentives.

In conclusion, the New India Literacy Programme represents a significant step towards achieving comprehensive education and literacy for all individuals above the age of 15. The programme's emphasis on youth engagement reflects a forward-looking approach that capitalizes on the potential of young individuals to drive social change. Youth engagement in NILP represents a dynamic force that can shape the programme's success and impact. The rich history of youth involvement in literacy efforts in India, from pre-independence visionaries to modern-day digital advocates, underscores young individuals' profound impact on education and social development. By integrating youth into imparting literacy and education, the NILP addresses the immediate challenge of illiteracy and cultivates a culture of lifelong learning and empowerment. By harnessing their energy, creativity, and enthusiasm, young individuals can bridge gaps in access to education, promote digital literacy, and drive positive change in communities across India.

The historical journey of adult education in India underscores the nation's commitment to continuous improvement and adaptation in response to changing needs. As the NILP takes centre stage, the focus on youth engagement ensures that education remains a dynamic force which responds to the demands of a rapidly evolving world. By fostering a sense of civic responsibility, promoting digital literacy, and tailoring educational content to contemporary aspirations, the programme lays the foundation for a more informed, skilled, and participatory citizenry.

While challenges exist, the dedication to inclusivity, equity, and quality education will guide the implementation of the NILP. The programme can overcome obstacles

and make meaningful progress through strategic measures, such as addressing economic constraints, challenging cultural norms, and enhancing technological access. Ultimately, emphasizing youth engagement, the New India Literacy Programme offers a promising pathway towards a more literate, empowered, and prosperous nation. To ensure the success of NILP, challenges related to access, retention, and educational quality must be taken care of to ensure the NILP's success in fostering a literate and empowered youth population in India.

In the broader context of Education for All, the National Education Policy 2020, and Sustainable Development Goal 4, youth engagement in NILP aligns with the global vision of providing quality education for everyone. As the programme taps into the potential of youth, it propels India towards a future where education is not only a tool for personal advancement but a catalyst for societal progress and sustainable development. In this journey, the combined efforts of government bodies, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, communities, and, most importantly, the enthusiastic and committed youth of India will determine the success of the New India Literacy Programme. As we move forward, let us recognize the transformative power of education, the unwavering spirit of youth, and the collective determination to create a literate and empowered new India.

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Educational Challenges among Migrant Workers' Children: Evidences from Odisha

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Abstract

Education at the primary stage is an essential component for shaping the future of the nation. The Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009 ensures that all children between the age group of 6 to 14 years have access to free and compulsory primary education. In India, a sizeable portion of children are enrolled but they are not attending school or have left school, which includes the children of migrant workers. Migration is one aspect that explains why children are not in school. Parents move for several months throughout the year in search of livelihood. This paper aims to highlight the challenges in educational attainment among the children of migrant workers. The lives of the migrant children from poor families have not dramatically changed due to the implementation of RTE Act. Families with poor socio-economic conditions are forced to migrate in search of employment. Children who migrate with their families generally live in miserable conditions. They have to work with their parents to support their household, which disrupts their educational access and opportunities. Migrant children attend school with difficulties and drop out at substantial rates due to the ignorance and poor socio-economic condition of the parents, migration and language barrier, improper implementation of government schemes including mismanagement of seasonal hostels. This paper broadly reflects how migration imposes several challenges in educational attainment of underprivileged children in India with a focus on Odisha.

Keywords: *Right to education, seasonal migration, children, inequality.*

1. Introduction

Education is a crucial component of preparing children for the future as human capital is essential for maintaining social, political, and economic growth in any community. As human capital is prominently included in the numerous global agendas

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and is connected to sustainable growth, it has drawn the attention of policymakers and academics. The world-wide aim of sustainable economic growth will be hard to attain without considerable spending on human capital (World Bank, 1993). Education has the potential to be an important instrument for reducing unemployment and poverty. Primary schooling is recognised as a fundamental human right, which is essential for the growth of individual and society as well (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2008).

The importance of education for financial prosperity has been acknowledged by numerous educational policies and plans, social scientists, and economists. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments in India emphasised the increasing role of panchayats in education, especially in basic education. The 86th amendment to the constitution, which was adopted in 2002, further elevated education to the level of a fundamental right. When it comes to migrant children's education, neither the central nor state governments have well-defined policies or programmes that address their concerns. Education for India's invisible migrant children remain an unattainable dream. In terms of growth in the economy, Odisha is one of India's poorest states and an important supplier of migrant labour. Moving to another state in pursuit of job and a higher wage is a common option when it comes to making a living and supporting a household. People from the south-west of Odisha, particularly those in the Kalahandi-Balangir-Koraput (KBK) districts; experience distress migration as a result of the lack of employment opportunities (Meher, 2019; Mishra, 2020).

The districts where these migrant workers come from have high rate of illiteracy and dropouts (Malik, 2016; Pedi & Adabar, 2020). The migrant children who move with their families between states and within the states is an alarming indication of an unequal Indian educational system (Coffey, 2013). It is matter of concern, that the dropout rate in Odisha has been increasing over time. The dropout rate is the percentage of students who fail to complete a specific level of education. In Odisha, the primary dropout rate has steadily increased from 0.40 percent in 2012–2013 to 4.20 percent in 2016–2017 and 5.81 percent in 2017–2018 (Planning & Convergence Department, 2019). The window of opportunity for children of migrant families is limited and millions of children traverse borders between states with their parents. The contractors, employers, and parents constantly bring small hands into the labour process on working sites. Therefore, education is crucial to addressing the issues of migration.

1.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Perspective

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) defines labour migration as “the movement of people for employment from their home state to another state.” *Dadan* labour is an arrangement for inter-state migration for labour work in Odisha and in other states. They get hired in Odisha from different regions of the state by contractors or agencies, for labour work outside the state. Children get affected by migration when they are left behind or migrate with parents who are poor and have lower incomes.

In 1964, the term “human capital” was coined by Gary Becker in his book *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education*. He regarded schooling as a form of investment in human resources that increases a person’s capacity for performance by fostering their intellectual development. Children of low-income migrant families who struggle to get a quality foundational education or who drop out of school are more likely to have trouble in securing employment and earning potential in later life. They also face substantial barriers to achieving greater technical skill development, which ends up making them poor for the rest of their lives and leaving their children in poverty. Individuals who are denied the opportunity to participate in society as a whole are unable to meet their educational requirements and standards due to poverty and a lack of resources (Bhatty, 1998).

Completion of education is directly related to socio-economic class. Regardless of their educational background or desire to learn, students from lower socio-economic origins are frequently denied the same opportunities as students from wealthier families. Students who come from economically disadvantaged and migrant families find themselves supporting financially, at home and work. This circumstance breeds social class inequality. Pierre Bourdieu and Passeron in their book *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture* (1990) have studied how cultural capital, or cultural knowledge functions as a metaphorical currency that enables individuals of the upper and middle classes to have more cultural capital than lower-class families (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

1.2 Objectives

- To understand the migration situation in India and Odisha.
- To examine the provisions for migrant children in the RTE Act.
- To identify the barriers confronted by migrant children in accessing education.

The present study has reviewed different literature, pertinent to the theme. Secondary data is gathered from a wide range of sources like the economic survey of Odisha, websites, different books, journals, newspapers, the census reports, NGO reports, and other sources. The analysis focuses on the factors that influence disparities among migrant children's educational attainment. The discussion of the findings is carried out in the context of the published literature.

2. Overview of Migration in India

There are 450 million internal migrants and 54 million inter-state migrants in India (Registrar General and Census Commissioner, 2011). According to the migration pattern: Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, and Rajasthan are the primary source states of migrants; whereas Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Kerala are considered to be the leading destination states (Dandekar & Ghai, 2020). According to the 2011 Census, intra-district, inter-district, inter-state, and international migrants made up approximately 22%, 10.0%, 4.7%, and 0.44% of the population, respectively. Census 2011 has witnessed an increase in both intra-district and inter-district migration compared to the 2001 and 1991 Census (Singh & Biradar, 2022). There are 92.95 million migrant children living in India; 47.05 million of them are girls (Registrar General and Census Commissioner, 2011). Children constitute one out of every five migrants in India. Girls constitute more than 14% of all female migrants. Boys under the age of 19 are found to be more than 31% of all male migrants. The percentage of female migrants (0-19 years) is higher among children migrants, making up to 55.4% of all children migrants (Singh & Biradar, 2022).

2.1 Migration scenario in Odisha

As per Census 2001 in Odisha, there were 9.3 lakh out-migrants in the state. Subsequently the number rose to 13 lakhs as per 2011 Census. People have chosen Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu as the first, second and third most popular destinations respectively (Praharaj, 2017). In 2001, 3.8 lakh people had left the state for work or for other reasons relating to their employment, making up about 35% of all migrants. The figure, however, is higher than the other migration-related variables. Since there were more job prospects in the above-mentioned states, individuals began migrating there in search of employment (Pedi & Adabar, 2020). A significant and persistent problem in the rural districts of Odisha has been seasonal migration caused due to financial constraints. During the pandemic, 8.5 lakh migrants returned to Odisha. The majority of them returned from Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Kerala (Planning & Convergence Department, 2021).

3. Right to Education Act and Provisions for Migrant Children

The Indian government introduced the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2000-2001. It was implemented in compliance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The subsequent measures are taken in order to achieve the goal of universalizing elementary education and promoting equity among the states. The Eighty-Six Amendment Act of 2002 added Article 21-A to the Indian Constitution, which declared all children between the age group of six and fourteen years to be entitled for free and compulsory education as a fundamental right. All children, including those of migrant workers, between 6 to 14 years of age are entitled to free and compulsory elementary education, that is of an equal standard under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act of 2009. The RTE Act specifies guidelines and requirements for the opening of elementary schools in neighbourhoods. After the RTE Act came into effect in 2010, India made significant progress towards attaining universal elementary education (Chandrasekhar & Bhattacharya, 2018).

The RTE Act successfully increased enrolment rates in India by making primary education free and mandatory for all students. However, it is widely known that children from families with short-term migrants still remain deprived (Kumar et al., 2018). In accordance with RTE Section 9(k), it is the local authority's duty, to ensure the admission of children from migrant households. Large-scale labour migration took place from tribal-populated districts such as Sundargarh, Nuapada, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Rayagada, and Nabrangpur in the Balangir region of Odisha. Several components of the RTE Act related to migrant children have not yet been accomplished in the districts after many years of implementation. The majority of local authorities do not have access to accurate information about the enrolment and continuation of migrant children, and they are not familiar with all the guidelines of RTE Act (Malik, 2016; Pati, 2020). Children from migrant families, both those who stay in the village and those who migrate with their parents, are not appropriately monitored or supervised by the local authorities when they are enrolled.

They also lack information on the number of children who travel with their families and the others who stay in seasonal hostels. Due to lack of monitoring and supervision, the retention rate of these children is low with increasing dropout rates (Das & Santhakumar, 2018). The child has the right to request transfer to any other school, excluding private, unaided and special category schools. The head teacher or person in charge of the school is expected to immediately issue a transfer certificate. Government schools are sometimes not available close to locations of employment, and their financial circumstances exclude enrolment in private schools

(Rajan, 2022). Migrant parents are facing difficulties in enrolling their children once more after taking a transfer certificate from their native school.

3.1 Seasonal hostels in Odisha

The Odisha State Education Programme Authority (OSEPA), with financial assistance from the central government, opened seasonal hostels in 2004 to give children an improved environment for learning. The Odisha government addressed the challenges by establishing seasonal hostels for children of migratory families at both the origin and destination locations. In order to retain the children of migrant families in the destination districts of Cuttack and Khordha as well as the migration-prone districts of Kalahandi, Nuapada, Balangir, and Bargarh, the Ministry of Human Resource Development's (MHRD) Project Approval Board has approved the construction of seasonal dormitories. These hostels also can check the dropout rate and eliminate child labour in the state (Department of School and Mass Education, 2016). A seasonal hostel is open for six or nine months. The seasonally accessible hostel normally begins in October and ends in June. The children keep attending school until their parents come back.

On the work site, the hostel is residential at the source point and non-residential at the destination point. The hostel superintendents were neither trained nor qualified, the hostel rooms were overcrowded, and even basic facilities were unavailable (Pattanaik, 2020). Due to the decline of seasonal hostels in Balangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, more than 5,000 children have been forced to leave their homes with their parents and are deprived of education (Biswal, 2020). Based on the performance of the SSA in the district in 2014-15, the Odisha Primary Education Project Authority (OPEPA) set a target of enrolling 3,500 children of migrants. It was claimed that the administration was failing to make payments to such centres. Hostels have limited availability in areas located in western Odisha like Muribahal, Turekela, and Belpada that are vulnerable to migration. The total number of these hostels also appear to be declining in the Turekela and Patnagarh blocks.

4. Barriers for Children of Migrant Workers

Children of migrant workers confront range of challenges in accessing elementary education. Even if they are enrolled, retention becomes a problem. Their educational attainment remains lower due to several issues like illiteracy and poor socio-economic condition of the parents, lack of awareness about government provisions and schemes, language barrier due to migration to a new destination and other related issues. In this section there is a special focus on children of migrant workers in Odisha.

4.1 Parents' perception and illiteracy

In order to attain universal primary education, children must enrol in school and remain there for at least eight years. The influence of parental perceptions on the importance of education in achieving the goal is essential. Education-related attitudes have been shown to be essential for raising community awareness, encouraging neighbourly cooperation, and enhancing local government and school accountability for delivering high-quality services (Thapa & Sarkar, 2018). Even in the most backward regions of Odisha, research has proven that poor parents have a low opinion of the importance of education (Pattanaik, & Gundemeda, 2016). Their vulnerable living conditions, high levels of illiteracy, and widespread poverty have only worsened their situation (Das, 2016).

According to the 2011 Census, Odisha's literacy rate is 72.9 percent. The literacy rate for men in rural areas is 79.6 percent, compared to 60.7 percent for women. The majority of migrant workers in Odisha come from the districts with the lowest literacy rates, including Nabarangapur (46.43 percent), Malkangiri (48.5 percent), Koraput (49.51 percent), and Rayagada (49.56 percent) Gajapati (53.49 percent), Nuapada (57.35 percent), and Kalahandi (59.22 percent). Migrant children drop out of schools and struggle on a daily basis in order to stay enrolled and participate in the teaching-learning process. Through the use of data that has been examined from the 2005-2006 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), the most important indicators of school dropouts in India were found to be household size and parental education. Since the majority of tribal people live in poverty and depend on a subsistence economy, they migrate to different places for their livelihood (Paltasingh & Paliwal, 2014). It is difficult for most of them to afford schooling for their children. As a result, tribal migrant parents are not interested in sending their children to school because they are not conscious of the importance of formal education (Naik, 2017). For the migrant families, children contribute to the family income through their participation and assistance in the wage work. As a result, school attendance and retention remain a challenge.

4.2 Seasonal migration

In Odisha the agricultural sector is affected due to several factors like natural disasters, lack of irrigation, poor credit facilities to the farmers, poor marketing strategies and so on. The majority of the rural population migrates periodically to other places in search of alternative livelihood options during the lean period (Nanda, 2020; Mishra, 2020). In addition to the other push and pull factors, economic issues

are thought to have a substantial impact on the migration process. The social aspects that influence the seasonal migrating process include family and community networks, social ties and linkages. Despite several limitations in some instances, migrants can overcome social exclusion and improve their socio-economic status (Keshri and Bhagat, 2012). According to a study by the *Anchalika Jana Seva Anusthan* (AJSA), in Balangir (Odisha) nearly 4,000 individuals leave the KBK region each year for getting engaged in the informal economy in few southern states (AJSA, 2012).

The main destinations of distress seasonal migration are Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh, where migrants work as bonded workers in brick kilns (Mishra, 2020). Many brick kiln workers bring their families with them and stay for extended periods of time. According to AJSA report, children who accompany their parents to work, sometimes experience verbal and physical abuse in addition to health problems. Due to the *pathuria* system or the lack of childcare options in the community, parents bring their kids with them. Under this system, labour agents would lend money for a couple and one or two children. These children would turn partially dried bricks or mould clay into balls. Children may simply flip bricks and move between rows. Some of the children are school dropouts, while others have never attended.

The scheduled tribe (ST) population has dominated distressed seasonal migration, followed by other backward classes (OBCs) and scheduled castes (SCs) (Meher, 2019). In most cases, entire families migrate, including children and women (Das, 2016; Nanda, 2020). School going children frequently travel with their parents. The employer invariably drags little hands and feet into the working process, both at the source and areas of destination. Children and families have been seen migrating to the urban and relatively developed regions of Odisha like Cuttack and Khordha districts from Nayagarh, Ganjam, Kandhamal, Nabarangapur, Gajapati, Bolangir, Mayurbhanj, Deogarh, Boudh, and other districts (Chandrasekhar and Sahoo, 2018). As per 2011 Census, the proportion of children who attended school in areas categorised as high out-migration prone was clearly lower as compared to other districts in rural Odisha. Children who skip schools during the scheduled academic period are negatively impacted. Seasonal migration causes a loss of study time, for which students drop out before they complete primary education. These young children are compelled to work as child labourers and enter the workforce too early.

4.3 Poor socio-economic condition of parents

Rural poverty and seasonal migration have substantially increased in Odisha over the past few decades. The tribal population is comparatively poor in comparison to the state population, with majority of them living below the poverty line. Many tribal regions in Odisha have experienced large-scale migration, which has alienated people from their own location and resources. Poverty also has an impact on the education of tribal children. The prospect of employment in the city accompanied by expanding urbanisation and industrialization, attracts most of these migrants from rural and tribal areas (Majhi & Mallick, 2019). They earn a livelihood by working in unorganised sectors that are plagued by issues like illiteracy, low income, unhygienic housing, and other adverse circumstances.

The children are the most neglected in households where both parents work. School-going children suffer the most since there is not enough space in the house, enough light, or enough electricity supply for studying (ST & SC Development Department, 2020). They would rather put their children to work and earn a living than send them to school. Poverty owing to a lack of resources makes schooling impossible for children from families with low incomes (Paltasingh & Dash, 2016). Due to the scarcity of economic prospects in their home regions, members of the SCs known as Ganda frequently migrate from Bargarh district, located in western part of Odisha (Biswal, 2020). In both the places of origin and destination, children from migrant families struggle to get proper schooling.

4.4 Language barrier

Education in one's native language is important for inclusivity as it enhances learning outcomes. This is critical, especially in primary school, to eliminate knowledge gaps and accelerate learning. The main reason for dropouts among tribal students is language barrier. There are efforts underway to educate tribal migrant students in their native tongue. This has helped in the retention of pupils in primary school (Soren, 2016). Children who leave their native school by obtaining a transfer certificate move to other states such as West Bengal, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. These states lack the essential infrastructure for schooling of migrant children and teach in a language other than their mother tongue (Das & Santhakumar, 2018). As a result, a large number of parents do not want their children to be enrolled.

4.5 Challenges during pandemic

COVID-19 has caused panic and become a disaster in Indian history. During

the pandemic, migrant workers faced numerous challenges. Workplaces were closed due to the government instruction for shutdown. Many migrant workers and their families remained hungry as a result of wage losses, had difficulties in finding shelter, and could not have any alternative livelihood sources. They then began walking back home with their families and children, as they had no other option because of the lockdown. It was extremely difficult to offer provisions related to education, health, safety measures, and means of subsistence due to the exceptional and overwhelming influx of return-migrant workers to their native areas; following the lockdown throughout the country (Paltasingh & Bhue, 2021). Nationwide, the pandemic has had a considerable impact on the education sector.

The majority of schools and seasonal hostels had closed and shifted to online learning. The seasonal hostel students were insufficiently supported with technical devices and they were unable to pursue their education online. In the KBK areas of Odisha, families lack access to power as well as basic amenities like internet connection, mobile phones, internet connectivity (Kumari & Nookathoti, 2020). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, children who were left with their grandparents or other family members; lost their education as a result of the closure of the schools. In the second wave of the pandemic due to closure of schools and seasonal hostels, a significant number of vulnerable children in the school-going age were forced to discontinue their education and move with their parents to work location.

5. Suggestions and Conclusion

India made significant progress towards universal elementary schooling by enacting the RTE Act in 2010. It has been effective in raising nation-wide enrolment rates. However, children from families with temporary migrants could not avail the benefit of primary education. In Odisha, allocations for the weaker or vulnerable groups including the children of migrant workers, remain unfulfilled. Seasonal migration is caused by issues such as a lack of economic opportunities, poverty, landlessness, indebtedness, the failure of public policies to produce employment and a means of subsistence in their original place, and so on.

Several factors connected to family poverty and socio-economic position play a significant role in providing basic education to migrant children. Improving the standard of seasonal hostels and instructional as well as infrastructure facilities in government schools is also urgently needed. Many children discontinue schooling and drop out in migrant-prone districts because of lack of properly functioning seasonal hostels. There should be permanent hostels established by the central and state governments

to facilitate completion of elementary education in place of seasonal hostels. Through different government and non-government organisations, awareness needs to be created for a better understanding on the importance of elementary education among migrant parents. Educational policies need to address the challenges confronted by the migrant workers and their children who could be the potential human resources of the nation.

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‘Right to Lifelong Learning’ and Sustainable Development Goals: An Overview

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Abstract

Learning is a continuous and lifelong process that transcends age boundaries. However, many individuals struggle to engage in organised educational activities, resulting in a lack of literacy skills. Adult education and lifelong learning are crucial components of the education system as it creates a conducive environment for people to actively participate in society, by acquiring knowledge and skills. It empowers individuals and enhances community productivity. Lifelong learning comprises a range of aspects, such as occupational skills, basic education, ongoing education, essential life skills, and other areas that change and evolve over time. This paper discusses the concept of lifelong learning and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Lifelong learning is a process that contributes to a sustainable world through education for sustainable development. The SDGs are part of United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for sustainable development adopted in 2015 as ‘a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity’. SDG 4 lays emphasis on quality education and inclusive education. This paper attempts to highlight the inclusive and quality education as emphasized in SDG 4. Since lifelong learning is an ongoing process and in order to attain the ultimate objectives of inclusive, high-quality education and sustainable development on a global scale, SDG 4 emphasizes the necessity and significance of policies and initiatives for its expansion.

Keywords: *Lifelong learning, sustainable development, Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 4, inclusive and quality education.*

Introduction

Education is an important determinant that significantly contributes to the progress of society. The term “Education for All” has been widely used and recognised globally for many years. Adult education is an effective method for promoting literacy, expanding knowledge, and involving individuals from all sections of society,

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irrespective of their age and region. The concept of adult education has evolved into a comprehensive approach known as lifelong learning. This approach places particular emphasis on providing educational opportunities to individuals from diverse groups, including disadvantaged and marginalised.

Sustainable development is the pursuit of three goals—economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability that are all essential to individual's and communities' well-being. Sustainable development (SD) can be defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (UN, 1987). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a plan of action for making the world a better and more stable place for all. ‘Poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice’ are some of the issues they address.

In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were laid down and emphasised on the issues of national importance. It laid out eight targets that were to be met by 2015. First, the world needed to end extreme poverty and hunger; second, everyone should have access to a primary education; third, women should have more power and influence; fourth, infant mortality should be reduced; fifth, maternal health should be improved; sixth, HIV/AIDS and malaria should be eradicated; seventh, environmental sustainability should be maintained; and eighth, a global partnership for development should be established (UN, 2000). The number of objectives was also expanded from eight to seventeen with the introduction of a new, more ambitious plan on January 1, 2016. The goals were as follows:

“(1) no poverty; (2) zero hunger; (3) good health and well-being; (4) quality education; (5) gender equality; (6) clean water and sanitation; (7) affordable and clean energy; (8) decent work and economic growth; (9) industry, innovation and infrastructure; (10) reduced inequalities; (11) sustainable cities and communities; (12) responsible consumption and production; (13) climate action; (14) life below water; (15) life on land; (16) peace, justice and strong institutions; (17) partnership for the goals” (UN, 2020).

Gradually, in 2015, the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs were adopted. The 17 goals are further broken down into 169 specific objectives that focus on ‘economic growth, social development and environmental protection’. The MDGs primarily aimed at developing nations, but the SDGs are global in scope. In the present paper, an attempt is made to discuss the concept of lifelong learning and sustainable development. The SDG 4 which stresses on quality education is highlighted. How is

India looking at SDG 4? What efforts are laid by the government? Are the 17 SDGs interrelated? Does education play a crucial role in national development? How are the various agencies making efforts to work together for achieving SDG 4? These are some of the issues which are emphasised in the paper.

Methodology

The study adopts content analysis method, which is mostly qualitative. The data for the research work was collected using secondary sources like reports, policy documents, websites, research articles and books.

Figure 1: SDG 4: Quality Education*



*Source: United Nations in India <https://in.one.un.org/page/sustainable-development-goals/quality-education-in-india-sdg-4/>

The SDGs envision a society in which individuals have equitable access to high-quality education across all levels. Goal 4, which is intended to be completed by 2030, is one of the SDGs, and the SDG declaration has put out an array of criteria to achieve this goal. Goal 4 of SDG focuses on ‘quality education’. “A quality education is the foundation of sustainable development, and therefore of the Sustainable Development Goals. As a policy intervention, education is a force multiplier which enables self-reliance, boosts economic growth by enhancing skills, and improves people’s lives by opening up opportunities for better livelihoods” (UN, SDG 4). To promote inclusive and equitable education for all, quality education and lifelong learning are essential. SDGs are expected to be implemented with participation from governments and society, thereby turning them into a societal movement, in keeping with emphasis on the “no one is left behind” principle.

Table 1: Target and Description of SDG 4 as highlighted by United Nations

S.No.	Target	Description
1.	4.1	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
2.	4.2	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
3.	4.3	By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.
4.	4.4	By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
5.	4.5	By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.
6.	4.6	By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.
7.	4.7	By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
8.	4.a	Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.
9.	4.b	By 2030, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.
10.	4.c	By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.

*Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>)

The above table illustrates the targets of the SDG 4 and it is quite evident that all possible aspects of education are taken into consideration. India's planned economy

and five-year plans have put the country on the path to sustainable development. The goal of these strategies is to promote equality of opportunity and economic growth by using measurable indicators of human progress. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), the National Rural Health Mission (NHRM), the Integrated Child Development Programme (ICDP), the Midday Meal Programme (MDP) (see, Shah, 2017, June), the Universalization of School Education through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), and the Total Sanitation Drive (TSD) are all policies and programmes with the goal of improving people's lives. Citizens are given more agency through Right to Information Act of 2005, and efforts are made to increase accountability among public officials and transparency in government. Community members are actively engaged in the execution of these development schemes at the local level through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) (Agrawal, 2011).

Recognising the significance of sustainability issues, the Supreme Court in 1992 issued a landmark ruling whereby Environmental Education (EE) became mandatory in the formal education. For this, the National Council of Education, Research, and Training (NCERT) was given the responsibility of creation and regular revisions of the National Curriculum Framework (Viswanath, 2014: 190). Later in 2009, Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act became a law on April 1, 2010 and provided a legal mechanism by which people's right to education can be asserted which was earlier denied to them. The Article 21 of the Indian Constitution states, 'every child between the ages of 6 and 14 years has a fundamental right to education, which the state shall provide in such manner as the state may by law determine' (for details on Right to Education (RTE), see Shah, 2017). Since 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasised on the right to education as a fundamental human right. Thus, now the governments have a responsibility to uphold the RTE and can be held liable for any violation that occur at their end. So, education came to the forefront and began to be provided to all.

With higher rates of enrolment and graduation from primary and elementary school, India has made great strides towards its goal of universal primary education. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is aligned with SDG 4 and intends to make sure that all the children have accessibility to a high-quality education throughout their lives. According to Haripriya and Prema (2023) the NEP 2020 fosters the development of critical thinking abilities and encourages a wide-ranging approach to education, providing students with the necessary tools to prosper in an intricate and interconnected world. Moreover, the NEP recognises the need of vocational training and skill enhancement, which is crucial for creating a workforce that is not only educated but also employable. This aspect of the NEP significantly contributes to the achievement of SDG 4's objective of providing inclusive and equitable quality education by making it accessible to marginalised communities.

Policies on Lifelong Learning

In today's competitive world, learning cannot be limited to a particular period, rather there is need for learning opportunities throughout life both for job opportunities and personal satisfaction. UNESCO highlighted that, "in order to face our interconnected global challenges, we must ensure the right to lifelong learning by providing all learners - of all ages in all contexts - the knowledge and skills they need to realise their full potential and live with dignity."² Adult education and lifelong learning "continues to evolve as new groups of people in need are identified, new educational objectives are discovered, new methods and techniques of delivery of services become available" (Shah, 1999: 15).

The concept of lifelong learning started expanding during the 1960s. In the international forum some writers like Paolo Freire and Ivan Illich started evaluations of rigid education systems and came forward with concept of lifelong learning. Interest in lifelong education was rekindled by Edgar Faure's seminal 1972 report, 'Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow' which was based on 'criticisms of the authoritarian, uniform, monolithic, and unequal' education systems of the time. The report advocated lifelong learning as a measure for educational reform and creating individuals needed to build a "learning society" (UNESCO, 1972: xxxiii).

Edgar Faure was appointed by OECD in early 1970s to look into the kind of education required for a 'future-oriented society', bringing lifelong learning back onto the international educational policy stage. After World War II, the long economic prosperity was beginning to wane, and the question arose whether the world's natural resources could really last forever. It took 20 years for another seminal report by Jacques Delors - 'Learning: The Treasure Within', published by UNESCO, to come out (Vieira, 2019: 4-5). By the 1990s, there was widespread agreement that a new comprehensive policy framework for education was necessary. The year 1996 marks a landmark year in the realm of lifelong learning as European Union (EU) declared it as 'Year of Learning' and the United Kingdom (UK) launched 'Learning Revolution' (Brown, 2018: 315). Thus, it prompted international policy changes and initiatives to promote lifelong education.

'Learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be' were envisioned as the four pillars, supporting a future society, in Delors's report, which argued that lifelong learning was critical to economic growth and social

²<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/right-lifelong-learning-why-adult-education-matters>

cohesion. Brown (2018: 317) pointed out that its emphasis was on education that aids in an individual's total progress, including 'mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic appreciation, and spirituality (learning to be); education to avoid conflict or calmly resolve it; and education to discover other people amidst diversity (learning to live together); proficiency of learning tools (learning to know); education to prepare individuals for future work, including innovation and adaptation of learning to future work (learning to do)'.

'Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives' was published by UNESCO in 2017. This document differentiates the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural learning objectives for all SDGs, and makes reference to the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve the goals, as well as the motivation and attitudes that can support them (UNESCO, 2017). The concept of "lifelong learning for all" is central to SDG 4. When a former UNESCO staffer, Carlos Vargas was asked the significance of lifelong learning being included in SDG 4, he argued that "Lifelong learning apparently advantages everyone and disadvantages no-one" (Elfert, 2019).

UNESCO's Futures of Education Report, titled 'Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education', emphasised the importance of the 'right to lifelong and life-wide learning' (UNESCO, 2021). The report was published in November 2021. Moreover, the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) provides a comprehensive picture of the measures required to ensure the continuous learning throughout one's life (UNESCO, 2022). It offers a lucid and all-encompassing depiction of the worldwide status of adult learning and education. It demonstrates that although there is progress, the majority of marginalised and disadvantaged groups, such as indigenous learners, rural populations, older citizens, and people with disabilities, are lacking access to opportunities for learning. Some of the crucial points highlighted were the need for greater participation and inclusion, need for more financing, need for stronger policies, progress in governance, improved quality, and importance of citizenship education.

