Appreciation Programme

Adult Education and Social Change

Module III

Contemporary Trends in Adult Education

Modules of Appreciation Programme in Adult Education and Social Change

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Introduction and Objectives

Introduction

In several societies, adults are ostracized from larger social groups based on health, economic status, social status, gender, colour, caste/creed or race. This kind of social exclusion leads to the creation of multiple problems associated with 'identity', thereby being denied basic rights or facilities, as a result of belonging to a group that has a socially 'undesirable' characteristic. Modern development discourse focuses on the politics and problems of social exclusion and how adult education can be a powerful tool to address these sorts of inequities in society (Cotera, 2011). Adult education encourages the exchange of ideas amongst members of the community thus opening up channels of communication amongst them. This communication creates a foundation of mutual respect, tolerance and understanding to the benefit of all members of these communities. It is important to understand the transformative power of adult education and, its ability to create and deepen community engagement on issues of contemporary importance.

We have already looked at the history of the adult education and lifelong learning movement. In this module we will discuss some contemporary trends in adult education through three sub-units.

- Unit one focuses on the role of adult education as a promoter of social inclusion with several examples and case studies.
- Unit two explores how adult education has been viewed in the context of development concerns such as environmental conservation, health and sanitation, gender mainstreaming, livelihoods and also in war contexts. This unit is focused on the practitioner and underlies the value of adult education in the field, in the context of contemporary development.

- Unit three serves as a brief backgrounder to the fourth module covering the concept of lifelong learning and how adult education is the key to bringing about social change in the 21st century.

Objectives

At the end of this module the learner will develop an understanding of:

- The issues affecting adult populations, especially social exclusion in their pursuit of education.
- Contemporary socio-cultural issues in the society, at national and international levels.
- Application of adult education principles to thematic areas in modern development discourse.
- Use of adult education tools in bringing about social change and transformation, underlying the concepts and philosophy of lifelong learning.

Unit 1 Adult Education and Social Inclusion for Social Change

Marginalization can occur due to the implementation of discriminatory legislation such as, South Africa's Apartheid laws or the discrimination faced by aboriginal tribes of Australia. It can also be a result of societal norms, traditions, beliefs, attitudes or stereotypes towards women, tribal and *Dalit*[1] communities. Social exclusion can occur to individuals often identified with low basic skills, adults in low-skilled employment, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities and long-term illnesses, long-term unemployed people, minority or ethnic groups, ex-prisoners, the homeless, drug addicts and some groups of women and the elderly.

Several countries employ adult education methodologies and interventions as a part of their welfare policies, as a means to increase employability by emphasizing vocational education and training. Inclusive development is addressed through a variety of ways and one of these is through community-based rehabilitation.

Example: Community rehabilitation methodologies provide people with disabilities, the right to equal opportunity and participation in society. Uwe Gartenschlaeger posits that, a community-based approach to adult education unifies disparate parts of the global north and south (Gartenschlaeger, 1999).

 Adult education methodologies address social exclusion, thus ensuring that every individual receives appropriate, good quality education within and beyond the school system.

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[1] Dalit is a designation for a group of people traditionally/historically regarded as untouchable. Dalits are a mixed population, consisting of numerous social groups from all over India; they speak a variety of languages and practice a multitude of religions. The government of India recognises and protects them as Scheduled Castes. The term Dalit has been interchangeably used with term Scheduled Castes, and these terms include all historically discriminated communities of India out-caste and Untouchables.

The Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force Report makes the observation that the aborigines remain, are the most educationally backward society in Australia. (Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force, 2002).

Australia's treatment of aboriginal people parallels the experience of other indigenous people around the world with regard to social exclusion. Their experiences are similar to the experiences of indigenous people from Scandinavia, and Canada, as well as the tribal populations in Central India. In the boxes below we discuss some case studies of how various organizations have worked towards social inclusion.

Case Study 1: The Aboriginal Community College 'Tauondi':

An interesting case is that of the Tauondi community in Port Adelaide, South Australia. The word 'Tauondi' is the local word for "breakthrough". At Tauondi, traditional schools were often integrated with local mainstream educational institutions, such as the local Technical and Further Education (TAFE) schools.

These schools have laid the foundation to achieve a better balance between what is called 'cultural teaching' and 'education for Aboriginal people'. Both these forms of 'education' exist at Tauondi today. Their amalgamation is referred to as 'holistic education'. Tauondi has been in existence since 1973 and came about as a result of Aboriginal activism. The success of the 1967 referendum, allowed Aboriginal people to be counted in the census, and the commonwealth government was responsible for their welfare.

The college runs its programmes on a holistic philosophy of education and emphasizes physical, mental and spiritual development. A community college rooted in the identity of these indigenous people was necessary, given their isolation from the mainstream. The Tauondi has helped address many concerns of marginalized populations by building a sense of community to discuss issues pertaining to discrimination, racism, economic disadvantages, health and education.

This opportunity has prompted them to pursue higher education and venture into new areas.

 (Tauondi Community College, 2013)

Case Study2: HIV/AIDs in Botswana

The experience of tackling HIV/AIDS in Botswana has been unique in terms of the involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS seeking support in health related behavioral change. These people are often socially ostracized from their communities based on misconceptions that the virus spreads due to 'illicit' sexual contact. In most cases the worst affected people are