Thus, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should not be viewed in isolation. In fact, many of the objectives can be seen as interrelated. Studies on the advantages of education have found that those with education are more likely to have higher-paying jobs, better health, greater community involvement, and are more engaged citizens. Government spending on industries, innovations, and infrastructures has been shown to correlate with higher rates of educational participation. This advocates that education can serve as a potent "engine" to create a harmonious and

equitable community. Educators today also prioritise gender equality (SDG 5), which is reflected in efforts for upsurge in female students majoring in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) (Panetta & Williams, 2018).

It has been shown that a highly skilled labour force is a key factor in attaining SDG 8's goal of "decent work and strong economic growth", which in turn aid in the fight against poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2). Goals 12 and 13 of the Sustainable Development Agenda emphasise the importance of educating future generations to care for our planet. The final SDG - SDG 17, emphasises on partnerships and highlights the need for governments to collaborate and coordinate with a variety of private and non-profit sector stakeholders. However, Goal 17 makes no mention of education at all in its explanation. That's not in line with what we know from studies about the positive effects of education and training on people's lives and on society as a whole, which is why all the other SDGs touch on those topics. Therefore, it may be helpful to learn more about the ways in which people, educational institutions, related stakeholders, and governments can collaborate to accomplish SGG 4 and other Goals.

Leave No One Behind

United Nations Secretary General António Guterres highlighted the importance of inclusiveness in the following words,

"The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015, provide a coherent holistic framework for addressing these challenges and their interconnections ... They require member states to address the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner. Their implementation must embody the principles of inclusiveness, integration and 'leaving no one behind'" (António Guterres, SDGs 2017: 9).³

So, the principle of universality 'Leave No One Behind' is at the heart of this 2030 global agenda. UNESCO's Institute of Statistics shows that there are 771 million illiterate adults worldwide, and a significant number of individuals also lack skills and knowledge in using digital platforms.⁴ While there has been progress in certain regions, disparities in access to educational opportunities persist. Ensuring that these aims are applicable to all governments and actors is critical for their actualization. Development in all its forms must be accessible to people everywhere, ensuring the active engagement of all, particularly susceptible and underprivileged groups.

³<https://www.sustainablegoals.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/008-009-SDG-GUTERRES.pdf>

⁴<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/right-lifelong-learning-why-adult-education-matters>

In India, the government have expressed strong support for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs at national and international meetings, demonstrating the Government of India's unwavering dedication to the goals. Globally, India plays a pivotal role in determining the success of the SDGs with the support of various policy initiatives like '*sab ka saath, sab ka vikas*' or 'development with all, and for all' for inclusive development which goes well with the SDGs. On 25 September, 2015 Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "These objectives reflect our evolving understanding of the social, economic, and environmental links that define our lives."⁵ India's policy institute, NITI Aayog, is in charge of coordinating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). When it comes to the SDGs and their targets, NITI Aayog has mapped out the relevant schemes and determined which ministries will be responsible for achieving each goal. By emphasising the interdependence of the SDGs across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, the government has taken a holistic view of sustainable development.

Conclusion

Lifelong learning plays a crucial role in facilitating the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', the SDG 4 places education at the centre of the sustainable development debate. Learning is a continuous and lifelong process. Goal 4 emphasises the need for, and the role of policies and initiatives that support lifelong learning in order to reach the ultimate goal of quality education and sustainable development on a global scale. However, the significance of lifelong learning is not a new concept, as numerous global initiatives over the years have highlighted the essential role of lifelong learning in fostering progress. There is need for 'right to lifelong and life-wide learning' to make it accessible to all. Moreover, the 17 SDGs are universal in nature and thus apply to all nations of the world.

The transmission of high-quality education within the community is significantly impacted by the roles of numerous policies and platforms involved with the implementation of diverse adult education programmes. Recently for widening the accessibility of education to all, a number of online courses are offered by various institutions and a variety of online platforms have emerged. These are successfully providing education in the relevant areas of specialisation for ease and comfort. For instance, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) under SWAYAM and OERs (Open Educational Resources) (for details see Bordoloi, Das and Das, 2020) operate in India for increasing sustainable and lifelong learning prospects.

⁵<https://www.livemint.com/Politics/XQNnmExc5ruApWC3oCDrXK/Full-text-of-Narendra-Modis-speech-at-UNGA-summit.html>

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Enhancing Elderly Well-Being through Progressive Community Care Initiatives: The Kerala Paradigm

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Abstract

The World Health Organisation's policy framework on active ageing made life-long learning a fundamental component. The growing number of older persons continues to be the driving force behind educational gerontology. In pursuit of quality living, individuals seek a balance between the duration and fulfilment of their lives. However, without a supportive environment, compromised quality of life and unhappiness may prevail. This paper focuses on the burgeoning elderly population in India's southern state of Kerala, highlighting the significance of progressive community care initiatives. Kerala's demographic landscape is experiencing a notable shift with growing elderly population, posing challenges to policymakers and community leaders. Progressive community care initiatives such as integrated healthcare services, continuous learning opportunities, social support networks, and community engagement platforms emerge as pivotal solutions. These initiatives aim to create nurturing environments conducive to the elderly's well-being and autonomy. Elderly people gain empowerment from education in numerous ways, one of which is the improvement of health outcomes and practices. Hence, by exploring Kerala's paradigm of progressive community care, this paper seeks to unravel the complexities of elderly well-being and societal harmony.

Keywords: *Elderly population, well-being, ageing, quality of life, carers, care initiatives.*

Introduction

As the global population continues to age at an accelerated pace, more people are entering grey hair brackets (Bloom, 2016). Based on the reports of the World

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Health Organisation (WHO) within the next six years, one in six people will be over 60 years of age (Shetty, 2012). WHO forecasts that the number of elderly individuals globally will surge from 1 billion in 2020 to 2.1 billion between 2020 and 2050 (Wilmoth, 2023). Over 60% of this global increase in the elderly population will be accounted for by Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. The global population is rapidly ageing, with the number of individuals aged 60 and over, projected to double by 2050 (Malkinson, 2019; Mokal et al., 2023). This demographic shift presents a range of challenges, including healthcare provision, social support, and discrimination (Fredriksen & Vries, 2019). The increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases in low and middle-income countries further complicates the situation (Mitchell & Walker, 2020). To address these challenges, there is a need for effective policies, collaboration, and a better understanding of the needs and contributions of the elderly population (Mokal et al., 2023; Mitchell & Walker, 2020).

It is evident that Japan, which is a country located in East Asia, has a majority of elderly population (Horlacher & Horlacher, 2006). Japan has already made advancements in the technological and healthcare sectors, and as a result the growth in their population has become stagnant (Suzuki, 2013). Even before the trend of the world's rising elderly population, Japan consistently rates as having the world's oldest population. In Europe, both Germany and Italy are facing similar issues. The ageing population in Japan, Germany, and Italy poses significant challenges in terms of providing long-term care for the elderly. The medical and social welfare systems in Japan are under immense strain due to a shortage of trained personnel, high care costs, and the breakdown of the traditional filial support system (Park, 2009). These issues collectively highlight the need for innovative and sustainable solutions to address the complex needs of the elderly in these countries. However, Japan, Germany, and Italy have taken various measures to support their ageing populations. In Japan, the government has focused on increasing nursing home beds, short-stay beds, and care homes, and they are trying to establish long-term care facilities to meet the needs of the elderly (Hayashi, 2015). Their aged care facilities prioritise optimal health and cultural engagement, with a focus on nutrition, life rehabilitation, and interpersonal care. Efforts are made by Germany and Italy to provide advanced care for their elderly, with Germany offering a range of services such as home care, day care, and residential care; and on the other hand Italy providing a mix of public and private care options (Coulmas, 2007).

The progressive elderly care systems and modern care homes in Japan, Germany, and Italy aim to enhance the quality of life and well-being of their elderly populations. These three countries share a common factor which is not only of a high elderly

population but also their status as developed and wealthy countries. In addition to offering basic facilities for elderly care, these countries also employ qualified nurses and caregivers from other states, investing heavily in this field. Although they face some difficulties in providing long-term care, they are making efforts to improve the situation by implementing new progressive care initiatives in this field.

The ageing population in developing countries is a major challenge to health and social care systems because of its rapid growth. Community-based primary health care with a focus on health promotion, cost-effective indigenous medicine, and strengthening public health infrastructure and capabilities are crucial to address the unique cultural and social factors faced by these countries. Due to budget constraints and the requirement for integrated health and social care services, providing adequate care for the elderly in developing countries is an overarching challenge. Re-organizing health systems, bolstering the public health infrastructure, and encouraging community-based social care are some approaches to tackling this problem. But even with these initiatives, there are still issues with the standard of care provided in institutional settings. Greater support for residents who are dependent on assistance and a higher policy profile are required. With the growing number of elderly people in developing countries, more attention and resources are required to address this issue.

India, one of the fastest growing economies in the world, experienced several demographic phases. In its fifth and ongoing transition, birth rates are going down and life expectancy is shooting up. The nation is experiencing an ageing population, which poses challenges in terms of health care, pension systems, and the whole economic situation (Ram & Ram, 2021 & Alam, 2006). Understanding this end of demographic transition helps India to formulate better programmes and policies focussed on health care, sources of income and social well-being for India's diverse population (Sahoo et al., 2023).

The true picture of the aforementioned demographic shift is evident from the last 50 year's statistics. Thanks to advancements in technology and medical treatment, there has been an increase in life expectancy (Sparrow & Sparrow, 2006). The UNFPA India Ageing Report 2023 (India Ageing Report 2023, 2024) states that during the last ten years, the nation's elderly population has grown by 41%. India having surpassed China to become the most populous nation is the clearest evidence of this. In some ways, it is impossible to consider this as a great accomplishment because of the uncontrolled population growth, which can be compared to a "population bomb" (Merchant, 2021).

Kerala has the highest percentage of elderly population (16.5%), followed by Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Overall, the percentage of elderly population has increased in all states. It will be difficult to support the dependent population with the nation's income if it continues to increase in this manner. Majority of the states are unable to provide even the most basic necessities for these individuals. With respect to Bihar, which is one of the states with the lowest development indicators, it is evident that it struggles to provide basic infrastructure to all segments of the population (Golam & Sharma, 2014). Bihar is also lagging behind in literacy and other essential facilities. Given this situation, it is unclear how they can address the growing dependency problem effectively. Among the many issues, an increasing aged population is a serious concern for the economy (Visaria, 2022).

Kerala's Paradigm

T.R. Malthus stressed the possible imbalance that could result from population expansion outpacing available resources and upsetting the balance of society in "An Essay on the Principle of Population." Though it doesn't directly address the elderly, the country's current trend of longer life expectancies is consistent with advances in health care, which subtly supports Malthusian theories. As life expectancy rises, the idea becomes more applicable, necessitating social monitoring and senior rehabilitation. This ground-breaking study emphasises how important it is to adapt to changing demographic patterns, particularly Kerala in India. It emphasises how important it is to skilfully navigate and resolve various issues brought forth by an ageing population.

In India, Kerala stands out due to some unique characteristics. It can be seen that Kerala's elderly population is higher than the national average. In 2021, 16.5% of Kerala's population was above 60 years of age, compared to just 10.5% for India as a whole (Sebastian et al., 2021). Over the past 50-60 years, the percentage of people aged 60 and over in Kerala has risen from 5.1% to 16.5%, while India's overall population is predominantly young (Sebastian et al., 2018). When it comes to literacy rates, Kerala has a strong lead with a rate of 94% in 2021, while India's rate stands at 74.04%. Kerala has minimal gender disparity in literacy, and excels in areas such as health care and social welfare compared to the rest of India (Singh, 2022). Kerala has a high rate of literacy, but it finds it difficult to employ its highly educated workforce, which leaves a large number of people unemployed or underemployed (Bhatt & Rajan, 1990). Today, a significant portion of Kerala's workforce has migrated to other countries or shifted to professions needing advanced education and skills. This trend has resulted in a significant impact on the elderly

population who now face difficulties in their daily lives. “They have been left behind by those who have moved away, and this has resulted in mental and physical distress (Shubham & Joshi, 2021).

People who once experienced great joy and contentment from spending time with their children and grandchildren are now experiencing loneliness. Many young people communicate and give money to their parents (Sebastian et al., 2018). Previously, some people used to abandon their elderly parents or send them to old age homes. Old age homes were often thought of as a place for orphans or charities. However, the situation has changed today (Mathew & Nair, 2017).

Progressive Community Care Initiatives

People frequently require more assistance and care from others as they age. Elderly family members were traditionally cared for by their family members and hospital visits were made when someone wasn't feeling well. But conventional hospitals were not always able to meet the unique needs of the elderly (Nehru, 2017).

In the past, some people chose to put their ageing family members in assisted living facilities where it was difficult to meet even the most basic needs because they were reluctant to care for them. Employees in nursing homes occasionally failed to provide proper care because they did not know enough about medical issues (Vanitha, 2014). A more effective approach is to prioritise caring for older individuals within our communities, either through services that come to their homes or through specialised housing options. The concept of progressive care initiatives goes beyond simple domiciliary care or traditional old age homes. These initiatives use advanced technologies to focus on overall well-being, offering facilities comparable to modern hospitals. Skilled professionals ensure comprehensive care, providing a conducive environment for a peaceful retirement.

In the 2024-25 Kerala Budget, there's a noteworthy emphasis on a special CARE economy. Kerala plans to adopt a care-hub model, providing ongoing facilities for progressive care (Government of Kerala, 2024). This initiative won't be limited to residents of Kerala; elderly individuals from other states will also have access to these facilities. The plan includes the creation of aged friendly homes, medical assistance, and more. This is a positive step towards the care of older individuals.

During the COVID pandemic, Kerala's health care system received global recognition for its effective management, including the provision of high-quality medical

care, well-equipped hospitals, dedicated health care workers, and equal treatment for all (Sadanandan & Rajeev, 2020). While medical treatment and other forms of assistance are available, providing nutritional support and wellness services for vulnerable groups is also a top priority in Kerala (Kumar et al., 2009).

Kerala offers various facilities for its elderly population such as old age homes, day care centres, assisted living centres, social support & community based programmes, and financial assistance through welfare schemes and awareness campaigns (Rajan et al., 2020). Old age homes (OAH) are now transformed into highly facilitated elderly care homes. They offer better environments with health assistance, mind-chilling programmes, and social activities (Rajan et al., 2020). A mixed group of dependents, including children and elderly individuals, are now cohabiting under the same roof, which is beneficial to both age groups.

In Kerala, there is an increasing need for better health assistance among elderly people. To cater to their needs, NGOs, private entities, and government-run advanced care centres are available (Mini, 2009). These facilities provide care services to aged people. Medical treatment, mental health counselling, and support is offered to those who have lost their independence due to age-related illnesses or disabilities. These facilities implement a mixed hospital and domiciliary care concept, where skilled nurses, doctors, and carers are available to provide care and support to the elderly. Caregiving institutions provide elderly care and affection, similar to home (Askham, 1998). Additionally, these institutions offer caregivers for at-home care, which can be very beneficial for elderly individuals living alone. In Kerala, there are people who can meet the needs of those in need, by offering palliative care and home visits.

Progressive Community Care: Way Forward

To move forward, Kerala can assess existing care systems, including medical treatment centres, mental health counselling programmes, nutritional support programmes, and wellness initiatives, to identify areas for enhancement in the delivery of elderly care. In the light of existing literature, associating with key stakeholders such as NGOs, private entities, and government agencies is recommended to ensure the holistic well-being of elderly individuals in our community. The state should explore the benefits and challenges of initiatives which promote dialogue and co-operation among elderly individuals and other age groups. It is recommended to identify optimal practices and recommendations that enhance inter-generational relationships and foster an inclusive environment, promoting social support and connection among diverse age groups.

Equipping caregivers with the necessary skills and resources to provide high-quality care to elderly population by assessing and enhancing training initiatives is necessary. Through a comprehensive review of caregiver training programmes, including skill development, mental health support, and relief care resources, gaps and opportunities are to be identified for improvement in caregiver support systems, ultimately improving the quality of care provided to elderly individuals in Kerala.

Lifelong Learning in Elderly Care: A Holistic Approach for Well-being

According to numerous studies (Merriam, 2014; Díaz-López, 2017; Anetzberger, 2002), progressive community care for the elderly is essential to their happiness, health, and welfare. This care should emphasize adult education and lifelong learning. By encouraging older persons to have active and involved lives, lifelong learning initiatives can make a substantial positive impact on community well-being (Merriam, 2014). Additionally, according to Díaz-López (2017), these activities can enhance participants' psychological health and help them integrate the skills which support active and healthy ageing. Learning opportunities and other community resources are crucial for ageing well (Anetzberger, 2002). A more comprehensive strategy that takes into account the environmental, social, and physical factors is required to improve older individuals' well-being (Davitt, 2016).

Research suggests that adult education can be made more engaging and of higher quality for older adults by integrating ageing content into health curricula (McPherson-Turner, 1980), providing learner-centred environments (Langer, 2002) and offering stimulating learning experiences in higher education (Lin, 2011). Educational and cultural touristic experiences are also becoming popular options for older adults which have the ability to provide meaningful engagement and opportunities for lifelong learning (Sie, 2016). These approaches can help older adults meet their late-life development needs and lead them toward a meaningful and positive ageing experience.

Conclusion

Kerala's strategy for improving elderly population well-being through innovative community care programmes is praiseworthy and exemplifies a progressive paradigm for meeting the changing requirements of an ageing population (Gulati, 1993). The state's proactive approach to addressing the issues presented by demographic shifts is evidenced by its concentration on integrating innovative technologies, specialised housing options, and comprehensive care facilities. Kerala's commitment to providing

holistic support for its elderly residents is exemplified through initiatives such as aged friendly homes, medical assistance, and various other supportive services within its CARE economy. This proactive approach underscores the state's dedication to inclusivity and accessibility, extending its outreach beyond its own senior population to include elderly individuals from other states as well (Guhan, 1993). This can be further enhanced by employing trained caregivers, providing a lifelong learning environment and a more engaging environment where both the physical and psychological well-being is ensured.

Kerala serves as a beacon for other regions seeking solutions to the challenges presented by an ageing population through its pioneering community care programmes (Veron, 2001). The state's leadership in innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity sets a remarkable example, ultimately enhancing the overall well-being and quality of life for the elderly by offering essential support, care, and dignity they deserve (Guhan, 1993). Despite significant progress, many elderly individuals are not experiencing the advantages of these advancements due to various disparities. It is imperative to take necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation of initiatives and the delivery of progressive care that benefits everyone.

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Digital Literacy Skills of Older Adult Women: Can Training Help?

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Abstract

Globally, the gender-based gaps in digital skills are prevalent especially among the older adult women posing considerable challenges to achieving several national and global goals pertaining to education, gender equality and equity. Older women often fail to benefit from the digital revolution as digital skill training was absent in their educational curriculum coupled with lack of access to such training opportunities even as adults. The present study has been conducted to explore the current digital skills of older adult women in Delhi, India and to assess the impact of a gender specific and sensitive digital skill training module on 100 women trainees. The study has shown that needs based, gender positive and contextual training in digital skills can go a long way in enabling women to meet their practical and strategic gender needs and lead empowered lives. Considering the limited reach of the government run digital training initiatives coupled with poor access of women to such training, it is important to promote and out scale such sustainable non-formal training approaches which can enhance women's digital inclusion, fluency and further empower them.

Keywords: *Women, gender gaps, digital literacy, digital skills, ICTs, practical and strategic gender needs.*

Introduction

Globally women lag behind men in the use of mobile phones as well as the internet. A recent assessment has shown that women's mobile phone ownership is 17 per cent less as compared to males. Women are also 19 per cent less likely than

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men to use mobile internet. Of the 900 million women who are still not using the internet, almost two-thirds live in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. These are also the regions where mobile gender gaps are the widest (Jeffrie, 2023). This is in stark contrast to the global scenario wherein 57 percent women as compared to 62 percent men use the internet (ITU, 2023). In India too, there are gender gaps as well as rural urban gaps in mobile phone ownership and internet usage. Some of the reasons are women's economic dependence on men, patriarchal mind set leading to perception of women as the primary caregivers and homemakers, limited literacy and digital skills of women and low or no requirement of digital devices and skills.

On an average, in India 54 percent women own mobile phones which they themselves can use, which is lower than that of males (NFHS, 2019-21). Such large gaps in ownership of mobile phones and internet usage put women to a disadvantage in their personal as well as occupational life. Studies have shown that in many rural areas in India, internet is often perceived as a risk to the traditional social order, considered unsafe for women and girls and at times its use is declared as 'immoral' for them (World Web Foundation, 2015; USAID, 2020; Alexander & Gerda, 2021 and Oxfam India, 2022). The resulting gaps in women's use of digital skills tend to magnify in later life and have inter-generational implications leading to women missing out on several opportunities resulting in poorer attainment in various domains.

Why is Digital Inclusion of Women Necessary?

As countries make efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), digital inclusion of women is extremely important, the attainment of which directly or indirectly impacts women emancipation and empowerment. Goal number 5 specifically refers to promoting the use of ICTs by women for bridging the gender gap. According to a recent estimate by UNICEF, in future, almost 80 percent of the jobs in different fields will require digital skills (UNICEF, 2023). As per other assessments, women's exclusion from the digital world may have amounted to losses of 1 trillion USD from the economy of low- and medium-income countries in the last decade; expected to grow to 1.5 trillion USD by 2025 if no action is taken (UN Women, 2022). ICTs have a vast potential to improving the lives and livelihoods of people by reducing poverty, upskilling, providing improved job opportunities and enhancing entrepreneurial opportunities. It is therefore necessary that all countries make special efforts to enable women and other marginalized groups to make good use of digital technologies and help not only address development but also humanitarian as well as gender based challenge. Thus aid in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 including the goal of achieving gender equality.

Training Women in Digital Skills: Efforts by the Government

The Government of India has started various ICT enabled mission mode projects in the field of governance, health, credit and finance, education and banking. If women have to benefit from these programmes, it is pertinent that they have adequate digital skills and access to digital devices with internet. Recognizing the limited digital skills of marginalized section of population including women, the Government started digital literacy training programmes such as the 'National Digital Literacy Mission' and 'PMDISHA' (*Pradhan Mantri Digital Saksharta Abhiyan*) to achieve this end. However, considering the magnitude of the population, there are limitations of reach and access to such training programmes. Alternative routes to training the vulnerable and marginalized groups especially women are therefore required. In addition, for the training curriculum to be of more value to women, it must incorporate the contextual gender-based needs of women.

The present study has therefore been conducted to examine the current digital skills of women and their usage as well as the barriers and challenges faced by women while using digital literacy. The study has been conducted on women largely from the middle and lower- middle socio-economic strata who are living in the different zones of the metropolitan city of Delhi. Another objective of the study was to assess the impact of need based and contextual digital skill training designed, using a gender lens and delivered to women. Next, to gauge its potential impact on women's confidence, productivity and empowerment. The overall objective of the study was to generate evidence about the uptake and impact of gender sensitive, need based digital literacy training on women and to gauge the feasibility of expanding such training initiatives to reach out to the community at large.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the capital city of India, New Delhi with a population of 31.7 million (UN World Population Prospects, 2022). The city is a salad bowl of cultures and classes and is home to people from various states, cultures and socio-economic strata. Since digital literacy training is a very intensive process requiring prolonged trainer-trainee interaction and considering that women across socio-economic strata often do not have access such training opportunities, the present study encompassed training women (mothers, relatives, acquaintances, domestic helpers) of students studying in the final year of under-graduate programme at the Institute of Home Economics, a college of University of Delhi. Henceforth these women will be referred to as trainees and the undergraduate students who imparted

the training will be referred to as trainers. They resided in different parts of Delhi and therefore represented the general status of digital fluency among middle class women.

The action research was carried out in three phases. The first phase comprised of training the trainers in principles of Andragogy so that they could deal well with the adult learners. This was followed by training of trainers in delivery of the digital literacy training module. The module has been adapted from a standardized module developed by the authors as a part of a research project under the aegis of Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. It has been designed keeping in view the triple roles of production, household, and community work performed by women as well as keeping in mind the practical (every day needs based on the gender roles of women) and strategic gender needs (Education, skill, income, decision making, etc.) of women as classified by the Gender Analysis Framework given by Caroline Moser. This was done to emphasize on the gender specific needs of women and to make the training module gender sensitive, gender positive and transformative.

In order to enable women to soak up the digital skills and concretize the learning, the direct training in components (40 hours) were interspersed with additional time (60 hours) for practice, recapitulation and evaluation. The 100-hour module was delivered over a period of eight months (August 2021-April, 2022) spread over two semesters. Various communication aids such as power point presentations, information cards, short videos, planned instructions and demonstrations were used for training the women. Some of the training aids were especially developed while some were taken from existing sources.

The second phase involved administering the pre-test of digital literacy skills especially developed for the purpose. This phase enabled the documentation of the digital skills of the learners in terms of ability to use the listed mobile phone based services and applications either independently, with help or the women's inability to use the same. The problems faced by learners, the perception of need of digital literacy training and the specific needs of the learners were also documented. The scores were computed for every learner out of the total score of 52. The initial scores ranged from 8 to 15. If any of the learners had a score greater than one-third of the maximum score, they were excluded from the study.

Finally, the third phase of the study involved administering the training module to the learners followed by assessing the potential impact of the training on digital skills

and digital fluency of women. This phase also involved post-test and evaluation of the entire training-learning process using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Tools Used for Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative tool comprised of a detailed interviewer administered questionnaire. The qualitative tools comprised of case study, observations and in-depth interviews with the learners. Information was collected on their educational status, occupation, family background, ownership, access and use of digital devices (mobile phone), internet connectivity, level of digital literacy, use of mobile and computer related technology as well as the barriers faced by them in usage of ICT based initiatives.

A pre-and post-training proforma was designed to gather the data about awareness, knowledge, and skills of women in mobile related digital literacy skills. Statistical tools such as Chi square analysis and paired samples t-test were used to assess if the differences between pre-and post-training scores were statistically significant. The entire teaching-learning process was monitored by the faculty members of the Department of Development Communication and Extension in the college (Institute of Home Economics, University of Delhi) on a weekly basis in a ratio of 1:20. Though as many as 140 women were imparted the training, but due to attrition and lack of complete data in some cases, the present analysis was done with a sample size of 100 trainees.

Results and Discussion

Profile of the Learners

A large majority of the respondents (91 percent) were older adults in the age group between 35 and 50 years. Only nine percent of the women were either unmarried (aunts living in extended family) or were divorced or widowed. Most of the women were quite receptive to the training as they felt digital skills were becoming increasingly important in the present times and such training could help them transact their day-to-day activities. As many as 70 percent families were nuclear and the rest were either extended or joint families. As many as 57 percent families had less than 5 members, another 34 percent had 6-7 members and the rest of the families had 8-11 members.

Level of Education

Almost 42 percent of the women (learners) had never been to college, of which only 23 percent had passed senior secondary and 19 percent had studied up to class X or below. These women had dropped out of school because they either lacked interest in studies, needed to help in household work, found studies to be very tough or were married off early. A little less than half of the learners were graduates (46%), a smaller number (12%) were post- graduates. Barring some women, most learners did not have an opportunity to learn digital skills during their education. When they were in school or college, computers and mobile phone were not available to them. They had never thought of joining a training programme for learning digital literacy as there were no such separate facilities for women, the training facilities existed only for children. The women as well as their families did not feel the need to join any special training for learning digital skills as they were very busy in household chores and other care giving responsibilities. The women felt that their children were proficient in digital skills and could perform the family's essential tasks requiring digital fluency. When asked about their willingness to learn digital skills if given a chance, most of the women were very willing to do so. They wanted to learn more about using WhatsApp for different purposes as well as learn to use Google, YouTube, make online purchases and payments as well as book cabs. The women mentioned that since these tasks were required to be done on a daily basis, training in these areas could make the women more independent and confident.

Family Income

A large number of families (57 percent) had monthly income of less than INR 50,000 per month. Another 38 percent families were placed in the monthly income ranging between INR 50,001-100,000. Only a few (5 percent) families had monthly income more than INR one hundred thousand. A large majority of the families (95 percent) thus belonged to middle class. The income profile is in tune with other surveys which reflect that one in every three Indians is middle class in India with annual income between INR 5 lakh and Rs 30 lakh per annum (PRICE, 2022).

Occupation of Women

Domestic responsibilities most often keep women especially in developing countries away from workforce. Our results also reflect the same as majority of the women (73 percent), were homemakers involved in the unpaid care economy and were not gainfully employed due to low level of education, household chores,

child care as well as gender based norms. About 25 percent women were working, the major occupations being teachers or desk job in offices. Some of the working women had more digital skills as compared to homemakers. On an all India basis too, it is seen that 56 per cent of rural and 59 per cent of urban women aged 15 years and above were engaged in full-time housework; thus did not participate in the work force (Economic Survey, 2020-21).

The Training Process

The women were imparted training in digital skills using the 100 hours training module on a one-to-one basis within the comfort of their homes. The training was transacted in a very interactive manner at least thrice a week, with each session of about one hour or more. Several communication aids including planned demonstrations were used by the trainers. Adequate time was given to the trainees to soak up the information, engage in trial and self-learning and clarify their doubts and hesitations. Since each learner is different, the trainers could deliver training at varying speeds depending on the grasping ability of the trainees. On the completion of a training session with respect to a particular domain, evaluation of learning was done by assigning a task to the trainees. If there were disruptions in training due to unforeseen events or family circumstances, the training was rescheduled to cope with the loss of time. The entire training activity was closely monitored by the faculty members in a ratio 1:20. The outcome of the training and the comparison with the pre-training scores has been presented here.

Outcomes of Digital Literacy Training

After completion of the training the post-test proforma was again administered to the women and the scores out of 52 were calculated. The change in scores is discussed here.

Use of Basic Functions of Phone

Though most of the women (learners) were able to receive and make phone calls, only some of them were proficient in other functions such as SMS, use of calendar, setting alarm, etc. After the training, as many as 87 percent women could send and receive SMS (the rest needed help), as compared to only 47 percent before. This difference was statistically significant $\chi^2(1, N=100) = 36.18, P=0.05$. Some learners who faced problems were taught the use of voice messaging. With respect to setting the alarm and using the calendar, 89-91 percent women could do

so independently after the training (the rest needed help), as compared to only 46 percent women who could use the calendar independently and 59 percent women who could use the various features of the alarm facility on their mobile phone before the training. The women reported, they often needed to set alarms to wake up their children or remind themselves of some important tasks. The differences in scores for both the activities (using calendar and setting alarm) before and after the training were statistically significant $\chi^2 (1, N=100) = 36.18, P=0.05$.

Mobile Phone Applications

Use of WhatsApp

WhatsApp is the most widely used application worldwide because of the ease of sending and receiving messages. Needless to mention that the application enables sending messages, pictures, and videos at no cost (except the cost of internet connectivity). Before the training, as many as 56 percent respondents knew how to use some of the features of WhatsApp application independently, whereas 44 percent could use it with the help of their children. Interestingly, majority of them were eager to learn more functions/features of the application such as how to form new groups, how to change status or profile picture on WhatsApp. The women were excited to learn more about WhatsApp since they used it to communicate with family and friends. After the training, a large majority of the women (94 percent) could use WhatsApp application independently (Table 1). The rest of the women either needed help or could not use it. These differences in the use of WhatsApp were statistically significant, $\chi^2 (1, N=100) = 38.6, P=0.05$.

Video Calling

Video calling facility was considered very important by the women as it helped them to stay in touch with their family or relatives. Before the training, 54 percent knew how to make video calls, while for the rest their children or others connected the call for them so that they could talk. After the training, a larger number of the respondents (90 percent) could make video calls on their own. The rest said they would still need help or not be able to use the function on their own. There was a statistically significant difference in the number of women before and after the training who could use video calling feature, $\chi^2 (1, N=100) = 32.14, P=0.05$.

Using YouTube

YouTube was a very popular application used frequently by the respondents. Before the training was conducted, 64 percent of the learners knew how to use YouTube, the rest (36%) either needed help or could not use the application at all. The trainers first imparted training on how to download the application and how to search for videos by typing key words. The women were very interested in searching videos of their favourite serials, cookery shows, movies, beauty/ healthcare tips, etc. After the training session, as many as 92 percent of women could use YouTube independently (Table 1). The rest either needed help or did not wish to use the application and lacked motivation to even try it. The difference in the number of women who could use YouTube was statistically significantly after the training, $\chi^2 (1, N=100) = 54.43, P=0.05$.

Searching for Information on Internet

Searching for information such as recipes of food, designs of garments, beauty tips was a craze among many women. More than one-quarter (28 percent) women were able to search information independently on the phones. A large majority of the women (72 percent) either needed help from children or husband, or had no clue about the need for or method of searching information. The women were imparted training for undertaking internet search by the trainers on topics such as fitness, remedies for common ailments and nutritious snack recipes to name a few. The women learnt internet search with great enthusiasm and interest. After the training session, as many as 80 percent women could search information on the internet all by themselves (Table 1). The remaining 20 percent women either needed help for searching information or still could not do so or did not have the inclination to even try on their own. They mentioned that other family members would do the search for them. The difference between pre-and post-training scores for undertaking internet search was found to be statistically very significant, $\chi^2 (1, N=100) = 21.59, P=0.05$.

Online Shopping

The women were asked if they used any online shopping applications. Before the training, only 7 percent of the women respondents used online shopping platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra independently and a large majority of women (93 percent) either did not know or required help from family members for the same. The women were eager to learn online shopping as they observed others availing hefty discounts and offers in online shopping. Training was imparted to women on

shopping from online platforms (Myntra/ Flipkart/Amazon) depending upon their need and preference. After the training, 62 percent women said they would be able to do online shopping independently, but 38 percent were somewhat apprehensive and said they would need help and often got scared lest they placed the wrong order (Table 1). Some other challenges were lack of credit cards or debit cards. The women therefore preferred to choose the option of cash on delivery. There was a statistically significant difference in the number of women who could independently do online shopping before and after the training, $\chi^2 (1, N=100) = 66.93, P=0.05$.

Fixing Appointment with Doctor using Online Registration System (ORS)

The respondents were imparted training on how to fix online appointment with doctors and the steps to be followed in Online Registration System (ORS) being implemented by the Government of India. Before the training, only 5 per cent of the women knew about the application and had used it independently. This also reflects the need of publicizing such schemes among the public. After the training in ORS, 38 percent women said they would be able to use the application independently, while 62 percent still felt that they could not use the application on their own and would need help (Table 1). Some women said they had a problem in having to read through a lot of information on the site and felt they might book a wrong appointment. However, despite the challenges faced, there was a statistically significant difference in the number of women who could fix online appointment with the doctor using ORS, before and after the training $\chi^2 (1, N=100) = 32.26, P=0.05$.

Use of *Himmat Plus* Application

Himmat plus is a mobile based application for women's safety developed by Delhi police and endorsed for use by the Government of India. The application also works in offline mode. There are several features in the application to ensure women's safety. One of the main features is, if women feel unsafe at a particular location, they can send alerts and SMS to their contacts and the police who can then track the women's location and provide assistance. When the women learners were asked about this application, majority of them (98 percent) neither knew about the app nor had used it, except for 2 percent of the women who had used the application. However, after the training, 38 percent women said that they could use the *Himmat Plus* application (Table 1). The rest (62 percent) women felt that they did not feel the need to use the application as they hardly travelled alone. Besides, they found it tough to learn to use the application. Despite this limitation, there was a statistically significant difference in pre-and post-training scores in women's ability to use the *Himmat plus* application, $\chi^2 (1, N=100) = 40.50, P=0.05$.

Booking Cabs

In recent years, online cab operating services have become very common and are much more affordable as compared to the traditional cabs. The families had to often book cabs online for various purposes such as to visit relatives, attend family functions, go to the airport /railway station or for shopping. Before the training, 95 percent of the women had never tried to book cabs and were totally dependent on their children or husband (Table 1). Only a small fraction (5 percent) of women knew how to book a cab. After the training, as many as 64 per cent of women were able to book a cab independently while the rest were scared to even try and felt they would not be able to book a cab on their own. However, despite the barriers, the difference in pre-and post-training scores was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N=100) = 77.02, P=0.05$ implying that the training had a positive impact on enabling women to book a cab and thereby enhance their mobility to be more independent.

Lodging First Information Report (FIR) with Police

Table 1: Difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the *Use of Mobile Applications*

S. No	Mobile Applications	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Independently (%)	With help/can't do (%)	Independently (%)	With help/can't do (%)
1	WhatsApp	56	44	94	6
2	Video calling	54	46	90	9.9
3	You tube	64	36	92	8
4	Searching information on the internet	28	72	80	20
5	Online Shopping	7	93	62	38
6	Fixing appointment with doctor using Online Registration System (ORS)	5	95	38	62
7	Himmat plus App	98	2	38	62
8	Booking cab	95	5	64	36
9	FIR	7	93	33	63

None of the women had ever lodged an FIR online with police, they were scared of the same. The trainers first apprised the learners about situations when

the women may need to lodge an FIR online such as in case of theft of belongings such as wallet or any kind of identification card (pan card, *aadhaar* card, etc.). The learners were then told about the steps to be followed for lodging an FIR. The learners remained somewhat scared about the process. There was not much change in scores. Before the training only 7 percent women were able to lodge FIR independently and it changed to 33 percent after the training (Table 1). These changes were also statistically significant.

Overall Change in Digital Fluency

To gauge the change in digital fluency of the women as a result of the training, scores were given to the learners in terms of what mobile phone applications and functions they could use independently, with someone's help or could not use at all - both before and after the training. The paired samples t-test was conducted on pre-test and post-test scores of these 100 women learners to assess the significance of change in their digital fluency. The results showed significant impact of training as the average pre-test score was 12.22 before the training which increased to 25.51 after the training. The t value was 22.6 which was statistically significant at p value of 0.05, suggesting that the digital training had a statistically significant impact on the digital skills of the learners (Table 2).

Table 2: Digital literacy scores before and after the training (N =100)

Pre-test mean	Post- test mean	Mean difference	t test score	Level of significance
12.2	25.51	13.31	22.6	0.000

**at 0.05 level of confidence*

It was found that women were very enthusiastic about learning and using basic applications of mobile phone (SMS, WhatsApp, photography, YouTube, Internet search, etc.) and many of them were already using them before the training. However, even after the training, a large number of women found it difficult to use applications such as ORS, *Himmat* plus, lodging FIR, online shopping and making online payments. They were hesitant due to various reasons such as having to read through large amount of textual material, inability to remember all the steps, fear of making mistakes especially in making payments. Some women also said that they did not need to use these applications and therefore did not feel the need to learn them.

Perception of Women about the Training

The women were asked about their perception of the usefulness of the training programme. A large majority of the women were very excited to participate in the training and felt that the trainers (daughters/niece) were present at their own homes but the idea of learning digital skills from them had never occurred earlier. Most women said that their family members, including the husband either supported them to learn digital skills at this age or were neutral about it. In some families, the men were not directly supportive of their wives participating in the training but the women managed to undertake the training as the men were generally away during the day. After having undertaken the training, the women said that they felt more independent as they could use their digital skills to undertake several personal and family related tasks within and outside the home. They were now more confident that they were using mobile apps or functions in the correct way.

The study has also shown that the women found it easier to use the mobile phone features of SMS, WhatsApp, internet search etc. but they found it much more difficult to use apps for online appointments with doctor, safety app and online purchases and payments. Several women reported that even after the training they were not comfortable and were scared to open the FIR application and fill up information for fear of actually lodging an FIR. Many women felt that they did not need to use these applications as their family members would take care of these aspects. They felt satisfied as long as their children or husband were digitally enabled and could undertake the required functions. This also suggests that it is important to change the mind set of women and create the need of being more independent in terms of technology usage and its applications.

Some women reported that they felt a sense of enhanced status in their family as they gained digital fluency. The dependence on children for several tasks such as cab booking or online shopping had reduced which enhanced women's mobility, gave them more independence and improved the quality of their personal and occupational life. It was found that the training helped the women to fulfil some of their practical as well as strategic gender needs. Thus, since the training was gender sensitive, it had a gender transformative impact on women, as in addition to enabling their ability to transact their day-to-day activities more efficiently, it also enhanced their self-image and status in the family. In fact, there were some instances where women had become more digitally fluent in comparison to their husbands.

Conclusion

The study has shown that gender sensitive, contextual and need based digital training can go a long way in empowering women with digital skills required in their personal and occupational life. Such training can have a gender transformative impact on women as it can meet not only their practical gender needs pertaining to their gender based roles in the household as well as help them meet some of their strategic gender needs of information, knowledge, education, financial decision making and enhance their decision-making ability. The study has also shown that comfortable and non-threatening environment of the home can be a very suitable academy for training women in digital skills imparted by their own children/close family members. The close trainer-trainee interaction permitting mentorship over a prolonged period along with clarification of doubts of women were the additional benefits.

The women's digital literacy skills improved considerably as a result of the digital literacy training. Since digital inclusion of women is one of the pre-requisites of meeting the goal of *Gender Equality* of the SDGs, it is important to experiment and promote the non-formal modes of digital training. Though the Government has launched several programmes for digital literacy training of marginalized communities in rural and urban areas, their reach as well as efficacy remains a challenge. To maximize the benefits of the digital technologies and missions, it is very important for developing countries to promote such non-formal low or no cost initiatives of digital literacy training which can go a long way in empowering girls and women. Therefore, the students studying in senior school and colleges between 15-25 years of age can be a tremendous resource who can be usefully tapped to impart digital skills training to women and other members in their families. Online modules for training women could also be developed which enable women to access such trainings from the comfort of their homes.

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Digital Learning Revolution: Role of Technology in Indian Adult Education

• Dipak Bhattacharya¹

Abstract

The landscape of adult education in India is experiencing a profound shift propelled by the integration of technology. This article explores the concept of a digital learning revolution and its role in addressing longstanding challenges faced by adult learners in India. Through an examination of key benefits, including increased accessibility, enhanced flexibility, personalized learning, and improved engagement, it becomes evident that technology-driven approaches are reshaping the educational landscape. The COVID-19 crisis has expedited the uptake of digital learning tools, underscoring the imperative for robust education systems capable of withstanding unforeseen challenges. However, challenges such as the digital divide persist, necessitating proactive measures to ensure inclusivity. The article also delves into emerging trends and opportunities in digital adult education, particularly highlighting on the transformative potential of virtual reality and artificial intelligence. By embracing technology, adult education in India can empower learners, promote lifelong learning, and foster a culture of innovation. Ultimately, technology serves as a catalyst for transformation, offering unparalleled opportunities for empowerment, enrichment, and growth in adult education.

Keywords: *Adult education, digital learning revolution, India, technology.*

Introduction

The landscape of adult education in India is undergoing a significant transformation driven by the rise of technology. Traditionally, adult education faced several challenges that limited its reach and effectiveness. These included - *time constraints*: many adults, particularly those employed full-time, struggled to dedicate regular time for classroom learning due to work and family commitments; *geographical limitations*: access to quality educational institutions has often been

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concentrated in urban areas, leaving adults in rural regions with limited opportunities; *rigid learning styles*: traditional classroom settings might not cater to the diverse learning styles and preferences of adult learners who may prefer a more flexible and self-paced approach; *limited course offerings*: the availability of adult education programmes might be restricted, particularly for specialized skills needed in the ever-evolving job market (MHRD, 2011; Merriam & Caffarella, 2001). These factors frequently led to decreased enrollment rates and restricted skill advancement prospects for a substantial portion of India's adult populace. Nonetheless, the advent of digital learning technologies is transforming how adults can access and participate in education. The concept of a digital learning revolution refers to the widespread adoption of technology-based tools and platforms for delivering educational content. This revolution offers a more accessible, flexible, and personalized approach to learning, making it a perfect fit for the needs of adult learners (Kapoor, 2018).

The following are some of the key benefits of this digital transformation in adult education:

- *Increased accessibility*: Online learning platforms and mobile applications offer accessibility from any location with internet access, removing geographical obstacles and fostering a more inclusive learning atmosphere.
- *Enhanced flexibility*: Learners can choose their learning pace and schedule, allowing them to fit education around their existing commitments.
- *Personalized learning*: Technology allows for the tailoring of learning experiences to individual needs and preferences. Learners can choose from a wider range of courses and modules, focusing on specific skills they wish to develop.
- *Improved engagement*: Interactive learning tools, multimedia content, and online communities can make the learning process more engaging and interactive for adult learners.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 outbreak has quickened the acceptance of digital learning technologies, underscoring the pressing requirement for education systems that are both resilient and flexible. Amidst periods of lockdowns and social distancing mandates, digital platforms became vital for both educators and learners, enabling the continuation of education amid unparalleled adversities (UNESCO, 2020). However, the shift to digital learning is not without its challenges. Despite the growing availability of digital tools and resources, disparities in access persist, particularly in marginalized communities and rural areas (World Bank Group, 2018). Additionally, the significance of guaranteeing fair access to digital learning opportunities for all societal segments is emphasized by apprehensions regarding digital literacy and

data privacy. The digital learning revolution has the potential to unlock a new era of educational opportunity for adults in India. By addressing the traditional challenges and leveraging the benefits of technology, we can empower individuals to continuously learn, up-skill, and thrive in today's dynamic world.

Unlocking Potential: Benefits of Technology-Driven Adult Learning

Technology is not just changing the way adults access education; it is fundamentally transforming the learning experience itself. By leveraging digital tools and platforms, adult education can unlock a multitude of benefits for learners, empowering them to achieve their goals and thrive in a knowledge-based economy. Here's a closer look at some key advantages (Bates, 2019; Kongcharoen, 2016; Stacey, 2015):

Increased accessibility: One of the major benefits of digital learning is its capacity to surpass geographical constraints. Online learning platforms and mobile applications can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection. This dismantles the traditional barriers of physical location, making educational opportunities available to adults in remote areas, those with limited mobility, or juggling with busy schedules.

Example: Imagine a farmer in rural West Bengal who aspires to learn new agricultural techniques to improve crop yield. Through online courses or mobile apps, the farmer can access educational content at ease, without the need to travel to a distant learning center.

Enhanced flexibility: Traditional classroom learning often requires fixed schedules and attendance commitments, posing a challenge for adults with work, family, or other responsibilities. Digital learning offers unmatched flexibility, allowing learners to choose their own pace and schedule. They can access course materials, complete assignments, and participate in discussions at their own convenience, making learning truly fit into their existing lives.

Example: A working professional aiming to improve business communication skills can enroll in an online course which allows to complete modules during commute or late evenings after work. This flexibility empowers adults to pursue their learning goals without disrupting their daily routines.

Personalized learning: Digital learning enables customized learning experiences that cater to the specific needs, preferences, and learning styles of adult learners.

Through adaptive learning algorithms and data-driven insights, digital platforms analyze learners' progress, preferences, and performance to deliver customized content, recommendations, and feedback. This personalized approach to learning enhances learner engagement, motivation, and outcomes by addressing individual learning gaps and challenges, promoting self-directed learning, and fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Example: Adaptive learning platforms such as 'Knewton' and 'Smart Sparrow' use machine learning algorithms to adapt the learning experience to each learner's abilities and knowledge level. These platforms evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of learners via diagnostic assessments and dynamically adapt the difficulty and order of learning activities to enhance learning results. Through targeted interventions, personalized feedback, and adaptive assistance, these platforms enable adults to advance at their preferred pace and attain expertise in their selected fields.

Improved engagement: Traditional lectures can be monotonous, especially for adults who may have different learning preferences. Digital learning platforms can incorporate multimedia content like videos, simulations, and interactive exercises to make the learning process more engaging and stimulating.

Furthermore, online communities and discussion forums allow learners to connect with peers, share experiences, and participate in collaborative activities. This social aspect of learning can foster a sense of community and motivation, keeping adult learners engaged throughout the programme. By incorporating these elements, technology-driven adult learning can transform classrooms from passive environments to active hubs of knowledge creation and exchange.

Technology offers a powerful toolkit for enhancing adult education. From increased accessibility and flexibility to personalized learning experiences and improved engagement, the benefits are undeniable. As we move forward, embracing these advancements will be crucial in empowering adult learners in India to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

Bridging the Divide: Addressing Challenges and Ensuring Inclusivity

The digital learning revolution holds immense promise for adult education in India. However, it's essential to recognize the presence of a 'digital divide,' which delineates the contrast between individuals who possess access to technology and the requisite skills to utilize it and those who do not. This divide can pose significant

barriers for some adult learners, hindering their ability to participate in the digital learning landscape. Listed below are some key challenges that can limit inclusivity in technology-driven adult education (Bhatnagar, 2016):

Lack of access to devices: Not all adults in India have access to the necessary devices, such as computers, smart phones, or tablets, required for online learning. The cost of these devices can be a significant barrier, particularly for those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Limited internet connectivity: Reliable internet connectivity is essential for accessing online learning platforms and resources. However, internet infrastructure and affordability remain unevenly distributed across India, particularly in rural areas. This lack of connectivity can exclude a significant portion of the adult population.

Digital literacy skills gap: Many adults, especially those from older generations or remote locations, may lack the basic digital literacy skills required to navigate online learning platforms effectively. This can include difficulties with using search engines, downloading applications, or completing online tasks.

These challenges underscore the significance of taking proactive steps to narrow the digital gap and guarantee equitable access to technology-driven adult education. Here are some potential solutions and initiatives (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010; Norris, 2001; Lee & Ma, 2012; Blaschke, 2013):

Community-based digital literacy programmes: Community organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions can collaborate to design and implement digital literacy programmes targeted at adult learners. These initiatives offer practical instruction in fundamental computer skills, internet navigation, online security, and digital communication, enabling adults to navigate digital technologies with assurance.

Government initiatives and policy interventions: Governments at the national, state, and local levels can implement policy measures and allocate resources to address the digital divide in adult education. Initiatives such as subsidized internet access programmes, provision of free or low-cost devices to underserved populations, and integration of digital literacy curriculum into adult education programmes can help bridge the gap and promote digital inclusion.

Public-private partnerships: The cooperation among government entities, private sector entities, and civil society organizations can aid in the creation and

implementation of incentivized approaches to advance digital inclusion in adult education. Collaboration between the public and private sectors can utilize resources, knowledge, and connections to broaden the availability of digital learning materials, enhance internet infrastructure, and provide tailored assistance to marginalized communities.

Mobile-based learning solutions: Given the widespread availability of smartphones, mobile-based learning solutions present a promising avenue for reaching underserved adult learners. Mobile apps and platforms that offer offline access to educational content, interactive lessons, and micro-learning modules can cater to learners with limited internet connectivity and empower them to engage in self-directed learning.

Bridging the digital divide in adult education requires concerted efforts from stakeholders across sectors to promote digital literacy, expand access to technology, and ensure inclusivity. By addressing the challenges and barriers to digital inclusion through targeted interventions and collaborative initiatives, we can create a more equitable and accessible learning environment for all adult learners.

The Future of Learning: Trends and Opportunities in Digital Adult Education

As we approach the dawn of a fresh era in education, marked by swift technological progression and shifting learning models, the horizon of adult education brims with tremendous potential. Emerging technologies stand ready to overhaul the adult learning landscape, presenting inventive remedies to meet the varied needs and obstacles faced by the learners. This section delves into the patterns and prospects within digital adult education, centering on the transformative capabilities of emerging technologies like virtual reality and artificial intelligence.

1. Emerging Technologies Shaping the Future of Adult Learning

(i) Virtual Reality (VR): VR technology immerses learners in realistic, interactive environments, enabling them to engage in experiential learning experiences that transcend traditional classroom boundaries. By donning VR headsets, adult learners can explore virtual simulations, interact with 3D models, and participate in simulated scenarios that replicate real-world contexts (Dede, 2009).

(ii) Artificial Intelligence (AI): Learning systems powered by AI utilize machine learning algorithms to tailor learning experiences, automate administrative

duties, and offer intelligent feedback and suggestions to learners. Through natural language processing and data analytics, AI algorithms can analyze learner behavior, preferences, and performance to deliver tailored learning plans (Siemens, 2013).

2. Potential of Emerging Technologies to Enhance Learning Experiences

(i) Immersive learning environments: VR technology enables adult learners to engage in immersive learning experiences that stimulate multiple senses and promote active participation. From virtual field trips and hands-on simulations to role-playing exercises and virtual laboratories, VR enhances learning by providing experiential and contextualized experiences (Bailenson, 2018).

(ii) Personalized learning: AI algorithms examine extensive learner data to generate personalized learning paths customized to individual needs, preferences, and learning styles. By adapting content, pacing, and difficulty levels to match each learner's abilities and interests, AI-powered systems optimize learning outcomes and foster self-directed learning (Koedinger & Corbett, 2006).

(iii) Interactive feedback and assessment: AI algorithms offer instantaneous feedback and evaluation, allowing adult learners to obtain personalized guidance, corrective interventions, and focused support. Through adaptive assessment tools and intelligent tutoring systems, AI enhances the quality and effectiveness of feedback, facilitating mastery learning and skill development (VanLehn, 2011).

3. Catering to Diverse Needs and Challenges

(i) Accessibility: VR and AI technologies have the potential to make learning more accessible to diverse populations, including individuals with disabilities, non-native language speakers, and learners from underserved communities. VR simulations can accommodate different learning styles and preferences, while AI-powered translation tools can facilitate language learning and comprehension (Epps & Dahlstrom-Hakki, 2019).

(ii) Engagement and motivation: Immersive VR experiences capture learners' attention and foster a sense of presence and immersion, enhancing engagement and motivation. AI algorithms personalize learning content and activities based on learners' interests and preferences, making learning more relevant, meaningful, and enjoyable (Gena, 2016).

(iii) Lifelong learning: VR and AI technologies support lifelong learning by providing flexible, self-paced learning experiences that cater to adults' diverse schedules and commitments. Whether acquiring new skills for career advancement, pursuing personal interests, or exploring new hobbies, adult learners can benefit from easy accessibility of digital learning (Cross, 2012).

The future of adult education is shaped by emerging technologies that offer unprecedented opportunities to enhance learning experiences, cater to diverse needs, and promote lifelong learning. Through the adoption of VR and AI technologies, adult educators and learners can harness the complete capabilities of digital learning and embark on educational transformations tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of each individual.

Empowerment of Adult Learners through Technology

In summary, the transformative impact of technology on adult education is evident, heralding a new era of empowerment and opportunity for learners of all backgrounds. Through this examination, we have uncovered several key insights into the role of technology in revolutionizing adult education (UNESCO, 2017; Khan, 2017; Siemens & Baker, 2012; Warschauer, 2003)

Accessibility and flexibility: Technology has democratized access to education, allowing adult learners to overcome barriers of time and space. Digital platforms offer flexible learning options, enabling individuals to engage in educational pursuits at their convenience, regardless of their busy schedules or geographic location.

Personalized learning: Advanced technologies like artificial intelligence facilitate personalized learning experiences customized to the distinct needs and preferences of adult learners. By analyzing learner data and behavior, AI algorithms can deliver customized learning pathways, optimizing the educational experience and promoting deeper engagement.

Engagement and immersion: Immersive technologies like virtual reality (VR) enhance engagement and immersion, providing learners with realistic and interactive learning environments. VR simulations offer experiential learning opportunities that captivate learners' attention and facilitate deeper understanding and retention of concepts.

Inclusivity and equity: Technology has the potential to bridge the digital divide and promote inclusivity in adult education. Initiatives aimed at expanding access to

devices, improving internet connectivity, and enhancing digital literacy empower learners from diverse backgrounds to participate in digital learning initiatives.

Lifelong learning: Digital learning cultivates a mindset of continuous learning, enabling adults to attain fresh skills, explore personal interests, and adjust to changing career requirements. Through digital platforms and resources, adult learners can engage in continuous skill development and remain competitive in the modern workforce.

As we look towards the future, it is essential to continue investing in technology-driven solutions that empower adult learners and promote lifelong learning. Through prioritizing digital literacy programmes, broadening access to digital resources, and nurturing an innovative educational environment, we can guarantee that every adult learner has the chance to achieve their maximum potential (UNESCO, 2020).

Conclusion

The article emphasizes the crucial significance of technology as a driving force for change in adult education throughout India. By delving into the digital learning revolution, it becomes apparent that technology has ushered in a new era of empowerment and opportunity for learners of all backgrounds. Through increased accessibility, enhanced flexibility, personalized learning experiences, and improved engagement, digital tools and platforms have revolutionized the educational landscape, breaking down traditional barriers and facilitating lifelong learning journeys. Moreover, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the imperative of robust and flexible education systems, hastening the integration of digital learning technologies. Despite notable advancements, obstacles like the digital gap endure, demanding collaborative endeavors to promote inclusiveness and fair access to technology-enabled education. Moving forward, the piece delves into upcoming developments and prospects in digital adult education, stressing the transformative possibilities of innovations such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence. By embracing these advancements and fostering a culture of innovation, adult education in India can empower learners, promote lifelong learning, and prepare individuals to thrive in the dynamic digital age.

Ultimately, technology serves as a powerful enabler, offering unparalleled opportunities for empowerment, enrichment, and growth in adult education. As stakeholders continue to invest in digital literacy initiatives, expand access to digital resources, and foster innovation in education, every adult learner in India can embark on a transformative educational journey, realizing their full potential and contributing meaningfully to society.

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Digital Skills for Women Empowerment: Study of Select ODL Institutions in Assam

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Abstract

In the present digital age, there is a close relationship between the acquisition of digital skills and employability. Today's job-market requires the use of computers and demands a highly skilled and 'specialized' workforce. This demand is growing day by day. On the other hand, in a developing country like India, 'employability' is a major marker of economic empowerment. So, to increase employability every job-seeker has to acquire basic digital as well as technical skills. The most effective way to learn these skills is through education. Hence, the educational institutions, particularly the higher education institutions, need to focus on developing the basic knowledge and skills of using digital devices. Besides, the process of skilling, reskilling and up-skilling is also the basic means for getting an employment opportunity. In this context, apart from the conventional learning system, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is crucial as it could play a pivotal role not only in providing educational opportunities to the deprived sections but also in providing a greater scope for skilling people in their chosen field, using self-paced and flexible ways. Therefore, every learner will need to update their prior knowledge and skills. It is also being noted that in the Indian context, women are relatively deprived in accessing their educational, economic, and social rights as compared to their male counterparts. Therefore, it is pertinent to discuss as to what extent, education in general and ODL in particular, can play a vital role in making women learners competent with basic digital skills. Besides this, there is a need to upgrade their technological skills in the present technology-based society and the job market. So, this paper intends to explore to what extent the various ODL courses have enabled women learners to gain basic digital skills for increasing their employability. For the study, this paper examined the post-graduate women learners of the ODL institutes of Assam.

Keywords: *Digital skill, ICT, employability, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) courses, women learner.*

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1. Introduction

Acquisition of skills has become a major requirement for present-day societies, economies, education and employment. But, what type of skills do our societies aspire for, to be developed in our learners? Surely, the main thrust would be on digital skills. In this digital era, internet access and connectivity have changed the world into a digital economy. About 95% of the population across the world live in an area covered by at least a 2G internet network. However, there are inequalities in the development of learner's digital skills across the world due to lack of access to the internet and other Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools. In developed countries, people have better access to the internet and online services than those in developing countries. Considering the relevance of the digital society and economy as well as the need for digitalisation, the Government of India in 2015 initiated the flagship programme called Digital India with the objective of ensuring that the government services are accessible to all citizens of the country. This helped in connecting the rural areas with high-speed internet, improving India's online infrastructure and increasing internet connectivity across India. However, the actual functioning of the Digital India programme in different states of the country needs further research.

It is therefore important to analyse whether the common people can cope with a life transformed by digitalization, how varied are their consumption behaviour against the advances of digital and industrial economies as well as how the quality of life has been influenced by the ever-changing digitalization in the educational, social and financial environment in the post-pandemic situation. Besides, there is also an urgent need to assess the tools and intervention strategies of digitalisation while bridging the gaps between implementation and participation in the era of digital transformation. In this context, two areas are important to explore:

- How are the educational institutions, particularly the open universities playing a crucial role in terms of mobilizing the capacity of lifelong learners for acquisition of digital skills?
- How can the various courses under these universities develop the skill development capacities of the learners and enhance their level of employability?

Through this study, an attempt has been made to explore the awareness level of the women learners of the ODL institutes in a state like Assam regarding the use of affordable modern technologies and digital resources in their day-to-day life, the level of 'know-how techniques', the state-specific contexts of digital transformation, digital security and so on. This will help to understand how the use of digital technology

has enabled a better life for women in Assam. Besides, the programmes and courses of the university should be designed in such a way that it could enhance the required digital skills of the learners. It is the basic responsibility on the part of the educational and training institutions to meet the target of the Government's mission and vision. In India, as we know the Government has launched the Digital India programme with the vision of transforming India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge-based economy, by ensuring digital access, digital inclusion, digital empowerment and bridging the digital divide. The overall goal of the Digital programme is to ensure that digital technologies improve the life of every citizen, expand India's digital economy, create investment and employment opportunities and create digital technological capabilities in India.

Hence, the development of digital skills has become indispensable for the people of India for their economic, social as well as technological empowerment. These skills will enable them to have appropriate access to employment and resources, e-healthcare services, e-learning opportunities as well e-banking transaction services; develop in them the right decision-making power; inculcate the capability to fight against societal discrimination and lead a violence-free domestic life. Therefore, a mission like Digital India should be implemented and made accessible to all irrespective of gender, regional disparities, rural and urban areas, communities, older people, marginalized, etc. Therefore, it is also important to analyse how one can acquire the basic digital skills that would help one to manage day-to-day activities such as transacting digitally, staying safe online while using digital devices and the internet, using blended or online learning platforms for educational transaction in a more self-paced and collaborative way.

2. Significance of the study

Technology focuses on the use of computers, internet, TV, VCR, CDs, radio, etc. Digital skills refer to a range of abilities to use these digital devices, communication applications and networks to access and manage information. These skills are also referred to as 21st century skills, i.e., the skills, abilities and learning dispositions required for success in 21st century society and workplaces. These skills of collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity enable an individual to create and share digital content, communicate, collaborate and solve problems for effective and creative self-fulfillment in life. The digital non-natives have to acquire basic digital skills. These skills help them to manage their day-to-day activities. This set of skill also includes transacting digitally, staying safe online, etc., besides the skill of using digital devices and the internet.

In higher-level digital skills, learners will be able to use higher level digital technologies, such as the use of Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, etc. Everyone needs to have basic digital skills to enjoy greater convenience and participate meaningfully in a digital society. The rapid technological developments and accessibility to technology have created a digital divide between those possessing digital skills versus persons who are not equipped with these skills. The digital divide is a disparity between those who have access to ICT, particularly services and information provided online, and those who do not. According to CEDEFOP (2009), the digital divide is “within populations, the gap between those who can access and use information and communication technologies (ICT) effectively, and those who cannot.” The present era of the digital world is full of challenges as well as opportunities. Emphasizing the importance of technology, Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary-General, expressed that, “we are living in a world of rapid change where technologies play a multitude of roles, how we tap this technology’s potential will shape our future together. We cannot remain indifferent to this enormous metamorphosis.”

Digital skills are of great importance in today’s world as they play a major role in enhancing a person’s likelihood of finding employment and act as a catalyst for further skills development. As such, these are said as ‘gateway skills’ for employment. These skills help enormously in solving the problem of unemployment. Moreover, the methods for exploring careers, education and employment opportunities have changed dramatically over the last decades with the application of technology. Technology has made an impact on the forms of work and the structure of labour market too. The use of digital devices has provided opportunities for new ways of working, organizing and managing work. Today, the need for a highly-skilled, flexible and productive workforce is central to economic growth across the globe. The employers also put the greatest emphasis on the job-seekers’ updated knowledge, attitudes and basic digital skills. As such, it becomes quintessential for every individual to acquire digital skills. These skills become crucial for work and life of all and a key employability skill of today. So, the situation demands re-skilling and up-skilling of adults and the development of digital skills among youth. In the United States, the older workforce cited information technology as the number one skill where they require training (AARP, 2007).

Digital skills provide proficiency in working with computers, the internet, mobile devices, etc., and develop the ability of an individual to find, create, compose, evaluate and communicate clear information using technology. It also demands ethical and judicious use of technology. One should be aware of how and when to use technology.

By embracing technology and exploring its various forms, we have to acquire digital citizenship too and follow the norms of appropriate, responsible behavior about technology use. Further, digital skills are needed for the right use of various digital platforms and for acquiring some social skills required to participate fully in modern society. Social networking sites help people to stay connected with others and transmit information on time. Websites and blogs have created a global community of readers. Digitally literates have a major voice online, through social media. Without digital skills one cannot possess and establish a personal digital identity. Digital skills also help to buy and sell goods and services online. Digitally literate persons can prevent themselves from being cheated by online frauds. A person who possesses digital skills can get familiar with different kinds of online resources. Free and open online resources and courses can make one professionally and cognitively enriched. Significantly, a lack of access to or ability to use these platforms can lead to digital exclusion. COL (2021) in “Digital inequalities and social inclusion” pointed out that poorer the country, the more likelihood that access to online technology and equipment is unequally distributed.

The Education Horizon Report (2021), stated that higher education in the future will continue to rely on remote technologies and digital networks for course delivery and learning experiences, and the gap will only widen between those with digital advantage and those struggling to access even the basic devices and network necessities. As Asha Konwar (2023) in her lecture delivered on 8th March 2023 stated, 66 per cent of the global population is connected to the internet, and many women and girls in the Commonwealth of Nations are on the wrong side of the digital divide. Therefore, to address this issue, COL (Commonwealth of Learning) is applying technologies that are appropriate, affordable and available to reach the last mile. COL, which is an intergovernmental organization has initiated a programme like Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F), which uses basic mobile phones to provide short audio lessons in local languages on agriculture and financial literacy to women farmers, leading to empowerment and economic gains, etc. Therefore, it becomes obligatory for everyone to be digitally skillful, particularly those who are at the risk of e-exclusion.

There is a gap between the employability skills desired by employers and those exhibited by graduates. Over the years, the context of employability has changed enormously due to rise of information and communication technology. This has resulted in a call for higher education to match graduate skills with those demanded by employers and the economy as a whole. It is noteworthy that employers have shown reluctance to recruit inexperienced young people for entry-level jobs as they

found that too many entry-level applicants are deficient in employability skills (Gogoi, 2010). So, schools, colleges and universities have to play an important role in the development of digital skills in learners. Furthermore, knowledge and skills are the expedients of economic and social growth for a country. For India, to be a knowledge-based economy, the skill of its people to create, share and use knowledge and respond to challenges effectively are the most important aspects. Education has the right potential to transform the masses into valuable resources with the required knowledge and skills. So, educational opportunities have to be made available to all sections of the society.

In India, women constitute almost half of its population and the majority of them are deprived of opportunities for taking part in developmental activities due to lack of skill and education. In a nation, where half of its population is kept aside of the developmental process, it cannot prosper. To take India to the desired height of development, it is essential to bring women into the mainstream of development. Empowerment through knowledge and skill development is considered the requisite strategy for this. Educating women results in improved productivity, improved income and economic development as well as better quality of life leading to a healthier and better nourished population (World Bank, 2001a). Additionally, in India a major part of its population is unemployed. The present unemployment rate in India is 6.1%, wherein 5.3% is of rural India and 7.8% of urban India. The highest unemployment rate is among urban females at 10.8% followed by males in urban India at 7.1%, whereas rural males at 5.8% and 3.8% in rural females. (PLFS, NSSO, 2019). This data clearly shows that women have been lagging behind in gaining employment as compared to men.

To enhance the abilities of women and increase their employability, they have to be equipped with digital skills as these skills contribute to employability, support the reduction of barriers and create pathways to employment for women. It reduces gender inequality in the workplace too. Digitally literate women can operate computers and other technology tools for significant actions and in a responsible manner. Giving education on digital skills to women is indispensable at this juncture. Along these lines, European Commission reported that ICT has enabled new ways of working, including flexible working arrangements and 'teleworking', which has enabled those who have difficulties in accessing the labor market (such as health and mobility issues, those with caring responsibilities, those wishing to study alongside work, etc.) to undertake employment/ enhance their employability.

It is found that, across the world, there are inequalities in the development of digital skills in learners among men and women. UNESCO in 2021 stated that across the world, women are less likely to know how to operate a smartphone, navigate the internet, use social media and understand how to safeguard information in digital media. The lack of digital skills indicates the lowest skill proficiency levels of women, such as using applications on mobile phones to advanced skills such as coding computer software. These issues are confronted by women due to their lower level of educational access and attainment. So, women are behind men in internet usage which is hindering the empowerment strategies of women. Training on digital skills and internet access at educational institutions becomes essential for women's capacity building. Digital literacy is a powerful catalyst for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Therefore, education has to be made accessible to all women. However, the conventional system of education is not accessible to all women, particularly those who are drop-outs, housewives, remote or rural area dwellers, older women, marginalized, etc. and deprived of higher education at proper time and age. To make these women educated Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system is the only viable means. The ODL system has a significant role to play in providing higher educational opportunities to women. Further, one of the main objectives of the ODL system is to provide quality education and develop skills and attitudes in learners. The ODL institutions have to give due attention in use of appropriate technology in course delivery methods and to provide adequate employability skill training to the learners. The women learners should be provided with necessary information and guidance for using digital devices, to develop digital skills through various courses and programmes of the ODL system. New developments in technology make the ODL system more convenient for women. Women can be at home and build their productive skills, obtain a degree and even earn a living, along with household responsibilities. It has to equip women with required skills to go hand in hand with men to take part equally in the nation building process.

3. Programmes for empowerment

Until the dawn of the 21st century, education systems had a focus on providing learners with knowledge and information. But recent developments in science, technology and telecommunication have made information and knowledge omnipresent and easily accessible to all. As such, responding to the technological and socio-economic changes, the education systems have to make a shift towards providing learners with some skills that rely on the interdependencies of cognitive, social, and emotional dispositions.

The extent of change in information and communication technology in this century is extraordinary. The changes in technology demands skilled personnel. So, it is high time to bring about required changes in the higher education system for preparing learners to adapt to technology-based society. Higher education system prepares learners to face the challenges in life boldly and help in acquisition of skills. Higher education, particularly the Master's degree level, provides expertise to learners along with knowledge and wisdom and prepares them to be fit for future world of work.

The institutions of higher education have a decisive role to play in producing knowledgeable, ethical, responsible and skillful individuals and are expected to impart quality education. Development of technological skills in learners should be a primary responsibility of the higher education institutes of today. One of the objectives of higher education is to provide earning or employment opportunity to the learner.

Thus, the ODL system has to provide the Master's degree courses in such a manner so that the digital skills are developed in women learners, no matter whether it is a technical course or not. The ODL institutions have to prepare learners with proper employability skills and attributes through the prescribed curriculum to fulfill the requirements of the employers. Generally, ICT is regarded as the subject of men; so, for women, learning the use of ICT tools would help in removing gender disparity. It reduces the workplace inequality too. The ICT integration process in education should consider both the scholastic and socio-cultural environment, so as to correct the technological imbalance between the men and women and thereby produce a new generation of young girls and women who are knowledgeable and trained in day-to-day use of ICTs tools.

Aligning to the facts discussed above, the present study has focused on the facilities provided by the ODL institutes to learners for developing digital skills. The researchers believe that focusing on the opportunities received by the women learners, would help in examining the extent of development of digital skills in them. It is also important to evaluate how the ODL system has become successful in making women technologically empowered. On these considerations, there is a strong need to conduct an empirical study to examine the efficacy of the ODL system in developing digital skills in women learners who have completed Master's degree courses.

4. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study are to:

- Examine the capabilities of women in using digital devices;

- Discuss the extent of digital skills developed in women learner from ODL courses;
- Evaluate the preference of course (general/technical);
- Provide necessary suggestions to policy makers by identifying the shortcomings of the ODL system in developing digital skills in women learner through different ODL courses.

5. Methodology

Keeping the objectives in view, personal and postal contacts were made with the women learners who had completed Master's degree courses from the ODL institutes of Assam.

Descriptive survey study method is used in this study. Purposive sampling technique is applied to select women learners who have completed Master's degree courses, namely, MA, MBA, MCA, MMC and MSW in the years 2014, 2016 and 2018 from Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU), Assam, Regional Centre, Indira Gandhi National Open University (RC, IGNOU), Guwahati and Institute of Distance and Open Learning, Gauhati University (IDOL, GU). As the Master's degree courses in KKHSOU are introduced in the year 2011 only and the first batch passed out in the year 2014, the year 2014 is taken as the base year for the study. In fact, from 2018, many courses and programmes at the Master degree level were cut down in KKHSOU, IDOL by UGC. Therefore years 2014, 2016 and 2018 were more convenient for analysing the experiences of learners towards the use of digital learning.

The pass-out years are taken alternately, so that the coverage area of sample can be extended. The evidences for the study are collected from the learners through a questionnaire. Simple statistical techniques of analysis, such as, percentage calculation, tables, etc., were used to interpret the results. A total of 202 women learners responded to the study. Besides, narrative approach research method was used to explore the experiences of the alumni in terms of their career prospects, academic enhancement and employment.

6. Analysis of data

Women learners from 29 districts of Assam (out of 33) have responded in this survey. Number of respondents from the respective district is shown in the following table.

Table 1: The districts of respondents

District	No. of Respondents
Baksa	3
Barpeta	4
Biswanath	5
Bongaigaon	3
Cachar	4
Charaideo	5
Chirang	1
Darrang	3
Dhemaji	3
Dhubri	3
Dibrugarh	4
Dima Hasao	4
Goalpara	2
Golaghat	11
Hailakandi	1
Hojai	1
Jorhat	6
Kamrup	39
K Anglmg	3
Karimganj	4
Lakhimpur	33
Majuli	1
Morigaon	19
Nagaon	16
Nalbari	2
Sibsagar	11
Sonitpur	4
Tinsukia	5
Udalguri	2
Total	202

i. Use of technology in course delivery system

The women learners were assessed to know the use of technology tools in the course delivery system. The queries put in this regard, and the learners' responses are shown below.

Table 2: Technology used in course delivery

Query	Response	
	Yes	No
The course provides with the opportunity of Tele/ Video conferencing with experts	26%	74%
Audio-visual aids /ICT tools are used in counselling sessions /PCPs	28%	72%
The counsellors encourage for use of OER/ Blended learning or other technology based learning processes	30%	70%

From table 2, it was found that 26% learners got opportunity of video/tele-conferencing with experts during the course; 28% learners used audio-visual aids for counselling sessions and only 30% received the encouragement for using OERs/ blended learning.

ii. Technological benefits derived by the learners

The learners were asked about the technological benefits they derived from the course. Their responses are shown below.

Table 3: Technological benefits gained from the course

Item wise Benefit	Response				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Comment	Disagree	Totally Disagree
Increased your capabilities to handle a computer/ electronic gadget more confidently	9%	48%	15%	19%	9%
Became capable to use Internet realizing its importance in present day context	9%	58%	17%	10%	6%
Became capable of performing tasks needed to do digitally in day-to-day life	6%	50%	23%	15%	6%
Capable to use social media to get connected with people	9%	61%	17%	7%	6%
Realized the need for judicious and ethical use of technology	11%	43%	22%	15%	9%
The focus of the course was to develop skills of using computer, Internet and other technology tools	12%	33%	23%	29%	3%

From table 3 it can be seen that out of total respondents, a total of 57% learners (48% agreed and 9% strongly agreed) agreed that the courses helped them to increase their capabilities to handle a computer and electronic gadgets more confidently. Besides, 67% respondents (58% agreed and 9% strongly agreed) agreed that they are capable to use internet realizing its importance in present day context. Again, the courses helped the learners to perform tasks digitally (a total of 56%) and also about

70% learners are capable to use social media to get connected with people after completing the course.

iii. Preference of course by women learners

The enrolment trend of women in master's degree courses in the ODL institutes is analyzed to find their preferences for technical courses. The trend is shown in the table below.

Table 4: Enrolment trend of female learners in Master's degree courses from 2012 to 2018 (programme-wise)

Year	Course	RC, IGNOU	KKHSOU	IDOL, GU
2012	MA	983	1077	7307
	MBA	56	8	*
	MCA	32	9	21
	MMC	*	7	*
	MSW	78	74	*
2013	MA	760	1121	9158
	MBA	12	15	*
	MCA	06	19	18
	MMC	*	12	*
	MSW	88	115	*
2014	MA	841	1642	12000
	MBA	12	28	*
	MCA	07	15	17
	MMC	*	18	*
	MSW	96	150	*
2015	MA	1159	1656	11948
	MBA	08	29	*
	MCA	09	25	20
	MMC	*	8	*
	MSW	133	112	*
2016	MA	1423	2317	10375
	MBA	15	32	*
	MCA	09	30	5
	MMC	*	5	*
	MSW	79	180	*
2017	MA	2206	2584	5842
	MBA	15	41	*
	MCA	08	19	0
	MMC	*	1	*
	MSW	124	214	*
2018	MA	1871	697	3628
	MBA	06	9	
	MCA	12	0	0
	MMC	*	0	*
	MSW	101	0	*

Sources: RC, IGNOU authority, KKHSOU authority & data published in Horizon, IDOL, GU authority & IDOL website

* The course is not offered by the institute.

It is apparent from the table above that enrolment of women in technical or professional courses is very less as compared to the general courses in all the ODL institutes. Women enrolment is more in general Master's degree course (MA) than the technical or professional courses, like MBA, MCA and MMC. Enrolment in MSW course is however better than other professional courses.

iv. Employability, career opportunities and the changing job profile

In the ODL system, learner's profiles are different in terms of age, socio economic background and employment. ODL provides an opportunity to all those learners for skilling, reskilling and up- skilling their capacities for securing better future prospects and lead their lives with self-esteem in the knowledge economy. Out of 202 learners, 60% were engaged in jobs (regular and part time). Besides, 4 female learners also got the opportunity to pursue higher studies (doctoral research) after completing their M.A. in Social Sciences, mainly Education and Political Science.

Besides, through WhatsApp and Facebook messengers (online messaging tools), views of a few learners after qualifying the degree, were also collected through the narrative approach of research. One learner stated that after completion of her M.A. in Education in 2016, she qualified the National Eligibility Test (conducted by UGC) and secured admission for Ph.D. at a reputed university. In her words, "It would not be possible to continue higher studies if I did not receive the chance to enroll myself at the open university. This system directed my life towards a new dimension." In fact, there were many such success stories as another learner expressed her feelings regarding how higher education helped her to get a job. Before pursuing Master's degree, she was recruited for a part time Clerk position at block level. She later got an opportunity to join as a Teacher at DIET (District Institute of Elementary Education), which became possible only because of the degree received from an Open University of the State. Thus, from the above analysis, it is obvious that the open learning significantly tried to bring out a change among the knowledge-enabled population of the country. In fact, this system could play a significant role in empowering the marginalized, deprived and disadvantageous groups of population in the country like India by providing the scope for enhancing their required skills.

7. Findings and discussion

In India, the higher education enrolment scenario in conventional mode is still challenging in terms of GER. In the last decade, India has seen an increasing emphasis

on distance education. Digitalisation has brought about unique changes in education as a whole. The transactional process of Distance Education (DE) has been characterized with the assimilation of new technologies. This aspect of DE must have a positive impact on women learners in empowering them technologically and making them skilful. This study tries to identify the impact of technology used in the ODL system in breaking barriers towards women's liberation and empowerment. In doing this, the study reviewed the technology tools used in the course delivery system, the opportunities the women learners get in the course to handle and use technology tools - internet, etc., so that a decision can be made regarding acquisition of technology skills, development of digital literacy and digital citizenship among women learners.

After analyzing the relevant data, this study unveiled a number of facts. It was found that majority of women learners technologically benefitted from the ODL courses. The courses helped them in developing skills to handle digital devices more confidently. So, it illustrates that the ODL system has become successful in instilling digital skills among women. It is also revealed through the study that the women learners mostly prefer general degree courses over technical or professional courses in ODL mode. Therefore, efforts have to be made to attract women learners to pursue technical courses too. But, at the same time, it is also found that a sizeable percentage of learners are not benefitted technologically from the ODL courses. Unfortunately, ICT tools are not being used appropriately in the ODL course delivery methods which hinders the technological empowerment of women learners. As such, the ODL system has to do a lot more in order to improve the course delivery system.

8. Suggestions

Rapid changes in technology and knowledge requires changes in educational approaches too. The ODL system has to provide learners, particularly the women learners, the opportunity to know, understand and use technology, which makes them skillful and enhances their employability. The basic task of HEIs is to create an ICT-enabled learning environment. For this, an ICT policy needs to be evolved for higher education institutes including well equipped ICT infrastructure, education-industry collaboration, competence building of teachers and ICT integrated pedagogy for developing emerging employability skills in students. The growing situation demands technological empowerment of every individual. As such, an intense effort focused in the right direction has to be made which would help in making women digitally literate and technologically empowered. Government and States need to play a pivotal role in setting up the fundamental principles for inclusive and equitable

digital skills development, providing programmes and capacity development initiatives for disadvantaged groups, and re-skilling adults at risk for job displacement through ODL system. Ensuring that everyone has the relevant digital skills would help promote equitable education and lifelong learning for all. As India moves towards the 'Digital India', it becomes increasingly important to focus on the skills that are relevant in the present and the future.

9. Conclusion

In the 21st century, the education system should best equip the learners with the aptitudes of how to develop, utilize and create knowledge. Learners should be self-directed in their learning and ensure their own employability in order to be successful. The institutions of higher education need to focus on imparting education with the help of ICT tools so that basic knowledge and skills of ICT can be acquired by the students through teaching-learning processes. Hence, from the above discussion, it is understood that ODL has to give emphasis on skill-development of the learners, particularly among the women learners along with providing knowledge and information. So, attempts should be made to encourage women to enroll in this system, both in general and technical courses. All possible efforts should be made to make women skilled, employed and empowered.

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Outcome Evaluation of Online Teacher Training on Student Workshops and Life Skills in Jammu

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Abstract

The present study aims to evaluate the outcome of teacher training via online mode for teaching skill development. Skill development includes goal-setting, time management, stress management, and tackling procrastination. The Kirkpatrick model (1959) was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the training programme, in terms of the reaction of teachers and students; the learning of teachers and students; behavioural change of students and teachers, and results. Sessions on time management and goal-setting saw the highest attendance from the students. Most of the teachers found the stress management session extremely valuable, with some gender variations. Respondents reported a range of changes across the acquisition of new skills as well as behavioural and attitudinal changes, including feeling encouraged and motivated, handling procrastination better, and learning to make and adhere to timetables. It can be concluded here that training sessions have played an important role in different dimensions during the COVID-19 outbreak. However, it is recommended that before scaling up the intervention, the state government organizes in-person training sessions and evaluates the same to understand the impact of a similar offline intervention. The teachers and students in India had either no or less access to training and capacity-building opportunities during the COVID-19 outbreak, more specifically in the states like Jammu and Kashmir. Even if the training was conducted, evaluations were rarely done for such training. The Kirkpatrick model (1959) has been used by Indian researchers for evaluating training effectiveness. However, the researchers did not find any such evidence of the use of this model for evaluating training effectiveness in Jammu and Kashmir during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the above context, this paper is breaking uncharted territory and is presenting a unique concept of evaluating the effectiveness of an online training program organized during the COVID-19 period in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, when there were no opportunities to conduct in-person training and evaluation sessions.

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Keywords: *Online training, training effectiveness, goal-setting, time management, stress management, tackling procrastination.*

Background

Teachers' professional development is a critical factor for their development and student achievement. (Penuel et al., 2007; Lowden, 2005). If a teacher fails to keep in touch with educational developments, then he/she would become ineffective, as indicated in the Indian National Policy on Education, 1986, 1992 documents. According to the report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996), nearly a quarter of secondary school teachers needed additional training for their subjects. Professional development for teachers is central to the learning process, as highlighted in India's National Educational Policy 2020 and enhances their professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve student learning.⁴

Thomas Guskey (1994) addressed this issue when he stressed the importance of having well-prepared, high-quality teachers in schools: "We cannot improve schools without improving the skills and abilities of the teachers within them."

Guskey (2000) made use of Kirkpatrick's multilevel model to link evaluation with planning for effective professional learning. Kirkpatrick's model rests on four simple questions that translate into four levels of evaluation i.e., reaction, learning, behaviour, and results (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2008).

Training and development are vital functions of human resource management (Mohamed & Alias, 2012), for enhancing trainees' skills. It shapes competencies and develops potential through a systematic process of changing work behaviour, skills, and motivation (Shahzadi et al., 2014). Research suggests that effective training programmes must be conducted systematically, with a step like identifying training needs (Burke & Hutchins, 2007).

Training evaluation assesses outcomes based on individual and organizational objectives, ensuring information is useful and appropriate. This process evaluates the training's worth and its alignment with organizational needs (Merwin, 1992; Guskey, 2009; King et al., 2001). According to Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2008), training evaluation serves three purposes: improving future programmes, deciding

⁴https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

on programme continuation, and justifying the budget. Feedback and encouragement are crucial for evaluating the attainment of training objectives.

Rationale behind Conceptualizing the Training

During adolescence, students have high intellectual, physical, social, and emotional capabilities but often face social, emotional, physical, and psychological challenges that hinder their potential. A responsible education system must address these challenges by developing students' skills to cope with them (Prajapati et al., 2017) for managing daily challenges, emotions, and informed decision-making.

The training aimed to equip teachers to impart skills for productive adulthood, such as managing stress, dealing with emotions, practising positivity, self-esteem, empathy, good listening skills, setting personal boundaries, handling disputes, balancing priorities, communicating confidently, setting goals, making decisions, problem-solving, thinking critically and creatively, using executive functional skills, and resilience (UNICEF, 2019). These skills are crucial for success in school, work, and relationships, and the training aimed to support teachers to educate students online on four broad parameters for the content of the training: (i) Goal-setting needs to be taught to students in the purview of developing overall academic performance and acquiring a better understanding of directions for success. The key to establishing goals that produce results is making them specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-sensitive (Punnett, 1988; Dotson, 2016; Idowu et al., 2014); (ii) Time Management can help students to gain academic success and achieve peace of mind that can lead to the fulfilment of goals (Adebayo, 2015; Hamzah et al., 2014); (iii) Avoiding Procrastination is a crucial skill that can help students to manage anxiety by prioritizing (Adebayo, 2015; Abedayo & Omojola, 2012); (iv) Stress Management, to make learning more effective, improve academic performance, improve quality of life and overall health (Yasmin, 2020, Kassymova et al., 2018; Vogel & Schwabe, 2016).

This paper connects these themes such as teacher training, life skills, and online education to offer a holistic analysis of an online life-skills training programme delivered to students and teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Need for Online Intervention during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the counselling cell under the Directorate of School Education, Jammu (DSEJ) realized the need to support the students with these four modules to enable them to be prepared for their board classes and for the outside world. Student workshops were undertaken through teacher counsellors from schools, with the support of Bharti Foundation.

Evaluation Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to understand the outcome of teachers' training organized virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic and the effectiveness of online teacher training on four skill modules imparted to the students.

Data and Methods

Study Area, Target Population and Sample Size

The training programme under evaluation was conducted in 10 districts of Jammu division of the state of Jammu & Kashmir in 2020-2021. Data for the study was collected from 206 secondary and senior secondary schools. From these schools, 330 teachers were involved, who virtually trained around 10,000-14000 students (Grade 9 to 12) in the skills that they had been trained in. A sample of students (2,954) who participated in the training were surveyed, to enable first-hand insights for the trainers on whether students can respond well to the training. Surveys of the students were undertaken in May-June 2021.

Table 1: Summary of the samples covered under this study

Target Group	Number	Type of Data
Schools	206	--
School teachers	330	Pre - Post Checklist
Students	2,954	Feedback survey

In addition to quantitative data, qualitative data was also collected to substantiate the findings. A total of five focus group discussions (FGDs) with government officials, project team members, teachers and students were conducted in February-March 2022. This study utilizes primary data collected before the training and post-training period. The descriptive and inferential analysis is carried out further to evaluate, using the Kirkpatrick model.

Training Evaluation Framework

The Kirkpatrick model assesses the results of the training on four different levels: reaction, learning, behaviour, and results. The model's simplicity and flexibility make it highly suited for the effectiveness evaluation of a training programme.

Kirkpatrick's model (1959) examines the results and impact from both individual and organizational performance perspectives (Reio et al., 2017). The model is now the most widely used model for evaluating training programmes despite the criticisms and the development of other models (Reio et al., 2017).

Kirkpatrick's model divides the evaluation process into four levels.

Level 1 - Reaction: The first level measures the responses of the trainee to the training experience and their satisfaction with the training programme: whether the learners were satisfied with the learning experience and the relevance of the material. Feedback was sought from both teachers and students to understand the participants' feelings about the training programme, and also capture their assessment of training effectiveness. In turn, these reactions can help trainers or administrators evaluate various aspects of the training programme and even provide directions to improve the programme.

Level 2 - Learning: At the second level, the learning outcomes of participants in the training are evaluated. The evaluation is done through pre-tests and post-tests; however, satisfaction doesn't necessarily translate to practical learning. The second level is content evaluation: it determines if there is an increment of skills and knowledge due to the training workshop.

Level 3 - Behaviour: At the third level, changes or improvements in the learners' behaviours are assessed. It evaluates the performance by determining the extent to which the participants apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to their work. How the participants (teachers in the study) transfer the knowledge and skills obtained during the training workshop to their jobs (students in our study) is important. Behaviour analysis operates as the missing link between learning (level 2) and results (level 4) of the Kirkpatrick Model. If the learned behaviour is not applied on the job, the training programme is considered a failure even if the second level shows good learning success.

Level 4 - Results: At the last level (results), the impact of the training on the learners' improvement in their abilities and their performance, and the overall impact are assessed (Bates, 2004; Frye & Hemmer, 2012; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Patel et al., 2018). Once the results/ objectives have been defined, trainers begin to think about the behavioural changes that will help in accomplishing these results, after which the training curriculum was finalized. An effective evaluation at the initial levels makes the level 4 analysis simple and effective.

Data Management and Analysis

Quantitative Data

At level 1, participants were requested to fill out questionnaires in Google forms upon completion of the workshops; the responses constituted the feedback data. The feedback forms were designed in a way that they focus primarily on how the trainees rate the trainers and whether the information they received was relevant to their profession.

At Level 2, to measure whether any learning took place during the workshop, pre-tests were conducted to set a benchmark score against which the post-score would be compared. Only those teachers' scores were considered for the evaluation who attempted both the pre and post-test. The difference in the learning (scores before and after training) was tested through paired t-tests under the null hypothesis that there was no significant difference between the pre and post-scores. We used the following formula to calculate the test statistic t:

$$t = x_{\text{diff}} / (s_{\text{diff}} / \sqrt{n})$$

Where:

- x_{diff} : sample mean of the differences
- s : sample standard deviation of the differences
- n : sample size (i.e., number of pairs)

At Level 3, to avoid bias in data collection, self-assessments from teachers were avoided. The main sources of data for assessment were feedback about modules from the students who attended the workshops. The students were also asked about the various changes in their lifestyle (if any) after attending the workshop. Students' viewpoints on different aspects of workshops were captured, to understand whether or not they were able to use those skills and knowledge in their daily routines. Some examples of questions asked were: whether they can make timetables for themselves or not, whether they can manage their academic assignments better than before, do they feel able to manage their time, do they continue to postpone things for the next day etc. Once this data was collected, cross-tabulations were performed to analyze what percentage of students (who participated in the workshops) incorporated the skills which they acquired in their daily lives.

At level 4, triangulation was done by looking at the key findings and major themes from quantitative and qualitative data to see how the students showed change in their attitude and behaviour.

Qualitative Data

To understand the overall impact of the training workshop on the education system in terms of behavioural changes after training, viewpoints and opinions of teachers and education officials were collected. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted among teachers trained to capture their perspectives. An insight from the operational and implementation point is crucial to gaining a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of training programmes. To this end, in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with the Director of the Counselling Cell and the Project Head from Bharti Foundation. Collective themes from the IDIs and FGDs provided a clear picture of the impact of training.

Qualitative data collected through FGDs and IDIs involved five different categories of stakeholders: teachers, government, administrators, project staff, and students. The transcripts from the interviews were coded and analyzed using a content analysis framework. NVivo, a form of Computer-assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), were used to code the transcripts thematically. Overall, a mixed approach combining inductive and deductive coding was adopted. Analysts coded transcripts sequentially and deductively during initial coding, generating a first list of 124 codes and subcodes. Separate “cases” were created for each category of respondent. The overall list was examined to remove redundancies, group related codes together across stakeholders. The second cycle of coding focused on process coding: here, we began to aggregate codes from the earlier cycle into descriptions of processes that led to 84 codes. The third cycle of coding followed after discussions and feedback, further merging the similar codes which led to the current set of 65 codes. This cycle of coding involved inductive coding with the existing codebook which further refined our codes.

Key Findings

This section presents a summary of the key findings of the training workshops.

Participation in Training Workshops

A total of 206 government schools (out of 225) were covered from 82 blocks. Both male and female teachers who participated in the training were: 134 (41%) and 196 (59%) in number respectively. Table 2 presents the number of participants who attended the training under different modules. The session on ‘stress management’ saw the highest participation from teachers.

Table 2. Teacher participants in the training programme, by module

Module	Participants (n)	Participants (%)
Goal-setting	298	90
Time Management	303	92
Avoiding Procrastination	290	88
Stress Management	319	97

Out of the total students who responded to the survey, 55% were females and 45% were males. After completion of training, teachers were directed to impart training in 206 schools. It was observed that teachers covered nearly 10,000-14,000 students for different modules (Table 3).

Table 3. Students reached by teachers through the online skill workshops

Modules	Females (%)	Males (%)	Total (n)
Goal-setting	5148 (47)	5741 (53)	10889
Time Management	6194 (52)	5720 (48)	11914
Avoiding Procrastination	6569 (50)	6507 (49)	13076
Stress Management	7048 (50)	6955 (49)	14003

Table 4 shows that more than 97% of students took part in all four skills taught in the training workshops. The sessions on 'time management' observed 98.5% which was the highest among the four modules.

Table 4. Number of student participants who responded to each module of the survey

Total Participants	Participants who gave feedback (n) ¹	Participants who gave feedback (%)
Goal-setting	2905	98.3
Time Management	2911	98.5
Avoiding Procrastination	2868	97.1
Stress Management	2888	97.8

Further, to understand the satisfaction of students with training and its contents, feedback was collected on a 5-point scale.² The analysis of feedback data shows

¹ 2,954 is the denominator for all the modules but simply adding the numbers for each module won't provide the correct figure as the participants are not exclusive and are not restricted to attending any one module. The participant might be repetitive in numbers as one participant might have attended more than one module.

²Feedback on 5 point scale, where 5 = Extremely valuable; 4 = Got relevant information; 3 = Got little information; 2 = Satisfactory, and 1 = Not satisfactory.

that *mean* feedback scores for the four modules ranged between 4.7 and 4.9 for female teachers; for male teachers, it ranged from 4.6 to 4.9 (Table 5). The ‘stress management’ session received the highest scores from both male and female teachers. Male teachers scored the session on procrastination the lowest, at 4.59; the time management session received the lowest score (4.72) from female teachers.

Table 5. Mean and standard deviations for feedback scores from students, by module

Modules	Overall Mean (SD)	Males Mean (SD)	Females Mean (SD)
Goal-setting	4.44 (0.8)	4.46 (0.7)	4.42 (0.8)
Time management	4.30 (0.8)	4.31 (0.8)	4.29 (0.8)
Avoiding procrastination	4.09 (0.9)	4.12 (0.9)	4.07 (0.9)
Stress management	4.18 (0.9)	4.22 (0.9)	4.15 (0.9)

A higher percentage of students stated to be satisfied with the content and the information provided in the ‘goal setting’ and ‘time-management’ sessions. Most student participants attending the sessions on ‘stress management’ and ‘avoiding procrastination’ found the training content to be relevant to their work and were quite satisfied.

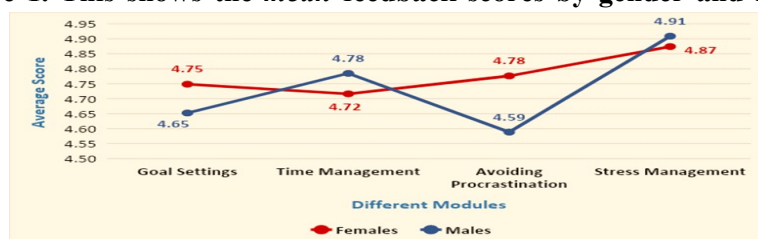
Level 1 Analysis (Reaction)

In the study, the feedback of teachers and students was taken to understand their reactions and viewpoints, to let the participants know the value of their reactions and further to obtain suggestions for improvement.

Feedback from Teachers Score of Level 1 Analysis (Reaction) for Each Module

After completion of training, teachers were asked for their responses to rate each module. Feedback data³ was taken through scores.

Figure 1. This shows the *mean* feedback scores by gender and module.



³Feedbacks were collected on a 5-point scale, where 5 = Extremely valuable; 4 = Got relevant information; 3 = Got little information; 2 = Satisfactory, and 1 = Not satisfactory.

Mean feedback scores from female teachers for the four modules ranged between 4.7 and 4.9; for male teachers, it ranged from 4.6 to 4.9. The ‘stress management’ session received the highest scores from both male and female teachers. Male teachers scored the session on ‘procrastination’ the lowest, at 4.59; the ‘time management’ session received the lowest score (4.72) from female teachers.

Stakeholders’ views from the focus group discussions revealed two important parameters of the training: 1) ‘Training process’, and 2) ‘Training topics’. Whether the stakeholders were students, teachers, project team members or government staff members, all of them unanimously agreed that the mode or methods of the training were interactive, simple, easy to understand and effective. The way training was conducted, was unique and engaging. The use of technology in the online mode proved to be a boon due to its wide approach to teachers and students. The instant feedback collection gave the sessions and participants a direction to improve. All stakeholders highlighted that the content of the training captured relevant topics crucial in their academic and professional careers. A sense of good return on investment of time and energy was felt by the stakeholders. The appreciation received by the teachers motivated them to ensure maximum participation of the students.

Figure 2. Visualization of responses linked to codes & sub-codes under Kirkpatrick level “reaction.”



Several respondents commented on the engaging use of multimedia. One teacher said: “...we felt like kids. They taught us by showing pictures and movies as examples, so we also did so with the kids.” Other vignettes included reflections on the relevance and relatability of material and the emphasis on interactivity. “...It has killed the monotony. A kind of pattern ...that we have not been introduced to such kinds of training before. The refined methodology being used and eloquence was beyond appreciation... It was very nicely conducted, and the rhythm was giving us more and more energy (Teacher)”.

Another teacher commented on the relevance of the module. “We are already stressed out and we need stress management. We are also stressed from many aspects of our life.”

An administrator/government official offered the following reflection: “I think the way slides were made by your team, all the counsellors and teachers attended with their full commitment and not for any official compulsion.”

Feedback from Students

Trained teachers received feedback from 2,954 students across 206 schools, on imparting the skills they learned in the training workshop. After the training session, students scored each module on 5 point Likert scale, as: 1 - Very dissatisfied; 2 - Dissatisfied; 3 - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 4 - Somewhat satisfied, and 5 - Very satisfied.

Figure 3. Module-wise *mean* feedback scores from students

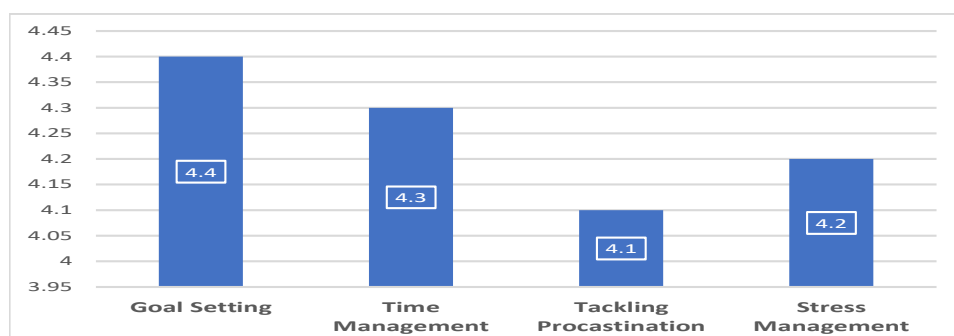


Figure 3 shows a higher proportion of students who felt that training on the ‘goal setting’ module was of utmost utility. The student participants found sessions on ‘time management’ modules as the second most beneficial training, followed by ‘stress management’ and ‘avoiding procrastination’.

Level 2 Analysis (Learning)

This level evaluates whether there is an increment of knowledge or skills due to the training. Only those teachers who attempted both pre-test and post-test were selected. The maximum percentage of teacher participants who attempted both pre-test and post-test were from the ‘procrastination’ session, followed by ‘goal-setting’, ‘stress management’, and ‘time management’ (Table 6).

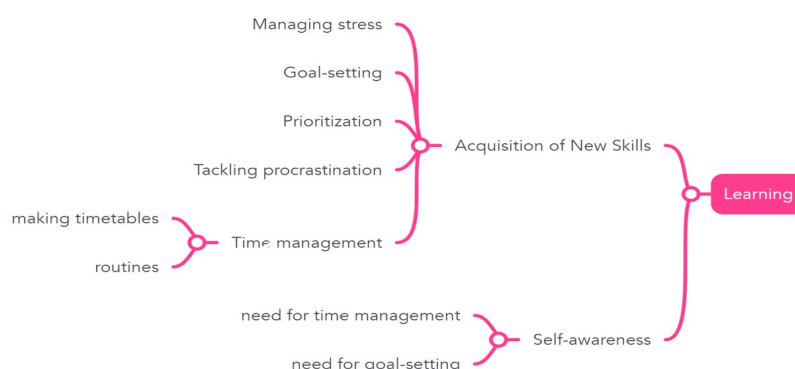
The post-test scores and the *mean* of change from the summary table (Table 6) make it clear that there is an increase in learning. The overall maximum *mean* post-score was in the session on ‘procrastination’. To see the change in each module, the *mean* was calculated for the change in each score. The change was seen by subtracting the pre-score from the post-score. The *mean* of all scores for that session was then calculated. Table 6 shows that the overall maximum change in *mean* score occurred in the session on ‘goal-setting’ (1.4), followed by the sessions on ‘time management’ (1.0), ‘procrastination’ (0.8), and ‘stress management’ (0.5).

Table 6. Gender-wise distribution of % increase in teachers’ average scores for each module

Modules	Female Teachers			Male Teachers		
	Mean Score		% Increase	Mean Score		% Increase
	Pre	Post		Pre	Post	
Goal-setting	2.2	4.1	83%	1.9	3.9	103%
Time management	2.6	4.0	53%	2.3	3.6	57%
Avoiding procrastination	3.2	4.3	37%	2.5	4.0	59%
Stress management	3.1	3.7	18%	2.7	3.8	42%

*The difference between post and pre-score was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) which shows that training has a significant and positive impact.

Figure 4. Visualization of responses linked to codes under Kirkpatrick level “learning.”



The insights from the qualitative data (major codes/themes emerged from focus group discussions with students, teachers, project teams, and government officials) indicate that training provided new learning skills such as the different ways of handling stress, goal-setting, prioritization, avoiding procrastination, and time management. ‘Self-awareness’ also came out to be an important theme that emerged from the views of all the stakeholders. The learners realize the need for time management and goal setting in their daily routines. For instance, a teacher commented that they were able to transfer the skills to students through the training. “We did get a lot of benefit from it, such as - how to do goal-setting, what to prioritize and the need to avoid procrastination. All this was liked by many of us and we taught the kids also.”

Further, a government official said: “I must admit that it was new for many of us, so that means training not only added new skills, but has also added new vocabulary. So, we have gained a lot and our students too.”

Another teacher respondent from a STEM field found the modules especially useful. “Being a botany student, I am not a psychology student but understood how to mould the kid and bring about behavioural changes.”

Level 3 Analysis (Behavioural Changes)

The skills for which training was given to the students include how they plan their daily routine and stick to it, whether they can make a goal sheet or not, what techniques are being followed for the same, and whether they have their vision clear in their mind or not.

After receiving ‘time management’ training, it was observed that around 85% of students prepared a proper schedule and followed their schedules. Around 45% of students (42% males and 44% females) missed their timetable only once a week, with minimal differences between genders. The students themselves observed the change in their ability to follow their schedules after attending the workshop. Eight out of ten students could now make and follow timelines precisely, while the rest could prepare but not follow them. Males exhibited slightly better time management skills for stress reduction. Males were found to have better time management skills to overcome their stress as compared to females. Session on avoiding procrastination helped 85% of males and 83% of females, to make significant changes in their daily routines. Both males and females had long-term and short-term plans which accounted for 94% and 96% respectively. Only 6% of males and 5% of females reported - *not planning yet*. Sessions on ‘stress management’ were found to be helpful for nine out of ten students which constitutes 91% of both males and females.

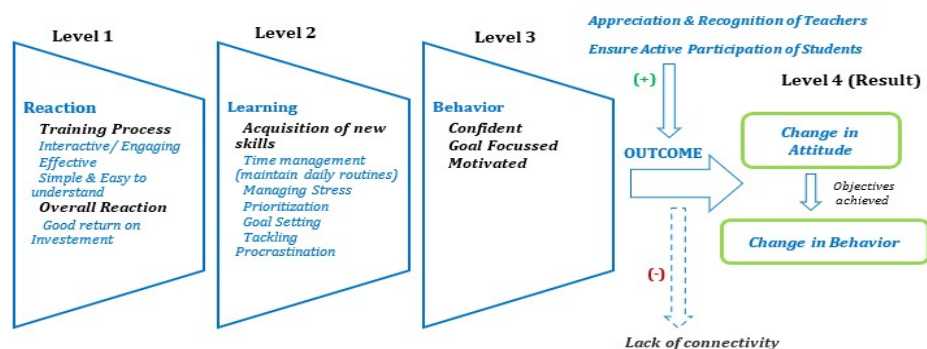
An analysis of the qualitative data collected from all the stakeholders’ interviews revealed behavioural changes amongst learners. This manifested in the form of increased participation and engagement and included a rise in confidence and motivation. As noted in level 1, decisions to reward and encourage students as well as to routinely follow up with them played an important role in bringing about behavioural changes. For instance, a teacher shared seeing students implementing the skills they had learned: “There are changes in the student’s behaviour, and naturally they have acted upon this advice.”

Despite the training on different modules, a few students experienced stress which led to physical distress. Some commonly identified stress-related symptoms were mouth dryness, fatigue, muscle pain, recall lapse, and others. Overall, there were no significant differences between boys and girls for any physical problems. The statistical significance of the difference was calculated for each variable in behavioural changes among boys and girls using the chi-square test. The difference came out to be non-significant.

Level 4 Analysis (Results)

In level 4 (Results), themes were identified that emerged from the views of stakeholders captured through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. These four stakeholders were namely students, teachers, the project team, and government officials. These results show the direction to the trainers for determining the success of the intervention and identifying challenges.

Figure 5. Diagrammatic representation of the themes (codes & sub-codes) showing the overall results



As demonstrated through qualitative data, several stakeholders collectively concurred that after the delivery of the workshops, the students were able to establish timetables which helped set their daily routine and allowed them to establish priorities while reducing procrastination. As one student said, “[the workshop] taught us how to make a timetable that we can follow. It’s not that we will make an overrated timetable, or try to alter our habits forcefully. We made a personalized timetable which can be followed easily.”

The project team noted that in Jammu, internet operates on 2G speed, making connectivity a challenge. The government administrators agreed that even though teachers can afford the internet connection, students have a significant digital divide. The appreciation which teachers got during the training motivated them, despite all the challenges in involving more students. They ensured active participation so that a large number of students benefit from the training. The teachers felt that the changes in behaviour and attitude were valuable.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study showed that adopting proper methodology helps both students and teachers to develop their skills further. The study showed that proper methodology and periodic follow-up can make online teacher training useful to teachers and students. The methodology that was used in this training can be adapted to various training programmes conducted by the Directorate, so that it is useful for teachers and students in their schools. Training can be organized periodically for the teachers

in a blended mode, online training to support and complement the face-to-face training, thereby optimally utilizing the available resources.

The major challenges in administering online teacher training programmes in government schools was non-acceptance of modern techniques and tendency to stick to the traditional curriculum and functioning of school, which occurred in some locations when the programme was implemented in schools and during the normal school year. One study reported that only one in ten organizations attempted to gather any results-based evaluation. In purview of enlightenment and motivating teachers to attend training modules, it was conveyed to teachers that training transfer is “the extent to which the learning that results from a training experience transfers to the job and leads to meaningful changes in work performance” (Baldwin, et al., 2017).

The study based on results recommends raising awareness among teachers to adopt technology-based learning systems to enhance students' learning capacities. The study also recommends policy makers to prioritize online teaching and make tech-based resources more accessible. The objective of imparting this training to the resource persons, was to enable sessions for the respective students. Thus the following were ensured: (i) Sharing the modules with the resources persons; (ii) Weekly schedule was in place for conducting the webinars by resource persons; (iii) Official notice was circulated by the department to conduct weekly webinars; (iv) Operated Google docs to track the progress; (v) Video recording was done of all four modules by the counselling cell officials; (vi) All four modules were telecasted on local channel so that maximum students could be benefitted; (vii) Follow up and follow through by the counselling cell officials, under the direction of government officials to make the activity sustainable; and (viii) Finalising the schedule of the training to be conducted in other districts of Jammu division.

The evaluation of training effectiveness is crucial to see whether it benefits the trainees' skills and performance. The Kirkpatrick's model used four levels of evaluation to understand the training effectiveness i.e., reaction, learning, behaviour, and results. It was evident that training objectives were achieved across the evaluation dimensions. The feedback and encouragement were crucial during training sessions to enable trainers and learners ascertain that the objectives of the training are achieved.

The student participants found sessions on 'time management' modules the second most beneficial training followed by 'stress management' and 'avoiding

procrastination'. Students, teachers, project team members, and government staff unanimously agreed that the mode or methods of the training were especially noteworthy. Further, the significant difference between pre and post score clearly indicates that training has significant and positive impact on the learners. The students themselves observed the change in their ability to follow their schedules after attending the workshop. The results show the direction to the training providers for determining the success of the intervention and identifying challenges, which are both crucial in evaluating the training's impact. Further, it is evident that after the delivery of the workshops, the students were able to establish timetables which helped set their daily routine and allowed them to establish priorities while reducing procrastination.

Sessions on 'time management' and 'goal setting' saw the highest attendance from students. Most of the teachers found the session on 'stress management' extremely valuable. Respondents reported a range of changes across acquisition of new skills as well as behavioural and attitudinal changes, including feeling encouraged and motivated, handling procrastination better, and learning to make and adhere to timetables. It can be concluded here that training sessions have played an important role in different dimensions during COVID-19 outbreak. However, it cannot be disagreed that there are limitations for conducting online trainings. Therefore, it is recommended that before scaling up the intervention, the state government should organize in-person training sessions and evaluate the same to understand the impact of similar offline intervention.

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Mentoring: Concept, Models and Implications of National Mission for Mentoring

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Abstract

Rooted in socio-cultural theory of learning, mentoring serves as a mediation process where mentors provide supportive situations in an active, social learning environment i.e., scaffolding, upon which learners build new understandings. The relationships between mentor and mentee serve as powerful tools that aid in mentees' personal and professional development. Situated in domain specific social contexts where negotiated process of learning between mentor and mentee stimulates the cognitive process of reflection i.e., searching for connections among the concepts, actions and contexts, shapes the novice to construct knowledge, skills and attitudes in a specific domain. The present paper surveys and examines the concept, research trends and models of mentoring and then provides implications of National Mission for Mentoring as envisaged by NEP 2020.

Keywords: *Mentoring, mentor, National Mission for Mentoring (NMM), NEP 2020, social learning theory.*

In our life, all of us arrive at a point where we desperately require *a word of* expert advice or guidance. It is possible that we had witnessed the positive impact of those words either during our education, our career or in day-to-day life. This aspect becomes more prominent when one enters any professional field, either as a trainee or as a novice practitioner. It is also a well-known fact that the most productive and excellent workforce emerges from the institutions where novices are professionally trained extensively (Ng et al., 2005) under the guidance and vision of an expert (Eby et al., 2008; Ramaswami and Dreher, 2010). There is "*an intense relationship calling for a high degree of involvement between a novice in a discipline and a person who is knowledgeable and wise in that area*" (May et al., 1982) who explicitly or implicitly hands down his/her knowledge and skills. Such kinds of relationships are also equally valuable for lifelong learning and had observable benefits in the form of improved job performances which in-turn results in promotions,

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career satisfaction, and recognition (Ragins and Scandura, 1999; Eby et al., 2006; Ramaswami and Dreher, 2010). Since the last decade, researchers are continuously taking considerations about these '*relationships*' as well as the '*environment*' in which these relationships get contextualized concerning career development (Hall and Associates, 1996), and '*mentoring*' is one such relationship (Kram, 1996; Fletcher and Ragins, 2007).

Envisaging the importance of such 'social relationships' and 'relationship rich environment' (Ramaswami and Dreher, 2010), our National Educational Policy 2020 (NEP, 2020) also purports ambitious recommendations regarding the development of a system where experienced and distinguished emeritus faculty should serve as mentors. These recommendations are:

- 12.3. Faculty will have the capacity and training to be able to approach students not just as teachers, but also as mentors and guides (MHRD, 2020: 39).
- 15.1. Teacher education is vital in creating a pool of school teachers that will shape the next generation. Teacher preparation is an activity that requires multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, formation of dispositions and values, and development of practice under the best mentors. Teachers must be grounded in Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos, and traditions including tribal traditions, while also being well-versed in the latest advances in education and pedagogy (MHRD, 2020: 39).
- 15.11. A National Mission for Mentoring shall be established, with a large pool of outstanding senior/retired faculty – including those with the ability to teach in Indian languages – who would be willing to provide short and long-term mentoring/professional support to university/college teachers (MHRD, 2020: 43).
- 23.3. Use and integration of technology to improve multiple aspects of education will be supported and adopted, provided these interventions are rigorously and transparently evaluated in relevant contexts before they are scaled up. An autonomous body, the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), will be created to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, administration, and so on, both for school and higher education (MHRD, 2020: 56).

From above it is clear that the importance of mentorship has been recognized and ambitious efforts are on its way in order to transform the academic as well as the professional institutions to build the culture of lifelong and continuous learning, which in turn empower the workforce to contribute in economic development of nation.

Defining mentor and mentoring

Historically, the term mentor seeped into academic literature from Homer's *Odyssey* having a character named 'Mentor' who was appointed for upbringing a kid (Homer & Cook, 1967), thus forming a representation of archetypal dyad (Donovan, 1990) between young and wise; novice and expert where expert and wise function as a trusted, senior advisor who provides guidance to young novice (Straus and Sackett, 2014).

It is one of the most basic and oldest approaches where relational aspects are highly significant.

This pedagogical or andragogical approach can be witnessed in almost every scenario of social relationships that is, from parent-child relationships to manager-employee interactions to friendships exchanging experiences (Noe, et al., 2002). But, the processes of mentoring require the great investment of time in order to design the learning opportunities so that mentees can build their contextual experiences in a self-regulated manner. However, such investments yield positive learning outcomes (Allen, et al., 2004).

The comprehensive and germane objective of these interactions is to transform these relationships from training to mentoring that is, from mechanical-instrumental to more humane and experience-based relationships (Pollack, 1995; Zachary, 2005). This relational shift can be achieved when mentor minimizes the mentee's dependency and diverts it to more self-regulated processes of acting and reflecting so that they become self-reliant (Middlebrooks and Haberkorn, 2009).

More often, theoretical definitions of mentoring boils down to the rigorous professional interactions which are concerned towards the development of protege's career (Carden, 1990). The intensity and rigor of these interactions can be clearly contrasted with other types of relationships that are less powerful and are usually supervisory relationships in nature (Burke, et al., 1991; Chao, 1998). For instance, Shapiro, Haseltine, and Rowe (1978) clearly stated that on the basis of rigor there is continuum of support or patronage system that includes a range of advisory/ guiding personae, where mentors are on starting point in contrast to sponsors, guides, and peer pals that are at end point.

However, in academic literature, mentoring is considered as a formal process (Burgess, 2007). Formal in the sense that both mentor and mentee are mutually

associated on the basis of some norms, accountabilities and duties (Hansman, 2000). Moreover, research literature also suggests for informal way of mentoring (Caffarella, 1993) and facilitated mentoring (Fassinger and Hensler-McGinnis, 2005), where, former is based on mutual commonalities (Caffarella, 1993) and latter incorporates the features and attributes of formal and informal mentoring, that is, norm based in function but natural in selection (Fassinger and Hensler-McGinnis, 2005). This type of mentoring retains the formal organizational structure as well as the naturalness of free selection (one of the most attractive elements of informal setting) thus making it unique infused structure, of both formal mentoring and informal mentoring. A part of structures and formats, the fundamental assumption among the definitions related to mentoring is one-on-one relationship (Cohen, 1995; Daloz, 1986) between mentor and mentee. This relationship traverses through various phases of learning and development from entry to exit (Kram, 1985; Zachary, 2000).

Functions of mentors

The fundamental function of mentor is usually perceived as a socializing agent. Historically, mentors are considered as the one who scaffold and assist less experienced (or knowledgeable) individuals to develop a potential so that s/he can become an effective member of system in which mentees aspires to thrive (Kram, 1985; Levinson and others, 1978). Traditionally, the presumption regarding the process of mentoring was based on age difference (Levinson and others, 1978). This notion regards age as experience where aged person is considered as knowledgeable/experienced and younger as naive and inexperienced. However, recent assumptions are not in accord with this and largely focus on functions of mentor. For instance, Cohen (1995), based his research on Daloz's (1986) work states that mentor's responsibilities are:

- Trust building
- Provide structured and tailored guidance
- Familiarize mentees with available choices and options or alternatives
- Put them in challenging situations
- Motivate and encourage

Moreover, recent literature also advocates that mentors exhibit their experience and achievements to maximum levels which indicates that this process is generally personal and reciprocal (Jacobi (1991).

Difference in mentors and other facilitators

“Being successful in the teacher role does not guarantee mentoring success; however, good teaching practice does inform good mentoring, and vice versa” (Daloz, 1999). However, the fundamental difference lies between mentors and ‘regular teachers’ which is the degree of concerns and engagements that are focused on the long-term development and are largely grounded in individuality of the learner in contrast to short-term performance in the course (Burgess, 2007).

Furthermore, there is also a difference between mentor and advisor. Traditionally, advising is based on some sets of tasks where information is imparted in order to complete the task. On the other hand, mentoring is largely based on the perspective of development in profession where both mentor and mentee choose one another on the basis of mutual preferences (Johnson, 2015). Another distinguishing characteristic among mentor and academic advisor is the degree of commitment and caring. Academic advisors are more concerned about degree or course requirement and share academic information. Contrastingly, mentoring is rooted in long term emotional commitments that are directed towards mentee’s development in both professional as well as personal spheres of life (Baker, 2010).

Similarly, coaching and mentoring can be differentiated on the basis of extent of clarity in tasks as well as their outcomes. Specificity of aim/target that is required by learner is the prime concern of the coach. Coach provides goal directed advice and serves as a means to accomplish the task and achieve the desired goal. Along with it, there is no scope of social pressure and personal issues. Whereas, mentoring is largely required for complex endeavors, both in academic as well as professional spheres, with a degree of personal involvement and commitment for the development of mentee.

Lastly, the process of mentoring is generally regarded as most complex due to its normative structure that is grounded over the bedrock of official status and purpose. On one hand, mentoring is concerned about personal and direct shaping of learner where learner is more important than institution. On the other hand, this relationship must not lose its normative status set by an institution. “The concept of mentoring conjures up support and encouragement for the autonomous individual, of the light touch of advice rather than the heavy hand of induction” (Cullingford, 2006) while preserving the ethos and norms of an institution.

Research trends in the field of mentoring

From the decade of nineties, publications on prescriptive theory and practice of mentoring process have been frequently publishing covering the diverse areas and concepts like definition, formal or informal mentoring, in-service and pre-service mentoring, peer mentoring, use of technology, diversity and power concerns in mentoring, etc. However, majority of them were anecdotal and rhetoric, thus building the notion that mentoring is universally successful and a positive phenomenon (Daloz, 1986) for mentor and mentee, unaffected by gender, race or socio-economic aspect of both (Roche, 1979). Later researches counter this notion and empirically assert that mentoring programmes could fail if other factors are not given their due considerations like gender, race, or SES (Daloz, 1999). Based on these empirical findings, there is an expansion in research literature in the field of mentoring and therefore, one can notice the diverse lines of research trends like:

- Impact of mentoring in mentee's development/learning;
- Effect of various personal attributes on the outcomes of mentoring process;
- Exploring the nature of mentoring in educational institutions as well as workplace;
- Impact of technology;
- Impact of power structure on mentoring relationships;
- Effect of diversity in mentoring programmes.

Roles of mentor in learning and development

Elaborating these trends, for example, regarding the roles of mentor in learning and development of learner, Cohen (1995) noted that mentor's prime focus is on sharing the information, building the relationships, modeling, facilitating reflection and preparing mentee for taking initiatives independently. These can be categorized in cognitive (Daloz, 1999), psychosocial (Crosby, 1999) and emotional (Lyon, 2001) domains broadly.

Moreover, the work of Levinson et al. (1978) is extended by other researchers in the area of career development. For example, English (2000) while exploring the roles of mentor in informal setups reported that mentoring is a complex process which involves "learning, initiation, and ongoing support towards career". Similarly, researchers also found that along with academia knowledge, mentors provide significant experiences to choose disciplines and careers. Moreover, they also support in building professional identity and efficacy (Lyons, et al., 1990).

Relationships between personal attributes and mentoring programmes

There is another trend of researches where personal attributes are studied to infer the impacts of mentoring programmes. For example, Allen, et al. (1997) reported that there was significant difference among the mentored and non-mentored proteges in terms of personality traits. Similarly, Aryee, et al. (1996) found that mentored proteges tend to thrive for increased achievement as compared to non-mentored individuals. Research reviews also suggest that mentors' motivation may be related to generativity in Erikson's terms (Aryee et al., 1996). On the other hand, regarding the personal attributes of mentor, Allen, et al. (1997) have explored the dimensions of personal traits like willingness to transfer information, to build work force that is competent, willingness to facilitate learning for others and succeed, readiness to support the organization, gratification at seeing others grow, desire to have influence on others, etc.

Mentoring at workplace

Mentoring at workplace and educational settings is another research trend. Particularly, positive effects were reported by researchers with respect to at-risk learners, peer mentoring, prospective teachers (Boreen and Niday, 2000) and induction to novice teachers (Evertson and Smithey, 2000). However, it was also reported that mentoring does not guarantee enhancement of teaching skills among novice teachers (Gratch, 1998).

Role of technology in mentoring

Despite many skeptics regarding the use of latest technologies, there are several evidences depicting the positive role of technology in mentoring process. A new area of technology-based mentoring called tele-mentoring is emerging (Chan, 2000; Single and Muller, 1999). For example, Hewlett Packard's tele-mentoring programme for its employees and students through its website (www.telementor.org/) is a case in point (Foster, 1999; Rea, 2001). Similarly, National School Network Tele-mentoring programme is designed to facilitate schools by linking subject-matter experts and students through the website (http://nsn.bbn.com/telementor_wrkshp/tmlink.htm). Another programme which is supported by National Science Foundation is the Tele-mentoring Young Women in Science, Engineering, and Computing (Perez & Dorman, 2001). Some of the models in the field are group mentoring and the ones like ask an expert are mainly concerned with short term advice, information imparting, etc. However, tele-mentoring falls short in socialization part (Bierema, 1996). Moreover,

factors like gender and race also had to be reported impacting the equality and duration of the mentoring process (Scandura and Ragins, 1993).

Impact of power structure

It has been observed that mentoring relationship are uncritically accepted as positive aspect for development and learning. As Daloz (1986) mentioned that mentor is an “interpreter of environment” and it is quite possible that mentor as an individual may be member of dominant/ hegemonic group within the institution and it is also possible that mentee due to its race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation may become vulnerable (Hansman 2000, 2001). As Thomas (2001) claimed that organizations failed to remove such barriers and thus the mentoring failed for marginalized groups because organizational interests were served at the cost of individual interest (Bierema, 2000). Mentors can exercise power operations on the basis of assumptions which are made about mentee as well as the process. This problem gets exponential in hierarchical system as “authoritarian, manipulative, banking pedagogy”, it overshadows the possibility of democratic and learner centered ways of learning and mentoring by distorting their experiences.

Process of mentoring

In socio-cultural theory of learning, mediating roles of social tools are of prime importance which purport that mental developments are the manifestation of social interactions and firstly appears at social level that is among the people, and then at individual level (Vygotsky, 1978). Learner builds new conceptualization in an active social environment where the knowledgeable others (peers and instructors) scaffold or provide support situations. Social relationships with the knowledgeable others serve as a powerful means or tools that facilitate a learner in personal and professional development (Baker, 2010). Such relationships are situated in social contexts where participatory process changes from peripheral to central membership which is from novice to expert (Lave and Wenger, 1991). These changing modes of participation are associated with tool use and involve “a negotiated process of learning [that] is heavily shaped by the shifting roles and relationships as newcomers get incorporated into a community of practice” (Nasir and Hand, 2006: 462).

Through these social interactions, mentors facilitate the cognitive development among the learners. One form of such social interactions is dialogue. Dialogue not only enables the mentor to comprehend the learner’s thought processes but also to formulate the questions and situations that pose the challenges to existing knowledge

structure of learner, so that s/he can get engaged in deep and meaningful cognitive processes by reflecting over them. While experience is necessary for learning, such reflections are essential because it facilitate the search and formation of new connections (Zull, 2002; Levinson et al., 1978) among the concepts, actions and contexts (Joy and Pask, 2007) (fig.1).

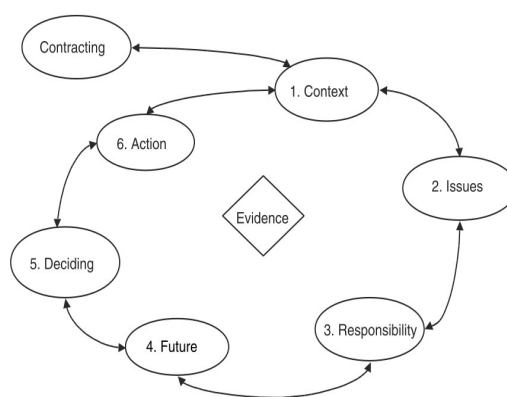


Fig. 1 Process of mentoring by Joy and Pask (2007)

Models of mentoring

As stated above, leanings process is social in nature and so is mentoring process also - where the mentor and the mentee collaboratively act and reflect to develop conceptualizations in a given context (Hall, 1987). To elaborate and make this process more concrete, from application point of view, various researchers proposed models for mentoring. For example, Jonhson et al. (1999) proposed (fig. 2) that “mentoring relationship is influenced by interaction between constructs of socialization, task, and lifespan”.

Socialization itself is a learning process where agents from different walks of life facilitate an individual to learn and develop in a specific context (Goldstein, 1994). Jonhson, Giroy and Griego (1999) explain this dimension as, when novice enters in a new environment, learner is in the pre-formative stage where the person gains new experiences and tries to adapt. Later, to make these experiences more structured and systematic, an organization or institution assigns a mentor. This is the formative stage. When a learner gains some internal locus of control and is able to make choices, it is the post-formative stage.

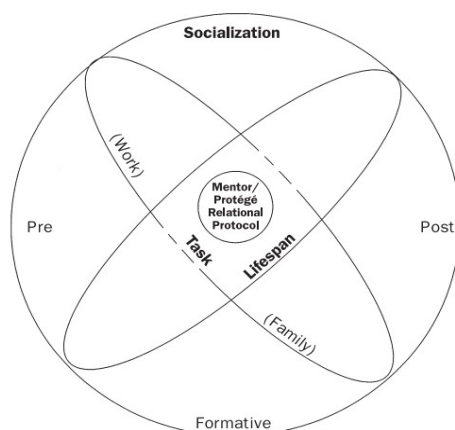


Fig. 2 Johnson, Giroy and Griego (1999) model for mentoring

Task dimension includes skill development where some set of proficiencies is required to be mastered to compete and achieve satisfaction in work environment. These skills and/or set of proficiencies are embedded in two major functions, viz., career function and psychological function (Arthur and Kram, 1985) and are resultant of mentor-protégé relationships. For instance, some of the career functions are coaching, sponsorship, exposure-and-visibility, etc., and similarly, psychological functions are role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, friendship, etc. (Kram, 1985). Life span dimension covers every aspect concerned with change, growth and development of an individual, from birth to death (Feldman, 1997). Researches had categorized various aspects of development like cognitive (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969), moral (Kohlberg, 1994), psycho-social (Erikson, 1994), self (Kegan, 1982). To explore the extent of mentor teacher ability to address the teacher trainee/ protégé needs, Crasborn et al. (2011) empirically explored four mentor-teacher roles through mentoring dialogues.

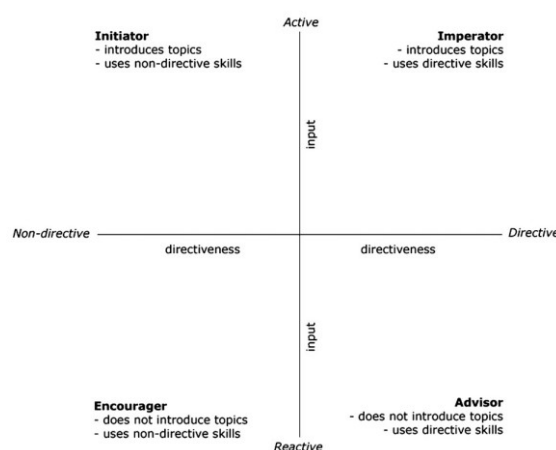


Fig. 3 Crasborn et al. (2011) Mentor Roles in Dialogues (MERID) model

In this two-dimensional model (fig. 3), input and directiveness are two independent dimensions. Mentor provides inputs in the form of content that lies anywhere on the continuum from active to reactive and the way by which mentor steers the course falls in directiveness dimension having a continuum from directive to non-directive. The combinations of these two dimensions results in formulation of four mentoring roles such as initiator, one who introduces the content and uses non-directive supervisory skills (like summarizing and asking open ended questions) and facilitates mentee to reflect. Then there is imperator, one who introduces the topic and uses directive supervisory skills (like giving advice) to guide the learner. Further, there is advisor, one who responds/reacts to the mentee after involving them in content and uses a directive supervisory skill and provides them by direct advice on the course of action. Lastly, there is encourager, who responds/reacts to the mentee after involving them in content use non-directive supervisory skills to induce the mentee to explore her concern.

Influenced by the work of Crasborn et al. (2011), Kubberoed and Hagen (2015) recently developed a mentoring model (fig.4) rooted in experiential learning approach on the basis of two case studies in separate fields viz., management and engineering, the domains where “skills and expertise are largely tacit and socially constructed”.

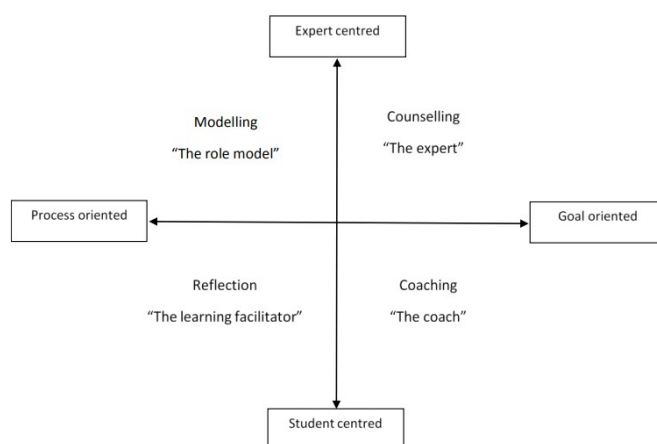


Fig. 4 Kubberoed and Hagen (2015) models for mentoring

Their mentoring model is also twin dimensional, having mentoring focus and goal orientation as independent dimensions. Mentoring focus means ‘who steers the course’ and is a continuum from expert centered to learner centered. Similarly, goal orientation is a continuum from process oriented to goal oriented. The combination of these dimensions gives four types of mentor roles. The first one is role model, one who demonstrates the skills as an expert, where mentee learns by examples. Second is the expert, who uses counselling skills and provides goal oriented direct advice on particular question or objective that is explicit. Thirdly, there is learning facilitator, one who devises substantial learning setups for meaningful learning experiences so that mentee can reflect and orchestrate the resources to become self-regulated and an independent learner. As mentor facilitates only for reflective process, it is not goal oriented. This kind of practice is based on critical thinking and finding solutions on your own. Lastly, there is the coach, who works with self-regulated mentee towards particular goal/objective by providing direct feedback on mentees actions.

Though there are various models for mentoring, research continuously indicated that the process which leads towards learner centric and reflection-oriented actions enable mentee to become self-regulated and independent, thus serving as the most suitable models (Jean and Audet, 2013).

Implications of national mission for mentoring

As the panel discussion on mentoring (NITTTR, 2020) clearly cited that the problems like lack of sufficient faculty members/teachers in HEIs, engagement of HEIs in assigned tasks, decreased funding for research and development, HEIs governance, etc., clearly impacts the faculty. Therefore, to make mentoring relevant and functional is a need of the hour. Rather than imposing, mentoring process must include the standard based aspect of creating, nurturing and sustaining (NITTTR, 2020).

Researches indicate that mentoring strategies must be relevant and measurable, where specific goals can be achieved within specific time limit collaboratively. Inter-institutional collaborations are required so that thrust areas as well as experts can be identified in diverse fields of learning. Moreover, these collaborations must be extended to relevant industries or employers. Ethical as well as pedagogical standards must be identified that are pragmatic as well as measurable for specific fields of learning as well as for institutional development. For this, measures from various theories of continuous professional development (CPD) can be adopted so that continuous evaluation or self-audit of both mentor and mentee along with an institution can be performed, to develop a feedback mechanism.

Moreover, mentoring programmes can be designed from highly-structured to informal and from short-term to long-term as per the need. For this purpose, the initial step is need analysis, i.e., identification of the thrust areas or hotspots where mentoring is required. Later, the strength and discrepancies of mentee, mentor and the context are to be analyzed so that clear objectives, curricula and strategies could be devised. During the execution of mentoring process, a mechanism of continuous feedback and evaluation must be adopted so that threats towards set objectives could be assessed.

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Transformational Features of Higher Education in NEP2020 and Engaging Students and Educated Youth in its Implementation

• Letginlen Dounge¹

Abstract

Education is the most effective means of social justice and personal advancement. There is no better investment to improve the future of society. With this perspective, the Government of India introduced the new National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), to transform the nation into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all. For its effective implementation, NEP 2020 seeks active involvement of the youth from the higher education sector and the educated youth from the community. Keeping this in mind, the present article seeks to explore and analyse the NEP 2020 especially in respect of higher education. It also explores how the key features when implemented, with active involvement of the youth within and outside the higher education set up will transform the higher education landscape and society at large.

Keywords: *National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), students, educated youth, volunteering, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).*

Introduction

Long back, India's first education policy was introduced in the year 1986, called National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) (MHRD, 1986) with a Programme of Action, later revised in 1992 (MHRD, 1998). About thirty-four years thereafter, a new policy called National Education Policy 2020 has been introduced by the Government of India in 2020. The NEP 2020 thus replaces National Policy on Education of 1986. The NEP 2020 signifies a huge milestone for India's education system, which will certainly make India an attractive destination for higher education world-wide (Sawant & Sankpal, 2021). The National Education Policy 2020² is a welcome step which aims to transform the entire education landscape in India. The

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²https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

NEP 2020 is aligned with the United Nation Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and especially SDG 4, which seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education; and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030³. This policy proposes revising and revamping of all aspects of the education system including its regulation and governance in order to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education, while building upon India’s traditions and value systems. The NEP 2020 lays particular emphasis on development of creative potential of individual and higher order cognitive capacities such as critical thinking and problem solving and social, ethical and emotional capacities and dispositions (Sawant & Sankpal, 2021:3456).

Moreover, the NEP 2020 also aims to achieve 100% youth and adult literacy by 2030, incorporating adult education and lifelong learning. A centrally sponsored scheme of “Education for All” (earlier known as Adult Education), called New India Literacy Programme (NILP) and its implementation blueprint, viz., Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society (ULLAS) 2022 - 23 to 2026 - 27⁴ has been introduced targeting all non-literates aged 15 years and above, in hybrid (both online and offline) mode, through volunteerism. With this, the new education policy gave emphasis on volunteers for its effective implementation. So, the present study seeks to analyze how this approach of the school education sector could be emulated with respect to HE sectors also.

Objectives of the Study

Keeping in mind the vision of NEP 2020 this study aims:

- (i) To study and highlight the significant features in higher education system in NEP 2020; and
- (ii) To explore how to engage the students and educated youth for awareness creation and implementation of NEP 2020 especially the higher education system.

Proposed Approach

The present study is based on a content analysis of National Education Policy 2020 document. Hence, it proposes to adopt a document analysis method for analysing the key significant features of its higher education to engage its students and the educated youth as volunteers to create awareness.

³<https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/>

⁴<https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/ullas-understanding-lifelong-learning-all-society>

NEP 2020 and Higher Education Institutions

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in a developing nation like India since it promotes human growth. After independence, higher education has grown massively. It promotes the development of the country by disseminating specialized knowledge and abilities. Historically, there were only 20 universities and 500 colleges in the country and 0.21 million students at the time of independence (UGC, 2010). Since then, the HE system has expanded exponentially. India has the world's second largest higher education system with over 58,000 higher education institutions. There are now 43.3 million students enrolled for higher education, around 20 21-22, as per the All Indian Higher Education Survey 2021-22.

The policy's main objectives are to improve the quality of HEIs and establish India as a hub for international education (Das, 2022; Das et al., 2023). The emphasis is on offering a flexible curriculum via an interdisciplinary approach, allowing multiple exit points in a four-year undergraduate degree, accelerating research, boosting faculty support, and promoting globalization (Das & Barman, 2023; Das et al., 2023). In fact, higher education is an important aspect of education system in deciding the economy, social status, technology adoption, and healthy human behavior in every country. The policy essentially aims at quality of HEIs and positioning India as a global education power.

Key Features in Higher Education System in NEP 2020

The key features and policy declarations in respect of the HE system in NEP 2020 are provided below:

Forward-looking vision for India's Higher Education System: The society and values, envisioned and promised by the Indian Constitution is democratic, just, socially-conscious, cultured, and humane - upholding liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice for all. As India moves towards becoming a knowledge economy and society, more and more young persons are likely to aspire for higher education. Higher education must aim to develop good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals. It must prepare students for more meaningful and satisfying lives. An identified set of skills and values will be incorporated at each stage of learning, from pre-school to higher education. Higher education must form the basis for knowledge creation and innovation thereby contributing to a growing national economy (MHRD, 2020: 33). Some major problems faced by India's higher education system include: its severely fragmented ecosystem, less emphasis on development of cognitive skills and learning outcomes, rigid separation of disciplines, limited access in socio-economically

disadvantaged areas, limited teacher and institutional autonomy, limited career management and progression to faculty and institutional leaders, lesser recognition to research and funds, etc (MHRD, 2020: 33).

Complete overhaul of HE system: The policy envisions a complete overhaul of the higher education system to overcome the challenges by a move to: large, multidisciplinary universities and colleges, one in or near every district, offering education in local/Indian languages; moving towards a more multidisciplinary undergraduate education and faculty and institutional autonomy; career promotions based on teaching, research, and service; establishing a National Research Foundation to fund researches in universities and colleges; “light but tight” regulation of higher education by a single regulator; increased access, equity, and inclusion through greater opportunities, scholarships for disadvantaged and underprivileged students; online education, and Open Distance Learning (ODL) (MHRD, 2020: 34).

Institutional restructuring and consolidation: The main thrust of this policy is to end the fragmentation of higher education by transforming the institutions into large multidisciplinary universities, colleges, and HEIs. The colleges will become degree granting autonomous institutions. By 2040, all HEIs shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions with degree granting powers (MHRD, 2020: 34-35).

Increase GER to 50% by 2035: The NEP aims at increasing the current GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) from 26.3% to 50 by 2035. It promises to add 3.5 crore new seats in higher education. Growth will be in both public and private institutions, with a strong emphasis on developing a large number of outstanding public institutions. There will be a fair and transparent system for determining increased levels of public funding support for public HEIs. Institutions will have the option to run Open Distance Learning (ODL) and online programmes, and improve access, increase GER, and provide opportunities for lifelong learning (SDG 4) (MHRD, 2020: 35). The overall higher education sector will aim to be an integrated higher education system, including professional and vocational education. This approach will be equally applicable to all HEIs across all current streams, which would eventually merge into one coherent ecosystem of higher education.

Holistic and multidisciplinary education: A holistic and multidisciplinary education would aim to develop all capacities of human beings-intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral in an integrated manner. Such an education will help develop well-rounded individuals that possess critical 21st century capacities in all fields of higher education (MHRD, 2020: 36).

Large multidisciplinary universities and colleges: The approach from now on would be to establish large multidisciplinary universities and colleges which will facilitate the move towards high-quality holistic and multidisciplinary education. Flexibility in curriculum and novel course options will be on offer to students, in addition to rigorous specialization in a subject or subjects.

Flexible and innovative curricula: Towards the attainment of such a holistic and multidisciplinary education, the flexible and innovative curricula of all HEIs shall include credit-based courses and projects in the areas of community engagement and service, environmental education, and value-based education.

Structure and lengths of degree programmes: The undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4 year duration, with multiple exit options and appropriate certifications. An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) shall be established which would digitally store the academic credits earned from various recognized HEIs, so that the degrees from an HEI can be awarded taking into account credits earned. HEIs will have the flexibility to offer different designs of Master's programmes (MHRD, 2020: 37).

MERUs (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities): Public universities for holistic and multidisciplinary education, at par with IITs, IIMs, etc., called MERUs (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities) will be set up and will aim to attain the highest global standards in quality education. They will also help set the highest standards for multidisciplinary education across India.

National Research Foundation (NRF): HEIs will focus on research and innovation by setting up start-up incubation centres. The NRF will function to help enable and support such a vibrant research and innovation culture across HEIs (MHRD, 2020: 38).

Optimal learning environments and support for students: First, in order to promote creativity, institutions and faculty will have the autonomy to innovate on matters of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment within a broad framework of higher education qualifications that ensures consistency across institutions and programmes and across the ODL, online, and traditional 'in-class' modes.

Choice Based Credit System (CBCS): All assessment systems shall also be decided by the HEIs, including those that lead to final certification. Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) will be revised for instilling flexibility. HEIs shall move to a criterion-based grading system, making the system fairer and outcomes more comparable, with continuous and comprehensive evaluation (MHRD, 2020: 38).

Institutional Development Plan: Each institution will integrate its academic plans ranging from curricular improvement to quality of classroom transaction - into its larger Institutional Development Plan (IDP). It will be committed to the holistic development of students, in both academic and social domains both inside and outside formal academic interactions. Faculty will have the capacity and training to be able to approach students not just as teachers, but also as mentors and guides. ODL and online education provide a natural path to increase access to quality higher education. ODL will be renewed and expanded while ensuring adherence to clearly articulated standards of quality, equivalent to the highest quality in-class programmes (MHRD, 2020: 39).

Internationalisation of HE: Implementation of all the above initiatives will help Indian students to improve the quality of higher education and the chances of their mobility abroad. India will be promoted as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable costs thereby helping to restore its role as a 'Vishwa Guru'.

Research/teaching collaborations: Setting up an International Students Office at each HEI hosting foreign students, facilitating research/teaching collaborations and faculty/student exchanges with high-quality foreign institutions, encouraging high performing Indian universities to set up campuses in foreign countries, inviting leading foreign universities to operate in India, and a legislative framework to facilitate this, are some of the measures to promote internationalisation of HE (MHRD, 2020: 39).

Funding higher education: NEP 2020 aims at increasing the current GDP to 6% higher at the earliest, with both the states and the Central governments working together.

Motivated, energized, and capable faculty: The most important factor in the success of higher education institutions is the quality and engagement of its faculty. The various factors that lie behind low faculty motivation levels must be addressed. Hence, the policy recommends that all HEIs be equipped with the basic infrastructural facilities; teaching duties to not be excessive, and student-teacher ratios not too high; and excellence will be further incentivized through appropriate rewards, promotions, recognitions, and movement into institutional leadership (MHRD, 2020: 40).

Recognition and reward: Excellent faculty with high academic and service credentials, demonstrating leadership and management skills will be identified early and trained through a ladder of leadership positions. Institutional leaders will motivate

and incentivize outstanding and innovative teaching, research, institutional service, and community outreach by faculty members (MHRD, 2020: 41).

Equity and inclusion in higher education: The actions to address the many reasons for exclusion include earmarking suitable Government funds for the education of SEDGs with clear targets for higher GER for SEDGs; and providing more financial assistance and scholarships to SEDGs in both public and private HEIs, and making admissions processes and curriculum more inclusive (MHRD, 2020: 41).⁵

Reimagining vocational education: This policy aims to overcome the social status hierarchy associated with vocational education. Beginning with vocational exposure at early ages in middle and secondary school, quality vocational education will be integrated smoothly into higher education. Every child will learn at least one vocation and is exposed to several more, going up to 50% of the students by 2025. It will be integrated into all school and higher education institutions in a phased manner over the next decade. This is in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Target 4.4 (MHRD, 2020: 43-44).

Catalysing academic research: NEP 2020 aims to establish a National Research Foundation to transform the quality and quantity of research in India, linking with identifying student interests and talents, and promoting research in universities. Given HEIs' multidisciplinary nature, emphasis will be laid on holistic education, linking research with career management with suitable changes governance and regulatory changes (MHRD, 2020: 46).

Regulatory system of higher education will be transformed: Regulation of higher education has been too heavy-handed for decades, with too little effect. The regulatory system is in need of a complete overhaul. Four institutional structures will be set up, as independent verticals within one umbrella institution, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), as empowered bodies to perform their distinct functions: (National Council for the Regulation of Higher Education (NHERC) for regulation; General Council of Education (GEC) for standardization; Council for Higher Education Grants (HEGC) for funding, and National Accreditation Council (NAC) for academic standard setting (MHRD, 2020: 46-47).

Governance and institutional leadership in HEIs: Strong self-governance and outstanding leadership is key to effective governance and institutional excellence in

⁵https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349359033_National_Education_Policy_2020_and_Its_Comparative_Analysis_with_RTE

HE. NEP 2020 sets a 15-year time frame to endow for all HEIs to become self-governing institutions of excellence in HE sectors (MHRD, 2020: 49).

Volunteerism in NEP 2020 Implementation

The NEP 2020 has laid down certain provision for volunteerism, predominantly for the school education sector, given below. These could be used as a reference point for engaging with students of HEIs and educated youth in implementing NEP 2020 in the higher education sector.

Scope for involving volunteers in literacy and school education sector in NEP 2020: NEP 2020 envisages that every literate member of the community could commit to teaching one student/person how to read, and it would change the country's landscape very quickly. States may consider establishing innovative models to foster such peer-tutoring and volunteering activities as well as launch other programmes to support learners in this nationwide mission to promote foundational literacy and numeracy (MHRD, 2020: 9). NEP 2020 lays down that efforts will be made to involve community and alumni in volunteer efforts for enhancing learning by providing at schools: one - on - one tutoring; the teaching of literacy and holding of extra-help sessions; teaching support and guidance for educators; career guidance and mentoring to students, etc. Support of active and healthy senior citizens, school alumni and local community members will be suitably garnered. Database of literate volunteers, retired scientist/government/semi government employees, alumni and educators will be created for this purpose (MHRD, 2020:11).⁶

NEP 2020 recalls the National Literacy Mission of 1988, which was largely based on the voluntary involvement and support of the people. It resulted in significant increase of literacy levels during the period of 1991- 2011, including women (MHRD, 2020: 51). This approach is useful to guide similar interventions in the HE sectors also.

Volunteerism in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): India has the world's second largest higher education system with over 58,000 higher education institutions. There are now 43.3 million students enrolled for higher education, up by nearly 2 million students in just one year. Nearly 79 per cent of students are enrolled in undergraduate courses with 12 per cent at the postgraduate (master's degree) level.

⁶<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/educational-blog/implementation-of-new-education-policy-in-india-an-insight-48262/>

The report of the All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) 2021–22, made public on January 25, found that 4.33 crore students are currently enrolled in a higher educational institute - up from 4.14 crore in 2020-21, and 3.42 crore in 2014-15.⁷

Possible volunteers and youth leaders for propagation of NEP 2020: The core strength of NYKS is a network of 2.55 lakh village level youth clubs across India with an enrolment of about 50.80 lakh rural youth volunteers (Department of Youth Affairs & Sports, 2020). It has become one of the largest youth organizations in the world (Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (2023)).⁸ The National Service Scheme (NSS) was launched in 1969 in 37 Universities involving about 40,000 volunteers which has now spread over 657 Universities and 51 +2 Councils/Directorates, covering 20,669 colleges/technical institutions and 11,988 senior secondary schools.⁹ The National Cadet Corps (NCC), established in 1948 with 20,000 cadets, will now have a sanctioned strength of 20 lakh cadets, making it the world's largest uniformed youth organization. This expansion, aligned with the National Education Policy 2020, aims to empower youth as future leaders. When pressed into service among the 4.3 crore students as volunteers in over 58,000 HEIs, they become the world largest volunteers to create awareness of NEP 2020 (Ministry of Education (2020)).¹⁰ They could be involved by the Ministry or HEIs' faculty. A meeting among the youth should be organized so as to sensitize and educate them on the action areas of NEP 2020.

The Way Forward

Some considerations for the effective implementation of NEP 2020 through volunteerism include:

1. Offering incentives as a way to increase morale and participation. Recognizing volunteer contributions through various forms of incentives such as providing cash incentives, letters of commendation to volunteers or honoring volunteers during Republic Day or Independence Day, etc., would help in combating volunteer fatigue.

2. Focusing on volunteerism at educational institutions could consider making student participation mandatory. This can be linked to course credits in their study programmes (Ministry of Education (2021)).

⁷<https://indianexpress.com> › Explained

⁸<https://nyks.nic.in> › resources › pdf

⁹<https://nss.gov.in/>

¹⁰<https://pib.gov.in> › PressReleaseDetails

Conclusion

The NEP 2020 is a welcome and ambitious re-imagination of India's education system into a modern, progressive and equitable one. Built on the foundational pillars of access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability, NEP 2020 is aligned to the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 4. It aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making both school and college education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, suited to 21st century needs. The policy calls for a large-scale implementation of a magnitude never before attempted anywhere in the world. It requires a great deal of acceptance, commitment, optimism, change in attitude, and mindset. Therefore, government and universities together need to engage in the massive involvement of volunteers.

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Impact of Leadership Skills on Academic Success of College Students in Shivamogga District

• Shivakumar G.S.¹

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between leadership skills and academic success among college students in the Shivamogga district. Leadership attributes are often seen as essential, for personal and professional development. This research explores how these traits influence students' academic performance. By analyzing data from a sample of students across various colleges, the study identifies key leadership attributes that correlate with higher academic achievement. The findings suggest that students who demonstrate strong leadership abilities tend to achieve better academic results, highlighting the importance of fostering leadership skills alongside traditional academic pursuits. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the role of leadership in educational outcomes, providing insights for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance student success.

Keywords: *Leadership attributes, academic success, college students.*

Introduction

In the evolving landscape of higher education, the development of leadership skills has emerged as a critical factor influencing student success. Leadership skills, encompassing qualities such as effective communication, strategic thinking and team collaboration, are increasingly recognized as pivotal not only in professional realms but also in academic settings. This study examines the impact of leadership skills on the academic success of college students in Shivamogga district, aiming to uncover how these competencies contribute to academic performance and overall student achievement.

Shivamogga district, with its diverse educational institutions and student population, provides a unique context for this research. Understanding the relationship

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between leadership skills and academic success in this region can offer valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and students alike. By evaluating the influence of leadership abilities on students' academic outcomes, this study seeks to highlight the importance of integrating leadership development into the educational framework to enhance student performance and engagement.

The focus of this research includes analyzing the correlation between various leadership attributes and academic achievements such as grade point averages, involvement in academic activities, and overall student satisfaction. The findings aim to contribute to the broader discourse on educational excellence, emphasizing the role of leadership in fostering a conducive learning environment and promoting academic success.

Literature Review

This study contributes to the literature in the following ways. "Helping students develop the integrity and strength of character that prepare them for leadership may be one of the most challenging and important goals of higher education" (King, 1997, p. 87).

Increasingly, higher education is being turned to as a source for potential change given its significant role in developing leadership capacity among today's youth (Astin, 1999; Astin & Astin, 2000; Morse, 1989, 2004).

The education and development of students as leaders has long served as a central purpose for institutions of higher education as evidenced in mission statements and the increased presence of both curricular and co-curricular leadership development programmes (Astin & Astin, 2000; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Additionally, research indicates that students can and do increase their leadership skills during the college years (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) and that in turn enhance the self-efficacy, civic engagement, character development, academic performance, and personal development of students (Benson & Saito, 2001; Fertman & Van Linden, 1999; Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005; Scales & Leffort, 1999; Sipe, Ma, & Gambone, 1998; Van Linden & Fertman, 1998).

This would suggest that the purposeful development of these capacities might help to diminish what numerous authors (Ehrlich, 1999; Korten, 1998; Lappe & DuBois, 1994) have identified as a lack of leadership capacity and emerging leadership

crisis in American society. This evidence and the increasing importance of outcomes assessment in higher education situate leadership as a critical college outcome (NASPA & ACPA, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). However, researchers' use of general measures of leadership development rather than those tied to specific models has contributed to a scarcity of empirical studies grounded in the theory that is supposed to inform purposeful practice (Posner, 2004).

This has resulted in three overarching problems:

- a significant gap between theory and practice;
- an unclear picture of the leadership development needs of college students;
- uncertainty regarding the influence of the college environment on leadership development outcomes.

If higher education institutions could begin to address these issues, the ability to enhance leadership development and the preparation of civically engaged citizens would increase dramatically.

Need for the Study

The need for this study stems from the growing recognition of leadership skills as a significant factor influencing various aspects of personal and professional success. In the context of higher education, leadership skills are increasingly being seen as crucial, not only for future career prospects but also for enhancing academic performance and engagement.

Educational enhancement: Despite the focus on academic skills, there is a gap in understanding how non-academic skills like leadership impact student success. This study addresses this gap by exploring how leadership competencies can contribute to better academic outcomes, providing a holistic approach to student development.

Regional context: Shivamogga district, with its unique educational landscape and diverse student population, presents an opportunity to investigate these dynamics in a specific regional context. Understanding how leadership skills affect academic success in this district can help tailor educational interventions and programmes to local needs.

Policy implications: Findings from this research can inform policymakers and educational administrators about the potential benefits of integrating leadership training

into the curriculum. By highlighting the connection between leadership skills and academic performance, the study advocates for curriculum reforms and support systems that promote leadership development.

Student development: For students, particularly those in Shivamogga district, this study emphasizes the value of leadership skills beyond traditional academic learning. It underscores the importance of developing these skills as a means to enhance academic achievement, preparing them for future challenges both in education and in their professional lives.

Educational strategy: The study provides a foundation for educators to design and implement strategies that foster leadership skills among students. By demonstrating the impact of these skills on academic success, it encourages a shift towards a more comprehensive approach to education that values both academic and personal growth.

Definition of Key Terms

Leadership attributes - Leadership may be considered as the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts towards goal setting and goal achievement. (Stogdill, 1950:3)

Academic success - Academic success is about excelling in coursework and examinations, it also encompasses the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a passion for learning. True academic success is an all-encompassing concept, which goes over and beyond the numeric representation of grades, focusing on the overall growth and development of individuals and of people as a whole (Cachia, M., Lynam, S., & Stock, R., 2018).

College students - College students are individuals who are enrolled in a higher education institution, such as a college or university, pursuing undergraduate or graduate-level studies. They are in a stage of their education that typically follows high school and precedes professional or advanced academic careers. (Caruth, G., 2016).

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were formulated for the present study:

1. To study the leadership attributes of undergraduate college students.
2. To study the academic achievement of undergraduate college students.

3. To compare boys and girl students on leadership attributes and academic achievement.

4. To find the relationship between leadership attributes and academic achievement of undergraduate students.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated for the study are:

1. There is no significant difference between male and female in their leadership attributes and academic achievement.

2. There is no significant difference between leadership attributes and academic achievement in their locality.

3. There is a relationship between leadership attributes and academic achievement of undergraduate college students.

4. There is no significant difference between Kuvempu university and other university students' leadership attributes and academic achievement of undergraduate college students.

Methodology & Sampling

In the present study, a sample of 90 undergraduate college students was randomly picked from Shivamogga district.

Tools Employed for the Study

Leadership quality scale: In the present study, the tool employed for the collection of data was 'leadership quality scale' prepared and standardized by Dr. Muthumanicham - Professor in the Department of Psychology, Madurai Kamaraj University Madurai District. The statement is in English and contains 40 statements. The 5 point scale comprises of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree which denotes the score 1,2,3,4,5 for positive statements.

Academic achievement: Regarding the academic achievement, the investigator consulted the examination in charge of each selected college and collected the marks obtained by undergraduate students in previous annual examinations (XII grade). The examination in charge teacher was kind enough to assist the investigator and in this way, the investigator obtained annual examination marks of XII grade. To obtain academic achievement, index scores of boys and girls and the marks collected were pooled together, added and percentages were found.

Statistical Technique Employed

Mean, SD and 't' test were computed to know the significant difference between the means of the different sub-groups in terms of gender, locality and Kuvempu university and other university students. Correlation study was done to find out the significant relationship between leadership qualities and academic achievement college students.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Distribution of the sample

Total Sample = 90			
Variable	Sex	Male	45
		Female	45
	Locality	Rural	55
		Urban	35
	Students	Kuvempu university	60
		Other university	30

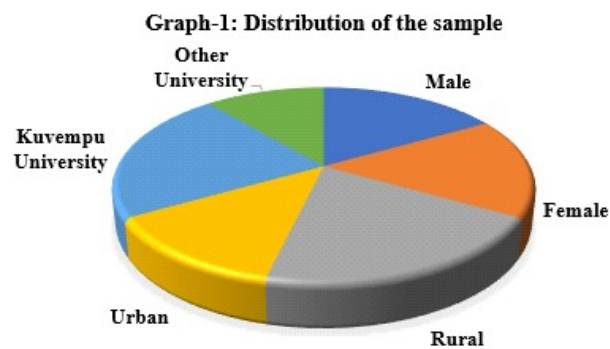


Table 2: Significant difference between male and female students in their leadership attributes and academic achievement

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	‘t’	Level of significance at 0.05 level
Leadership attributes	Male	45	82.83	8.81	2.88	Significance at 0.05 level
	Female	45	76.3	10.52		
Academic achievement	Male	45	82.84	8.83	2.99	
	Female	45	76.4	10.53		

The calculated t' value 2.88 is greater than the table value 2.00 for df 78 at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. There is significant difference between male and female students in their leadership qualities. The calculated t' value 2.99 is greater than the table value 2.00 for df 78 at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. There is significant difference between male and female students in their academic achievement. Male students were found to possess more leadership qualities and academic achievement than female undergraduate college students.

Graph-2: Showing the significant difference between male and female in their leadership attributes and academic achievement

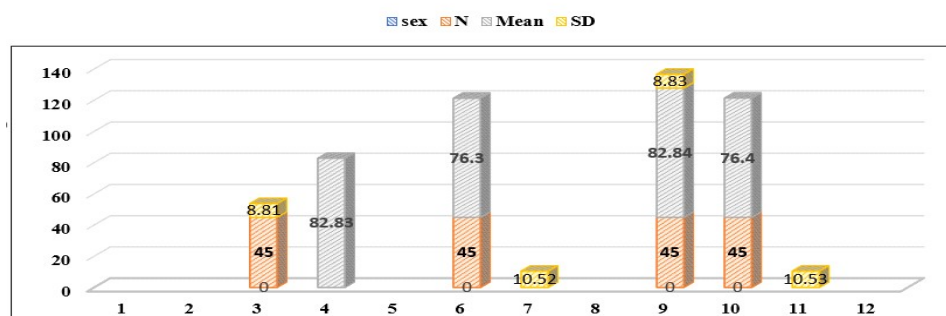
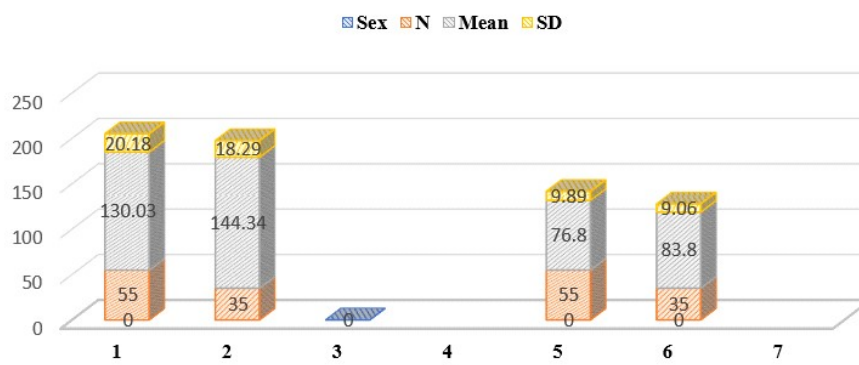


Table 3: Significant difference between leadership attributes and academic achievement in their locality

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	‘t’	Level of significance at 0.05 level
Leadership attributes	Rural	55	130.03	20.18	3.25	Significance at 0.05 level
	Urban	35	144.34	18.29		
Academic achievement	Rural	55	76.8	9.89	3.15	
	Urban	35	83.8	9.06		

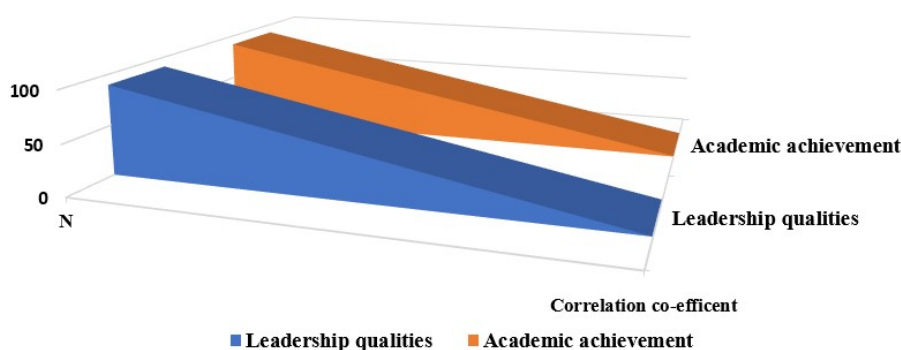
Graph-3: Showing significant difference between leadership attributes and academic achievement in their locality

The calculated t' value 3.25 is greater than the table value 2.00 for df 78 at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. There is significant difference between rural and urban students in their leadership qualities. The calculated t' value 3.15 is greater than the table value 2.00 for df 78 at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. There is significant difference between rural and urban students in their academic achievement. Urban students were found to possess more leadership qualities and academic achievement than rural undergraduate college students.

Table 4: Relationship between leadership attributes and academic achievement of undergraduate college students

S. No	Variables	N	Correlation Co-efficient	Level of Significance at 0.05 level
1	Leadership attributes	90	0.77	Positive and significant
2	Academic achievement	90		

Graph-4: Showing the relationship between leadership attributes and academic achievement of undergraduate college students

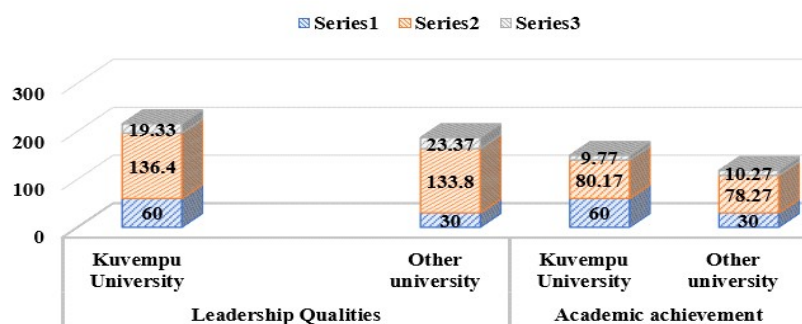


The calculated t' value 0.55 is greater than the table value 0.217 for df 78 at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. It is found that the relationship between leadership attributes and academic achievement of undergraduate college students is positive and significant.

Table-5: Significant difference between Kuvempu university and other university students leadership attributes and academic achievement of undergraduate college students

Variable	Students	N	Mean	SD	‘t’	Level of significance at 0.05 level
Leadership attributes	Kuvempu University	60	136.4	19.33	0.55	No significance at 0.05 level
	Other University	30	133.8	23.37		
Academic achievement	Kuvempu University	60	80.17	9.77	0.79	
	Other University	30	78.27	10.27		

Graph-5: Showing the significant difference between Kuvempu university and other university students' leadership attributes and academic achievement



The calculated t' value 0.55 is less than the table value 2.00 for df 78 at 0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference between Kuvempu university and other university students in their leadership attributes. The calculated t' value 0.79 is less than the table value 2.00 for df 78 at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference between Kuvempu university and other university students in terms of their academic achievement.

Findings

1. There is significant difference between male and female students in their leadership attributes.
2. There is significant difference between male and female students in their academic achievement.
3. Male students were found to have more leadership attributes and better academic achievement than female undergraduate college students.
4. There is significant difference between rural and urban students in their leadership attributes.
5. There is significant difference between rural and urban students in terms of academic achievement.
6. Urban students were found to have more leadership attributes and better academic achievement than rural undergraduate college students.
7. There is no significant difference between leadership attributes and academic achievement of undergraduate college students.
8. There is no significant difference between Kuvempu university and other university students in their leadership attributes.

9. There is no significant difference between Kuvempu university and other university students in terms of their academic achievement.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to 90 students across 7 colleges and to certain aspects of leadership attributes along with academic achievement.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that there exists a significant relationship between the leadership attributes and academic achievement of undergraduate college students. Hence the hypotheses 1 and 2 are accepted. Most of the college students possess average level of leadership attributes. The study reveals that leadership attributes and academic achievement of undergraduate college students differ significantly with respect to gender and locality. Male students were found to have more leadership attributes and academic achievement than female undergraduate college students. Similarly, students from urban area college were found to have more leadership attributes and academic achievement than rural area college students. Through this study, it is revealed that there is no significant difference between Kuvempu university and other university students in terms of their academic achievement.

The study found a significant positive correlation between leadership skills and academic success among college students in the Shivamogga district. Students with strong leadership skills tend to achieve higher academic performance, demonstrating the importance of these skills in their overall success. There is a need to help the students to develop the integrity and strength of character that prepare them for leadership. This may be one of the most challenging and important goals of higher education.

The findings suggest that fostering leadership skills through extracurricular activities, student organizations, and community involvement can significantly enhance academic outcomes. Institutions that emphasize leadership development tend to produce more academically successful students. The study recommends that educational institutions in the Shivamogga district integrate leadership training into their curricula. By doing so, they can not only improve academic outcomes but also equip students with essential skills for their future careers. The study implies the generation of a sustainable academic achievement which prepares learner for the development of leadership capacity. Higher education institutions must allow teachers

to deploy student leadership within classroom. Teachers must inculcate student leadership abilities in students by using different academic techniques and by using advanced methods of teachings.

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Student Attitudes on Integration of Transgender Persons in Higher Education in Delhi NCR: A Comparative Study

• Akanksha Singh¹ • Rajesh²

Abstract

Education is a tool that is essential for the development of any democratic nation. Education not only helps a person to achieve their professional and personal goals, but it also plays a vital role in the overall development of an individual's personality. Education has a significant impact on a person's behaviour, mental processes, and worldview. It also broadens a person's viewpoint of the world. Every citizen in India should have the same opportunities to grow and reach their full potential, regardless of their caste, religion, or gender, as mandated by the Indian government. Those who transition between genders are members of a disadvantaged group in society. The transgender community requires a higher level of attention from both the state and the people who live there. Education is the only tool that can be used to successfully integrate people who do not conform to traditional gender norms into society. Literacy rates among transgender people are significantly lower than those of people of other binary genders. It is of utmost importance that we conduct research regarding the factors that contribute to low literacy rates of transgender people and investigate the means, by which their inclusion in higher education and the social order can be improved.

Keywords: *Transgender rights, transgender mainstreaming, education, social integration, equality, stigma, exclusion.*

Introduction

Every civilization has its own set of principles and conventions, and the family is the fundamental building block of all societies. Every individual who is a part of the society will, over time and of their own accord, conform to those values and standards. In exchange, the community will provide them with safety and acknowledgement. However, this is not the case with criminals and other lawbreakers. When a person

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commits a serious crime, society treats them harshly and deals with the situation in accordance with the law and assistance of the state. On the other hand, things are handled differently with regard to the transgender population. Due to “their gender identification”, they are seen as an aberration in society, and persons who are a part of this community are still forced to live outside the mainstream society (Nanda, 1999).

As a direct consequence of this, they are frequently left more disadvantaged and isolated, thereby compelled to dwell outside the society. This community, which has never committed any crime, has always been viewed as criminal, and the reason for this treatment is the gender identity of transpersons (Michelraj, 2015). Transgender persons all over the world are being denied their human rights, not only by states but also by modern democracies. With the landmark judgement of honourable supreme court of India in 2014 this community got its identity as ‘third gender’.³ But getting the identity as third gender was not enough for the inclusion in society so Indian government brought ‘The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019’. The objective of the act is to provide equal status to the transgender persons in the society and to protect their rights⁴. We have seen throughout the history of human rights how vulnerable groups have been given special protection through treaty law, which has resulted in conventions such as the ‘Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women’ and the ‘Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’.⁵

Where is the universality when it comes to human rights for trans-individuals?

Transgender persons in our country do not have access to education, as is evident from their socio-economic status. Their main priority is to survive. They continue to view education as a luxury. Children who identify as transgender, experience social stigma in schools/colleges, as well as a lack of acceptance as a respectable member of the society.⁶ Making schools/colleges “trans friendly” is therefore urgently needed.

³National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) VS. Union of India 2014 Available - <https://translaw.clpr.org.in/case-law/nalsa-third-gender-identity>

⁴Transgender Persons Act come into effect, The Hindu, New Delhi, Dated 11th January 2020, Available- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/transgender-persons-act-comes-into-effect/article30545336.ece#:~:text=The%20Act%20aims%20to%20en>

⁵Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for Youth, 2016. <https://www.unwomen.org/en>

⁶New study on bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity in schools in Tamil Nadu, India (unesco.org) Available- <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/new-study-bullying-based-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-schools-tamil-nadu-india>

It is true that states around the world have enacted numerous laws to protect the rights of transgender people.⁷ Nonetheless, it appears that these rights are insufficient to provide this vulnerable community with equality and justice (Nanda, 1996).

The low visibility of transgender students in traditional higher education (regular mode) may be due to their fear of bullying, stigma, prejudice, and lack of financial assistance to continue their study. In many instances, transgender students drop out of school owing to a lack of family support or the negative repercussions of being isolated from society. Hence, the dropout rate becomes high. Without education, it is impossible to envisage a just and developed state. Literacy rates are lower among members of the trans population compared to those of binary gender. Although the population of transgender people in India was estimated to be roughly 4.9 lakhs in the census that was conducted in 2011⁸, several transgender activists say that the data is not accurate. The truth is rather different. According to the census of India in 2011, the literacy rate of the transgender community was only 56.07 percent. There were 313 transgender children between the ages of 0 and 6 in Delhi alone, and the total number of transgender children in India between the ages of 0 and 6 was 54,854 according to the census in 2011.⁹

It indicates that these children should have been enrolled in educational institutions at this time; nevertheless, we rarely discovered any transgender children studying in traditional settings at schools or colleges/universities. The only way out of this predicament is for the people living in the society to change their behaviour, or to come up with an approach that is gender friendly and inclusive. It is of the utmost importance to raise awareness of this issue among the common people and to work towards gender equality in the physical environments of educational institutions. Only then will transgender persons be able to achieve the necessary qualifications and skills, which are necessary for being successful in life.

Integration of transgender students in India's higher educational institutions

Transgender inclusion in higher education in India has been a topic of discussion in recent years, with efforts being made to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for transgender students. The Indian government has taken steps to

⁷Yogyakarta Principles, Indonesia, 2006, Available <https://yogyakartaprinciples.org/>

⁸Times of India, New Delhi, Dated 30th May 2014, Available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/First-count-of-third-gender-in-census-4-9-lakh/articleshow/35741613.cms>, Access date 22nd May 2023

⁹Transgender population (Census of India 2011), Available at: - <https://www.census2011.co.in/transgender.php>, Access date 20th February 2023

recognize transgender individuals as a third gender and provide them with educational opportunities, including reservations in higher education institutions. However, despite these efforts, transgender students in India still face numerous challenges in pursuing higher education. It is worth noting that they do not have any specific reservations in education and employment. Instead, they may be able to access these advantages by claiming under the quota for Scheduled Tribes (STs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Socially and Educationally Backward Communities (SEBC).¹⁰ The transgender community continues to advocate for their rights in order to achieve full integration into society. It is noteworthy that the Supreme Court, in its NALSA judgement in 2014, mandated the Indian government to grant reservations in education to transgender individuals. However, separate reservations for this community have not been implemented yet, as it is considered unsuitable for other citizens.

In terms of student perceptions, there is a general lack of awareness and understanding about transgender issues in India, which can contribute to discrimination and exclusion. Many students may not have had any exposure to transgender individuals or may only have been exposed to negative stereotypes in the media (Revathi, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial to increase awareness and education about transgender issues in higher education institutions in India to promote acceptance and inclusion. Efforts are being made to create safe and inclusive spaces for transgender students in higher education institutions in India, such as the establishment of gender-neutral hostels and restrooms.¹¹ However, there is still a long way to go in terms of achieving full inclusion and equality for transgender individuals in higher education in India. It will require a combination of policy changes, education, and cultural shifts to create a truly welcoming environment for all the learners without any gender-based violence or disparity (Saxena, 2011). Students' attitudes about transgender classmates are the primary research subject of this study.

The government has taken many steps to ensure transgender inclusion in various areas, including higher education. One such step has been the reservation of seats for transgender individuals in higher education institutions. The University Grants Commission (UGC), the apex body responsible for regulating higher education in India, has issued guidelines to universities and colleges to ensure the inclusion of transgender students. These guidelines include promoting the inclusion of transgender

¹⁰“Transgender persons can avail of any of quota benefits available to the marginalised, government tells SC”, The Hindu, 27 July 2023, New Delhi, Available - <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/transgender-persons-can-avail-of-any-of-quota-benefits-available-to-the-marginalised-government-tells-sc/article67124307.ece>

¹¹“Over 100 toilets constructed in city for transgender people, Delhi HC told”, The Hindu, 12th Sep 2023, New Delhi Available- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/over-100-toilets-constructed-in-city-for-transgender-people-delhi-hc-told/article67295594.ece>

individuals in research projects and scholarships, and incorporating a transgender category into application forms.¹² The UGC has mandated that universities adhere to the guidelines for gender champions.¹³ This decision has been made in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and aligns with the purpose of Article 15, which advocates for gender equality.¹⁴ This is to ensure that students are educated about and remain sensitive towards diverse genders to create an inclusive environment inside university grounds. The aim is to encourage higher education for transgender students.¹⁵ Furthermore, some state governments in India have also taken steps to provide reservations for transgender individuals in higher education institutions.

For example, the Tamil Nadu government has reserved 1% of seats in all undergraduate and postgraduate courses at state universities and colleges for transgender students.¹⁶ The government of Kerala has directed all state and affiliated universities to reserve two seats for transgender students in undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. However, despite these efforts, the implementation of transgender reservations in higher education institutions in India has been slow and uneven.

There is still a lack of awareness and understanding about transgender issues among university administrators and faculty, and many institutions have not taken adequate steps to implement the UGC guidelines. Moreover, transgender individuals face numerous challenges in accessing higher education, including financial barriers and discrimination from peers and teachers. It is crucial to address these challenges and ensure that transgender individuals have equal access to education and opportunities to succeed (Barman, 2024). This requires a rigorous effort from the government, higher education institutions, and society as a whole to create a more

¹²Barman, M. 2024, 19th Feb, "Transgender Community and Higher Education in India", Centre for Development Policy and Practice (CDPP), Available- [https://www.cdpp.co.in/articles/transgender-community-and-higher-education-in-india#:~:text=Despite%20initiatives%20by%20the%20University,persist%20\(Ag](https://www.cdpp.co.in/articles/transgender-community-and-higher-education-in-india#:~:text=Despite%20initiatives%20by%20the%20University,persist%20(Ag)

¹³The times of India, 8th June 2023. Available- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/ugc-directs-universities-to-appoint-gender-champions-to-increase-inclusivity/articleshow/100849419.cms>

¹⁴"UGC directs universities to appoint gender champions to increase inclusivity", Times of India, 8th June 2023,

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¹⁵News9live. Madras University to have one seat in each college for transgender students, no fees to be charged., from Available - <https://www.news9live.com/education-career/madras-university-to-have-one-seat-in-each-college-for-transgender-students-no-fees-to-be-charged-160783>

¹⁶Reservation for transgenders: HC seeks State response. *The Hindu*, October 31, 2019: Kochi. Available - <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/reservation-for-transgenders-hc-seeks-state-response/article29846524.ece>

inclusive and welcoming environment for all individuals, regardless of their gender identity.

Objectives of the study

- 1) To investigate how students perceive the integration of transgender persons in higher education.
- 2) To understand the challenges and concerns of both genders (male and female) regarding the transgender community.
- 3) To examine the possibility for integration in higher education.

Scope of the study

Transgender community is the most excluded and disadvantaged section of our society. As a result of the discriminating behaviour by people, they are denied of a healthy lifestyle and means of subsistence, which hinders their development. With the historic NALSA (2014) ruling, Indian government granted transgender individuals the status of the third gender and a separate identity.¹⁷ The NALSA decision aids them in acquiring an identity, but the problems of facing discrimination, violence, exclusion, inequality, poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment still exists in the society, and the key to resolving these issues is to empower the community through the provision of quality educational facilities. Only through education can we bring illumination to the lives of the transgender people. Keeping in mind the relevance of education for the transgender community, the researcher aimed to determine the students' perspective on including the transgender community into higher education. In addition, the research findings will encourage the population to enrol in educational institutions without hesitation or fear of exclusion by other students. The study will also spread sensitization among the young minds of the nation.

Methodology

The present study was conducted by employing a variety of methods to determine its objectives. The descriptive research approach was selected for conducting the study. Both primary and secondary data sources were used.

i. Selection of study area

The study was conducted at four universities: Jamia Milia Islamia, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Ambedkar University, and University of Delhi. The students of

¹⁷National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) VS. Union of India (2014) Available- <https://translaw.clpr.org.in/case-law/nalsa-third-gender-identity/>

these universities and research scientists were the primary focus of the investigation. The researcher questioned graduate students, M.Phil. and Ph.D. candidates to determine their perspectives on the integration of third gender in higher education.

ii. Collection of data sources

In this study, the core respondents were students from four universities in Delhi, i.e., Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jamia Milia Islamia, University of Delhi, and Ambedkar University. Gender-specific statements were also collected for outcome. Secondary data was gathered from various publications, articles, and newspapers, as well as by studying government agency records and international organisation regulations.¹⁸

The universe of the study and process of data collection

University Name	Frequency	Percentage
Ambedkar University	20	25
University of Delhi	20	25
Jawaharlal Nehru University	20	25
Jamia Milia Islamia	20	25
Total	80	100

The sample size was 80. The population sample consisted of 50% males and 50% females. The universe was selected via purposive sampling method. The study was qualitative in nature. All four universities' students and researchers were interviewed. The study benefited from secondary and research studies. The researcher also participated in different debates and discussions at the Department of Continuing Education and Extension's Transgender Resource Centre, Delhi University. Well-structured interviews were the source of primary data. Secondary data from library, books, journals, research papers, and government sites like NACO, UNDP, MSJE were considered.¹⁹

Results and discussion

Qualifications of the respondents

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
L.L. B	3	3.8
Post graduate	24	30.0
M.Phil.	21	26.3
Ph.D.	32	40
Total	80	100

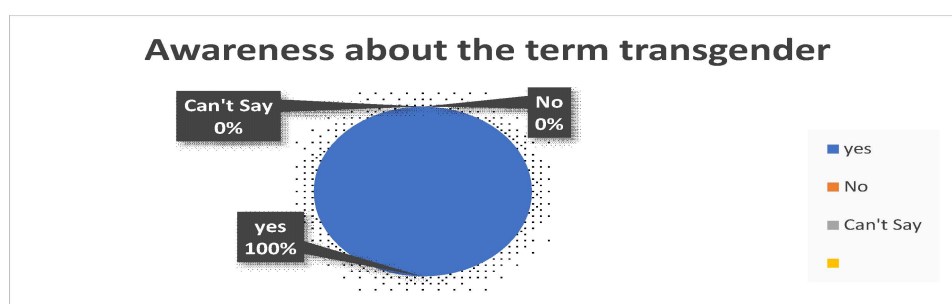
¹⁸The Indian Express, 14th June 2024 Available -<https://www.newindianexpress.com/web-only/2024/Feb/13/despite-landmark-sc-judgement-transgender-rights-still-a-deferred-dream>

¹⁹Report of Expert committee constituted by the efforts of MSJE 2014 Available - <https://socialjustice.gov.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Binder2.pdf>

The table provides information about the respondent's educational background. Among students who participated in the study, 40 percent of the students hold Ph.D., 26.3 percent hold M.Phil., 30 percent of students hold M.A., and 3.8 percent hold LLB degree.

Awareness about the term transgender (Objective 1)

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	80	100
No	0	0
Can't say	0	0



According to the table above, all eighty students were familiar with the term transgender, as they all responded affirmatively during the study. The students' responses indicate that they are not unfamiliar with this word. Today, as a result of media involvement and sensitization programmes, debates and discussion serve to sensitise the members of society regarding the concerns of the third gender.

Local names of transgender persons²⁰

Local term	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Kinnar	11	13.75	3rd
Eunuch	3	3.8	
Hijra	31	38.8	1 st
Chakka	9	11.3	4th
Transgender	14	17.5	2nd
Manning	1	2.5	
Uzz	1	1.3	
Laancheh	2	2.5	
Nupi Sabi	1	1.3	
Kossa	1	1.3	
Lesbian/Gay	2	2.5	
Can't say	5	1.3	

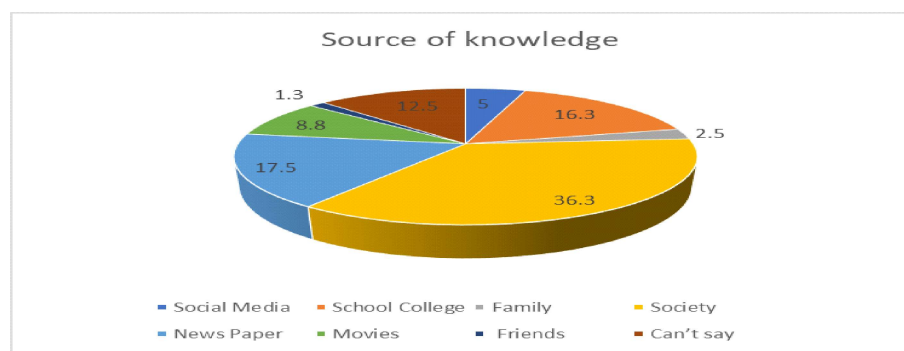
Transgender people in India have diverse identities based on which state they are already in. Eighty students responded about their understanding of the third

²⁰Michelraj, M., 2015. Available -<https://iasp.ac.in/uploads/journal/005-1708491768.pdf>

gender; preliminary data suggests that 1.3 percent of students don't know the local name for the third gender in their area. In fact, the highest percentage of pupils (38.1%) identified transgender persons as *Hijra* (transgender). 17.5% of students identified transgender persons as *transgender* only, 13.5% identified as *Kinnar*. 11.3 % students also used the name *Chhakka* for transgender people, despite the fact that it is generally understood to be offensive. 2.5% of the students also recognized transgender persons as *Gay/Lesbian*. Some local names such *Nupi Sabi*, *Kossa*, *Uzz*, *Manning*, *Laancheh* were also discovered during the study.

Source of knowledge about the transgender community

Sources	Frequency	Percentage
Social media	4	5
School College	13	16.3
Family	2	2.5
Society	29	36.3
News Paper	14	17.5
Movies	7	8.8
Friends	1	1.3
Can't say	10	12.5
Total	80	100

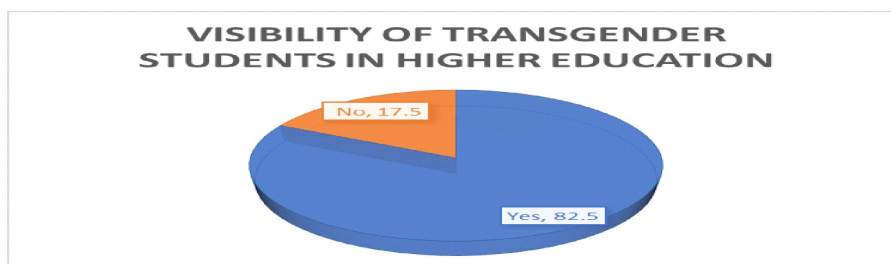


The sources through which the students learnt about the third gender are outlined in the table above. 5 percent of students learnt about transgender persons through social media, whereas 36 percent of students learnt about the trans population from society. The second-highest percentage, 17.5%, learnt about transgender via the newspaper, as print media is also a good source of information; however, 16.3% of students learnt about transgender from their schools and universities. Sometimes family also provides awareness through rituals and tradition; for example, as transgender person typically attends the birth ceremony of a new born to perform dance and to bless the child (toli badhai), which connects trans to the society; however, only 2.5% of students learnt about the third gender from their families. Also, movies

about social issues offer a variety of information, 8.8% of students responded that they learnt about transgender through movies, such as *Tamanna*, *Laxmi*, *Sadak*, *Kanchana*, *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* etc., which demonstrates that the transgender is also a human being and may contribute to the well-being of humanity.

Visibility of transgender student in higher education

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	66	82.5
No	14	17.5
Total	80	100



The above table represents the experience of students (Male and Female) with transgender students in university premises. 82.5% students have seen the transgender students in university education but it has also been observed through a conversation with the respondents i.e., majority of the transgender students in university either do not expose their identity or those who expose their status are enrolled in distance mode.

Transgender colleagues in your class (n = 80)

It was discovered that only 5% of students accepted the presence of transgender classmates. However, 95% of the pupils rejected their acceptance.

Transgender persons are also part of our society

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	77	96.25
No	1	1.25
Can't Say	2	2.5

The table above depicts respondents' perceptions of transgender people as members of our society. 96 percent responded that they are a part of our society since they are human beings; 1 percent of the respondents said that transgender people are not a part of our culture; and 3 percent were uncertain. Data shows that many people understand transgender people as a part of society. It has been clearly observed that recent judicial activism in the field of transgender persons, as well as various media coverages and researches, have made people understand that the third gender is also a part of our society. However, some people were still not aware. Gender sensitization is the only way to raise awareness among the uninformed members of society.

Students comfortable in sharing their classroom with transgender students

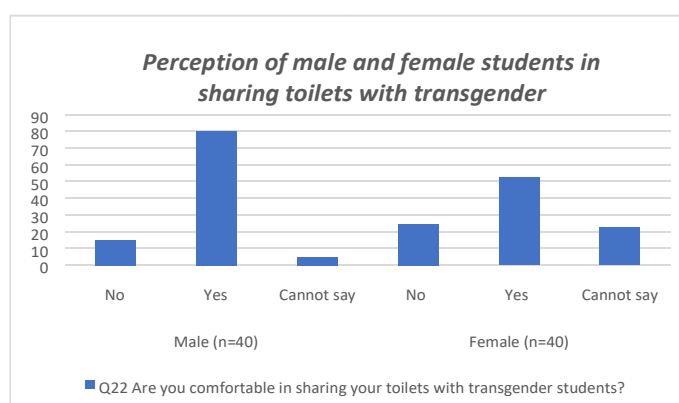
Both male and female 100 percent said they are comfortable in sharing class room.

Sharing toilets with transgender students

Female N=40	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	52.5
No	10	25
Can't say	9	22.5

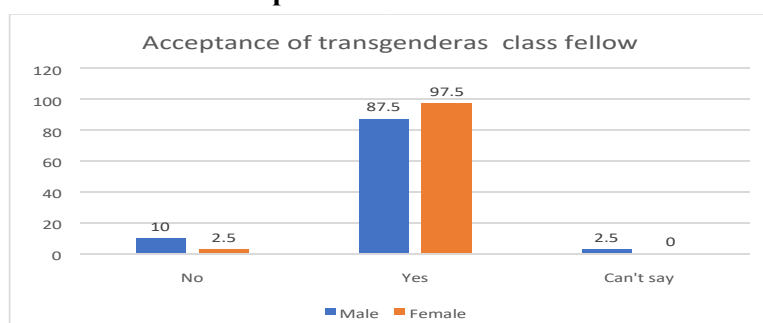
Male N=40	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	32	80
No	6	15
Can't say	2	5

Students' perception on sharing toilets



The above table depicts the perspectives of males and females towards sharing restrooms. 80% of men and 52.5% of women are extremely comfortable sharing restrooms with transgender individuals, whereas 15% of men and 25% of women do not want to share. 5% of men and 22.5% of women did not choose to give their responses. The low percentage of females who responded positively to sharing restrooms with transgender persons indicates that females have a negative impression of transgender persons because they believe it is unsafe and could put them in danger.

Acceptance as the class fellow

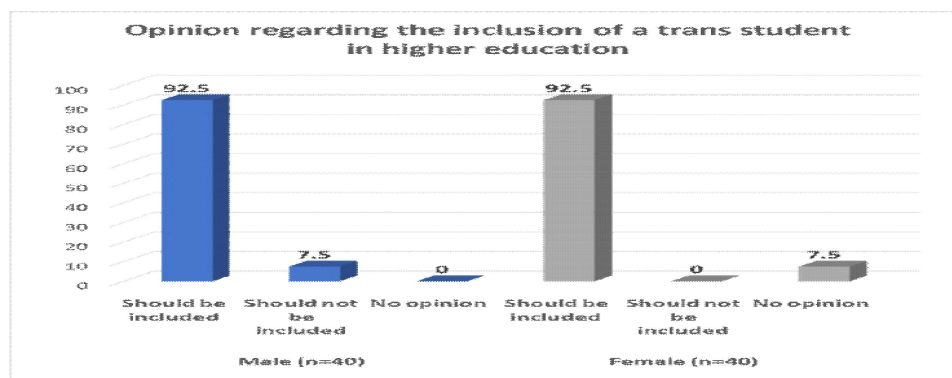


Respondents		Frequency	Percent
Male (n=40)	No	4	10
	Yes	35	87.5
	Can't say	1	2.5
Female (n=40)	No	1	2.5
	Yes	39	97.5
	Can't say	0	0

The figure states 87.5% of male respondents are happy to accept the transgender student as their class fellow while 10% of male students refuse to accept trans students as class fellows. Yet, there are people in the society who don't accept the transgender persons to be part of the community or do not treat them as equals. Owing to this, transgender persons are prone to diseases, atrocities and prejudice. People's ignorance pushes transgender individuals on the route to illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, etc.

For females, 97.5% of them claim that they can accept the transgender persons as their class fellows, while 2.5% of females said that they will not accept the transgender as their class fellow. But female students seem to be more welcoming towards the transgender persons than the male students.

Opinion regarding inclusion of transgender students in higher education



Opinion regarding the inclusion of a trans student in higher education			
Respondents		Frequency	Percent
Male (n=40)	Should be included	37	92.5
	Should not be included	3	7.5
	No opinion	0	0
Female (n=40)	Should be included	37	92.5
	Should not be included	0	0
	No opinion	3	7.5

The study states 92.5% males opined that transgender should be provided with every sort of facility in order to accommodate in higher education institutes.

It shows that people are positive towards the third gender. Yet, 7.5% of males stated that transgender students should not be included in higher education. 92.5% females opined that the third gender should be included in higher education. It is a good sign that the females' perception are similar to the males' perception and both genders are eager to collaborate with the third gender.

Nonetheless, there are still some students who are not prepared for the inclusion of the third gender in higher education, indicating that the society still needs sensitization programmes on gender issues to alter the stereotypical and discriminatory attitudes of the populace.

Government has enacted many laws to safeguard the civil and fundamental rights of the transgender. Despite all efforts, transgenders in our society are victims of atrocities and discriminations. Do you agree with it?			
Respondents		Frequency	Percent
Male (n=40)	No	3	7.5
	Yes	33	82.5
	Can't say	4	10
Female (n=40)	No	0	0
	Yes	37	92.5
	Can't say	3	7.5

The table above displays the opinions of male and female students regarding the discrimination and atrocities faced by transgender individuals. 82.5% of male students agreed that transgender individuals continue to face discrimination and atrocities. 7.5% of male students are unaware of this community, which is not a good sign, as mainstreaming or integration of the third gender in higher education cannot happen until everyone is prepared.

Contribution in the development of transgender community (opinion of binary gender students)

How one can contribute to the development of transgenders ?			
Responses	Frequency	Percent	Rank
Awareness/ gender sensitization program	30	37.5	II
Scholarship/ reservation in education	58	72.5	I
Motivation	7	8.75	VI
Legal action	21	26.25	III
Basic amenities	8	10	V
Reservation in government jobs	10	12.5	IV
Special schools and colleges	4	5	VIII
Can't say	5	6.25	VII

Among all the responses, 72.5% of students believed that the third gender could be uplifted by providing reservation and scholarship opportunities in education. Awareness and gender sensitization programmes should be organised to open the doors for welfare of transgender, according to the second most concern of students.

The third concern of students was legal action - they opined that legitimate action should be taken by the concerned authorities and laws should be made to

safeguard the fundamental and human rights of transgender persons. Fourth concern was reservation in jobs for the third gender as they belong to the economically and socially backward class of the society. 10% of students believed that the third gender should be provided with basic amenities to facilitate their livelihood.

As the third gender belongs to one of the most vulnerable and excluded communities, motivation is required by all segments of society. Through motivation, one can assist the third gender to live a healthy life without obstacles. 8.75% of students said motivation can help the third gender for overall development. About 6.25% of students responded that they can't say anything on this matter. This proves that despite gender sensitization programmes and numerous laws, many people still do not care about the welfare of the third gender. In fact, they have never considered gender-variant people, which demonstrates that transgender people are the primary reason for the vulnerability of the third gender.

Among all responses, 5% of the respondents said that special schools and colleges should be open for transgender persons, which means that this will further exclude them from the other genders of the society and as a result, inclusion won't be possible.

Conclusion

It is of utmost significance to provide individuals of the third gender, with the knowledge and abilities they need in order for them to lead fulfilling lives. But the exclusion which still persists in our society, stops them from accessing education, despite all the fundamental and human rights guaranteed to them by the Indian constitution. Education is the fundamental right that is guaranteed to everyone, but due to their gender identity, third gender people continue to face stigma and discriminatory behaviour in educational institutions. Although some people say that they are ready to cooperate, reality is quite different. There are still some people who do not understand the sensitivity of this community and make fun of them, which causes the third gender persons to stop pursuing their education. In fact, third gender students typically choose open and distance learning over traditional schooling out of a fear of being bullied or because they are financially limited. They turn to open and distance learning as a mode of education because poverty and unemployment are major factors in their decision to pursue formal modes of education. Because they are a part of this country, transgender people need to be integrated into mainstream society and given the encouragement they need to pursue higher education. This is necessary for both their personal growth and the general well-being of the nation. Despite the fact that the government has taken many steps to

protect their rights, such as the NALSA (2014) Judgement, which was a landmark decision made by the honourable supreme court of India, transgender persons are still vulnerable and unable to live a healthy life. Therefore, it is important to change the perception of the people in the society, and students are important pillars of our society who provide strength to the nation. The mindset of people plays an important role in the acceptance of third gender as part of this society. As mentioned earlier, the study also tried to find out the opinion or perception of students so that further inclusion of third gender can be facilitated. The main focus of this study is on the perception of students and scholars towards the inclusion of third gender in higher education.

The following suggestions were derived from the study:

- Discussion on gender sensitization should be facilitated in the universities and colleges to make the students understand sensitivity around this topic.
- A third gender cell should be established in the institutions to address the challenges of trans pupils.
- Reservation in admission should be offered to them so that they can take admission in normal institutions easily.
- There should be a central location for information that is run by a single person and is dedicated to serving the needs of people who identify as third gender.
- The information centre should have all the facilities like internet, computer and networking with all the stake holders who can help the trans people.
- A certificate identifying a person as belonging to a third gender may be required by an institution; hence, the information centre ought to assist transgender individuals in acquiring such a certificate from the appropriate administrative body.
- Sensitization programmes should be arranged for faculty members as well as non-teaching staff and security guards in order for them to be able to assist transgender students in accessing education on the university campus.
- Orientation of gurus towards value of education and social involvement should be done.
- A certificate programme should be created that will provide the third gender with occupational training and education.
- Promotion of welfare packages for the third gender must be done with the support from NACO, DSACS, and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India.
- Counselling of parents should be done to sensitise them about gender differences and sexual orientation. The trauma and stigma that transgender children face in society, within their families can be lessened with the help of educated parents.

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Mastering Research Skills: From Concept to Conclusion by N. K. Chadha and Rajesh Kumar, New Delhi: Misha Books, 2024. pp. 216.

• Geeta Mishra¹

The book by Chadha & Kumar is a very comprehensive piece of work which covers the concepts of research from introduction to the conclusion and publication of research work.

The book covers the definition of research from various authors along with a deep understanding of the concepts and key components of research. A comprehensive definition of research as given by Creswell states that “research is the process of steps used to collect and analyse information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue” (p. 4). It comprises of three steps – Posing a question, collecting data to answer the question and presenting a suitable answer to the question.

The introductory chapter on research (pp. 11-15) makes a clear differentiation between the three fundamental types of research namely basic, applied and action research along with an enumeration of when to use each of these types.

Basic research is motivated by curiosity and aims to increase knowledge. Theories and patterns are frequently developed through the use of basic research. Methods like ethnography, in-depth interviews, and longitudinal studies can be used to carry it out. Applied research is problem-solving, goal-oriented, and focused on providing answers to particular queries or resolving real-world issues. Action research, on the other hand, is focussed on application and not the development of theory.

The second chapter of the book on formulating research questions is a fundamental and significant chapter. Formulating research question is the essence and cornerstone of any research. It paves the way for the entire research and provides direction to the researcher. It also sets ground for the research design and influences the choice of methodology, data collection and the analysis.

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This section of the book also incorporates suitable examples and practical exercises in various disciplines (pp. 45-46) to enable the scholars to craft specific and suitable research questions in their specific field of research.

Many a times the review of literature is not thorough and to bridge this gap, the authors of the book have given methodological insights on the vigour and process of conducting a systematic literature review. The primary purpose of literature review is to establish a theoretical framework for the research. A thorough review of existing theories and findings enables the researchers to identify the most relevant framework for their specific study.

The authors also delve into the strategic process of identifying the gap and the crucial role of justifying the significance of research. The entire process of literature review is demonstrated to guide methodological choices.

Research Design is the blueprint that guides the research study. The comprehensive definition given by various authors as specified in the book covers various components such as structuring and organising the research study; objective and purpose of research; variables of interest and hypothesis formulation; selection of appropriate methods and techniques such as qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods approach; addressing of issues related to sampling, designing data collection instruments and their application along with ethical considerations.

Selection of research methods appropriate to the study are also well explained and enumerated by the authors.

The chapter on data collection and techniques (pp. 89-99) cover a wide range of techniques in both quantitative and qualitative research along with their merits and limitations. The chapter also aptly points out at the need to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants as a salient ethical and moral measure in research work. Critical to research is data analysis, which is the process of identifying patterns, relationships, or trends through logical and analytical reasoning. The authors have given a detailed description of some commonly used data analysis techniques and their application such as descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, thematic analysis, content analysis, factor analysis and cluster analysis. The core concepts and components are detailed well.

A research proposal outlines the topics one will study, their significance, and the methodology one will deploy. A well-structured and brief synopsis of the planned research is known as research proposal. The components of a research proposal,

starting with a concise title that encapsulates the essence of research and concludes with listing of all references following a specific citation style along with the appendices as per the outline, is well illustrated (p. 129).

The authors have also cited tips for writing a compelling and strong research proposal.

They have also detailed on a very crucial element i.e., effective presentation to communicate the findings and results which includes understanding the audience and skilfully handling their queries.

The book reflects upon managing research projects and the ways of enhancing research productivity. The increasing demand for high quality research outputs, coupled with the pressure of publication and funding acquisition underscores the need for strategies that can enhance research productivity (p. 155).

The book also comprises of a section on the importance of collaborative research in the light of increased need for multidisciplinary research which integrates various disciplines for a coherent outcome (p.165). It also encapsulates the challenges in collaboration and strategies to overcome them and enhance communication with collaborative mindset and setting clear goals and roles.

Towards the end, the book covers a comprehensive chapter on publishing research papers which starts with choosing the right journal, understanding the scope of the journal, the guidelines for authors and the formatting tips to get published in the most appropriate outlet for the research work.

The book is published by Misha Books and is available in stores. It is a productive and comprehensive piece of work for research scholars and academics from varied fields and disciplines.

Contribution of K.C.Chaudhary to the Development of Indian Adult Education Association



Shri. K.C. Choudhary, former President of IAEA passed away on September 14, 2024. An Interview with him conducted by Dr. S.Y. Shah on January 7, 2015, in IAEA is reproduced here as a tribute to him—Ed.

Prof. Shah: *Good afternoon, Sir. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to interview you. As you may be aware, it is very important to interview the members who are closely involved with the activities of the Indian Adult Education Association (IAEA) over a long period because they may be having rich experiences on the working of the organization which might not have been documented and known to many and such information and insights may help us understand the history of the IAEA.*

How did you get to know about the Association? Which year did you join the Association and who introduced you to IAEA?

Shri Choudhary: It was in the year 1964 when Shri Nekiram Gupta, the then General Secretary of the IAEA organized a workshop at Indore that I got an opportunity to know about the Association. Smt. Florence Jacob and Shri N.C. Pant who were already Life Members of IAEA introduced me to the activities of the Association. Asha Kala Kendra, an NGO working in Mhow with which I was associated was enrolled as an Institutional Member of IAEA and thus began my long association with the organization.

Subsequently, I attended the Annual Conference of IAEA in 1968 at Pondicherry (now called Puducherry) and I came into contact with Sachdevaji, Dr. S.C. Dutta, Dr. M.S. Mehta and other leading personalities. Subsequently, I attended the Guwahati conference also and since then I have been attending the annual conferences regularly.

Prof. Shah: So, for the last 50 years you have been attending all the Conferences?

Shri Choudhary: Yes.

Prof. Shah: What attracted you towards the Association?

Shri Choudhary: My father was a Scout teacher and he was the Headmaster of the local school and also incharge of an Adult Education Centre. I used to go with him to the Adult Education Centre with a lantern where he taught the adult learners. This aroused my interest in adult education. Asha Kala Kendra was also conducting five Adult Education Centres and other vocational centres.

Prof. Shah: Did your involvement with IAEA continue uninterruptedly over the last fifty years or there was some break in between?

Shri Choudhary: There was no break during the last fifty years and I still continue my deep interest in the affairs of IAEA with the same zeal and commitment.

Prof. Shah: Please elaborate your interest in IAEA. Did you do something beyond attending the conferences?

Shri Choudhary: Yes, I did not just attend conferences but presented papers and also actively participated in discussions. Since 1976 when I was elected as a Member of the Executive Committee for the first time in the Annual Conference held at Mysore, I became more active in the affairs of IAEA. In 1978, I was elected as an Associate Secretary. I was the convener of 35th All India Adult Education Conference held in Mhow in 1982 and another All India Adult Education Conference held at Bhopal in 1990. I was also the convener of four Regional Conferences organized at Bhopal, Indore, Reva, Mhow and several seminars organized during this period. In 1986 I became the Vice President of the Association and then from 1990 to 2001 I was the General Secretary and again in 2002, I was elected as the President of the Association.

Prof. Shah: *Can you recollect some of your specific contributions to IAEA in terms of improving the programmes, administration and strengthening of the Association?*

Shri Choudhary: There is nothing personal but it was the team work of President, Executive Committee members and co-workers whose cooperation and hard work could bring a lot of changes in IAEA. We have taken a number of initiatives since 1990 when I was in key position. We tried to renovate and expand the infrastructure facilities and computerize office administration for betterment and improve the working conditions at the office. The Library was improved and enriched during our period. We contacted Shri Bhaskar Chatterjee, the then Director General, National Literacy Mission and sought his support for developing the Library. I am happy to tell you that he was instrumental in providing racks, almirahs and books and in that way, the library was expanded and enriched during that period.

We established the International Institute of Adult and Lifelong Education and National Chapter of International Reading Association with your inspiration and all these activities could be possible under the valuable guidance and support of Shri B.S. Garg, the then President. Our best of relationship with the government department and officers, particularly with the earlier Director Generals of National Literacy Mission viz., Shi L. Mishra, Shri Sudip Banerjee, Shri Bhaskar Chatterjee, Shri Jagan Mathews and Smt. Vandana Jena helped us a lot to run the Association smoothly. IAEA was entrusted with the responsibility of publishing NLM Newsletter with the support of Dr. V. Mohankumar, the then Director In-charge, Directorate of Adult Education for about four years. The Directorate was always helpful to us and the National Documentation Centre for Population and Adult Education was set up during this period. We could also conduct around 60 evaluation studies assigned by the DAE.

During this period the entire building was renovated and even now the work is in progress. The office building of IAEA is 40 years old and needs a lot of maintenance and changes. Now we have given a new look to the building and added classrooms, committee rooms, guest house and a lot more.

I should admit that the Journals published by IAEA were not very regular during the earlier period. We took special interest to improve the quality of the journals and enhanced the readership. Earlier we were not getting any postal concession for the journal but during our period, we got it with the result the expenditure on the same is very minimal. For postal concession it is mandatory that the journal is published

regularly which we maintain till date. During our period Research Methodology courses were organized to improve the quality of research in adult education and began the Annual Reports of the Association in printing format.

***Prof. Shah:** I am sure, it may not have been very smooth being the President for a long period. Did you face any challenges or problems and if so, how did you overcome the same?*

Shri Choudhary: The main problem has been of finance. We did not have enough money to expand our activities in the earlier period. IAEA did not get enough academic inputs from its members. However, we have been receiving academic inputs from many people like you and the Delhi based universities, specially University of Delhi, JNU and NUEPA. But even then, we feel that our journals need to be qualitatively improved further. There are very few good writers among our members who have the real professional knowledge, skills and competence and could contribute in a significant manner.

***Prof. Shah:** You mean running a journal was a big problem because of shortage of good quality articles? How did you tackle the issue? Did you take any special steps?*

Shri Choudhary: Yes, it was taken and still it is on. We have been asking our friends specially those who are in universities to write research based articles for our journal and we could get good response.

***Prof. Shah:** Now that Indian Adult Education Association has completed 75 years, what do you think of the future of Association in the next 25 years?*

Shri Choudhary: As far as the infrastructure of IAEA is concerned, I think we have done a lot and with the expansion of the facilities in the building, we will have no problem in taking-up new activities in the future. Up to certain extent the Association is now financially self-sufficient. We are neither depending on the government grants nor financial help from outside sources. It is also to tell you that as we publish the journal, we cannot get any foreign contribution. In fact, earlier also we have not accepted any foreign contributions. However, the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education which is now called Asian South Pacific Bureau of Basic and Adult Education has supported us in some of our activities. Likewise, during earlier days, ICAE had also contributed a little towards our programmes. As a part of our future activities, we plan to take-up skill development programmes, training of trainers programmes, evaluation and research activities.

Prof. Shah: *Do you think that as an organization, IAEA has been effective in providing enough scope for its members to contribute to the development of adult education?*

Shri Choudhary: Yes, I think so. It is our endeavor to provide enough scope for our members to contribute to the development of adult education in whatever manner they may like.

Prof. Shah: *What was your experience in seeking the cooperation of government for the activities of IAEA, especially from National Literacy Mission Authority. Did you get enough support and encouragement from them?*

Shri Choudhary: Earlier, our voice was there in the government when our past President Shri K. G. Saiyaidain, who was the Education Secretary to the Govt. of India and Shri Anil Bordia, the then Joint Secretary in the government who was the Editor of Indian Journal of Adult Education. Through them we could convey our views to the government. But with the passage of time, our links with the government became weak. With the launching of the National Literacy Mission, there were political interests and people from different political walks of life came into adult education and I can categorically say that many of them did not understand the real spirit of Adult Education. Even now people at the helm of affairs are politicians who do not understand the concept of Adult Education. We try our best to educate them but miserably failed. You may know Prof. N.G. Ranga, a veteran parliamentarian who served as a member of Lok Sabha for many terms. He was our Life Member. We tried to promote adult education by making him the Chairman of the Forum of Parliamentarians and organized programmes, but in vein as many politicians did not respond to it.

Prof. Shah: *Do you think that IAEA has succeeded in achieving the aims and objectives for which it was established?*

Shri Choudhary: Definitely. Upto a large extent IAEA has succeeded in achieving the aims and objectives for which it was set-up. As far as the eradication of illiteracy is concerned, IAEA has made some significant contributions by encouraging the state branches to promote and support literacy programmes. But still we have to do a lot. Hence, we are thinking of taking-up new activities and programmes in the areas of vocational education, skill development programmes, activities for senior citizens and women empowerment, etc.

***Prof. Shah:** To what extent the activities of IAEA have been influenced or guided by different fund giving International agencies like the UNESCO, DVV, ASPBAE, etc? Did their fund influence the programmes of IAEA?*

Shri Choudhary: As I said earlier, we have not accepted any foreign contributions. However, DVV has been supporting our activities not financially but academically. They have supported the participation of our members in some of the international conferences. As far as the Government of India is concerned, we have received grant-in-aid for certain programmes, publication of our journals, organization of conferences besides strengthening our library which is named after Shri Amarnath Jha.

***Prof. Shah:** What were some of the very significant field activities IAEA has undertaken in Delhi or elsewhere?*

Shri Choudhary: We had organized 7 to 8 adult education projects in the slum areas of Delhi, especially Trilokpuri which is a big resettlement colony. Now we are running a Gender Resource Centre at Kirti Nagar in North Delhi for the empowerment of women.

***Prof. Shah:** Did IAEA play a furthering role of government policies or criticized government policies at any point of time?*

Shri Choudhary: IAEA always supported the government programmes. In one of our conferences, some of the participants were critical that Kerala literacy programme did not give due importance to post literacy and continuing education. This reached the then Education Secretary to Government of India and DG, NLM who asked us how such an observation was made by IAEA? We clarified that the observations were made by some participants in their personal capacity and it was not the view of IAEA.

***Prof. Shah:** What has been your experiences of involving universities in the activities of IAEA?*

Shri Choudhary: That has been very good as many universities have come forward. Many of the University Departments of Adult, Continuing Education and Extension are Institutional Members of IAEA. In fact, in 1964, IAEA organized the Vice Chancellors' Conference in Bhopal where our then President Dr. M.S.Mehta, who was the Vice Chancellor of Rajasthan University played a key role. About 60

Vice Chancellors attended the conference and they resolved to start Departments of Adult Education in the universities. As a follow-up of the conference, several universities introduced adult education programmes and they have done very good work.

Prof. Shah: *What has been the experience of IAEA in establishing cooperation between national and international agencies for the promotion of Adult Education? Was there any problem?*

Shri Choudhary: There was no problem in collaborating with international agencies. We had successfully collaborated with the International Federation of Worker's Education Association. With their support we conducted an International study circle and we studied labour problems. We are a member of International Council of Adult Education (ICAE) and Asian South Pacific Bureau of Basic and Adult Education.

Prof. Shah: *What about the national organization?*

Shri Choudhary: Yes, We worked with Central Board of Worker's Education, National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, AICMED, Kolkata and similar such organizations.

Prof. Shah: *Did IAEA work with the All India Committee for Eradication of Illiteracy?*

Shri Choudhary: Yes, we worked closely with the All India Committee for Eradication of Illiteracy for Women. Smt. Phulrenu Guha, Prof. R.N. Talwar and Smt. Gomati Nair were very cooperative and we organized several programmes with them. We continue to be a member of India Literacy Board, Lucknow since its inception. The First Nehru Literacy Award was given to Dr. Wealthy Fisher, who was the founder of Literacy House, Lucknow. Since our President is the member on the India Literacy Board, we actively participate in their programmes and provide guidance to them.

Prof. Shah: *During the last 75 years is there any programme or project of IAEA which has influenced others, and which you can say served as a model for other organizations?*

Shri Choudhary: One was our Research Methodology course. This has provided a model for many universities to organize similar such programmes.

Prof. Shah: Is there any period in the history of IAEA, when it was very active?

Shri Choudhary: Yes definitely, we were always doing good work. However, during the period 1969 to 1974, we were very active and influenced the government policies and introduced the concept of Total Literacy in Mhow during one of the Regional Conferences. Shri Dutta and Barrister M.G. Mane gave a call for “Literacy for All” which was later on adopted by the government.

Prof. Shah: Did IAEA face any type of crises during the last 75 years?

Shri Choudhary: Yes, crises were always there. The crises were in the form of finance, leadership or some other type.

Prof. Shah: Which was the biggest crisis IAEA faced?

Shri Choudhary: There was a problem about 10 years ago, concerning our General Secretary. He got a case instituted against the Association and defended himself, but half heartedly. In fact he himself admitted that as he wanted to continue as General Secretary for a longer period he initiated a case to get the election stayed. It was purely a personal motive and of course we came out of the problem very soon.

Prof. Shah: Do you think that certain individuals in their personal capacity have greatly influenced the character and functioning of the IAEA?

Shri Choudhary: Yes. Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, as the President of IAEA influenced a lot the activities of the Association to a great extent. In fact his leadership was an asset. Dr. M.S. Mehta as the President also influenced a lot. Dr. S.C. Dutta who was the General Secretary for 22 years, Treasurer for 3 years and President for one year rendered yeomen service to the organization which is valuable and unforgettable. Prof. B.S. Garg, the then Chancellor of JRN Rajasthan Vidyapeeth (Deemed University), Udaipur has been a guiding factor in the growth of the Association. He was our President and Patron for 17 years. The co-members Shri B.B. Mohanty, Bhai Bhagwan, Shri Sudhir Chatterjee, Shri A.L. Bhargava and many others also have contributed to the growth of the organization.

Prof. Shah: *Has the constitution and character of the Association undergone any major change over the years?*

Shri Choudhary: Yes. I think for the first time, it was done in 1970 during Bombay Conference. Earlier there was no provision for direct election. The Managing Committee used to go with a list before the General Body and that was accepted and thus the Executive Members were elected unanimously. Then the constitution was changed in 2006 to stipulate the term of the membership of the Executive Committee to the maximum of 10 years only.

Prof. Shah: *I have noticed that every year during the annual conference, IAEA brings out a series of recommendations. What has been the follow-up of those recommendations?*

Shri Choudhary: We send the recommendations to the government and they are raised in various forums. These recommendations are normally considered by the government. You may know we cannot compel anybody to give serious consideration to the recommendations but only can bring to their notice.

Prof. Shah: *IAEA has more than 2000 Life Members. How many members take active interest in the activities of IAEA?*

Shri Choudhary: About 25% of the members take active interest in the activities of IAEA. We have been organizing the annual and regional conferences and it has been found that on an average around 200 to 300 members participate in the same. Moreover, some of our members write about their field experiences and send us articles which we publish in our Journals and Newsletter. Additionally, our State Branches are active in West Bengal, Rajasthan, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and some other states in which the members participate.

Prof. Shah: *How are the policy decisions taken in IAEA.?*

Shri Choudhary: All the decisions are taken in a democratic manner. All the plans and proposals are placed before the Executive Committee and after through discussion, decisions are taken collectively.

Prof. Shah: Have you planned any strategy to encourage young people to take over the leadership?

Shri Choudhary: We have been following a systematic policy of encouraging young people to join IAEA. In the present Executive Committee, we have five young persons. The previous committee also had a few young people as members.

Prof. Shah: Do you think that the present income of IAEA is sufficient to undertake various programmes?

Shri Choudhary: We are not getting enough funds for programmes. We really need a lot of funds to organize more number of programmes.

Prof. Shah: What percentage of income is used for the programmes?

Prof. Choudhary: Earlier we decided not to spend more than 40% of our income towards salary. But in the recent time the expenditure on this account has increased to 50% as we pay the employees the salary almost at par with the government. About 30% of the income is being spent on publications and organization of conferences, seminars and meetings and the remaining 20% is being spent on the improvement and maintenance of the office infrastructure.

Prof. Shah: One of the criticisms is that IAEA is dominated by the same group of people for long and new persons do not get a chance to serve. How do you react to this?

Shri Choudhary: No, the perception is baseless because we organize General Body meeting every year and the election to the Council, Executive Committee and Office Bearers is conducted every three years for which the notification is issued at least two months before. We advertise the Election schedule and related information well in time to enable the members to participate in the same. Our experience is many times we do not get enough nominations. Normally we try that the election for different posts is unanimous. If not unanimous, there should be a minimum contest.

Prof. Shah: We are living in a globalized world and IAEA needs to have links with global organizations. What are the initiatives taken in this direction?

Shri Choudhary: IAEA has been encouraging international collaborations and our members have been attending several international events. A number of

international experts have been visiting IAEA regularly. We have set-up an International Institute mainly to promote international projects and programmes. Some of the distinguished adult educators viz., the President of ICAE, Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and the Secretary General of ASPBAE are our regular visitors. We have also established a national chapter of International Reading Association.

***Prof. Shah:** Do you think IAEA should work more closely with international organizations? Will there be any problem in receiving funds?*

Shri Choudhary: Sure, we should work with international organizations; but there will be a problem in receiving foreign funds. This can be overcome by getting FCRA for IAEA.

***Prof. Shah:** In this year when IAEA has completed 75years, I would like to know your visions for the future. Have you formulated any specific future plans for IAEA?*

Shri Choudhary: This is my dream that IAEA should become a centre for learning in which middle level and higher level academics could come. I wish that we should have maximum courses which can attract younger people. IAEA can start a community college and similar other institutions. We can start an exchange programmes for the youth both at national and international level.

***Prof. Shah:** As an eminent adult educator with over fifty years of experience in the field of adult education, do you like to give some suggestions to those who are entering the field?*

Shri K.C. Choudhary: It is unfortunate that youngsters have no attraction towards adult education movement. I wish the younger generation, particularly professionals come to this field of their own to pay back to the community from which they have got a lot. For this we have to create sufficient attraction and such conditions so that they like the field. In our managing committee we have kept room for them which is gradually increasing. In future we may take a decision to reserve at least 40% positions for them. But we have to device appropriate programmes suitable to their interest.

***Prof. Shah:** Thank you very much sir for sharing your thoughts.*

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Book

Shah, S. Y. & Choudhary, K.C. (Eds.). (2016). *International Dimensions on Adult and Lifelong Education*. New Delhi: International Institute of Adult and Lifelong Education.

Article

Sork, Thomas J. (2016). The Place of Ethics and the Ethics of Place in Adult and Lifelong Education. *Indian Journal of Adult Education*, 77(3), 5-18.

Chapter in a Book

Subha Rao, I.V. (2002). A New Approach to Literacy Assessment in India. In Madhu Singh (ed.) *Institutionalising Lifelong Learning* (pp. 270-91). Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education.

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The Indian Adult Education Association founded in 1939, aims at improving the quality of life through education, which it visualizes as a continuous and lifelong process. It directs its efforts towards accelerating adult education as a process, a programme, and a movement.

The Association co-ordinates activities of various agencies – governmental and voluntary, national and international – engaged in similar pursuits. It organizes conferences and seminars, and undertakes surveys and research projects. It endeavours to update and sharpen the awareness of its members by bringing to them expert views and experiences in adult education from all over the world. In pursuit of the policy, the Association has instituted the Nehru Literacy Award and Tagore Literacy Award for outstanding contribution to the promotion of Adult Education and Women's Literacy in the country, respectively. It has also instituted Dr. Zakir Husain Memorial Lecture, which is delivered every year by an educationist of eminence.

The Association has brought out many publications on themes related to adult education, including Hindi editions of several UNESCO publications. It brings out the Indian Journal of Adult Education, Proudth Shiksha and IAEA Newsletter.

The Association acts as the Indian arm of the International Council for Adult Education, International Literacy Association and the Asian-South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education. Its membership is open to all individuals and institutions who believe in the aims and objectives of the Association.

Its headquarters is located in Shafiq Memorial, IAEA House at 17-B, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi - 110 002.

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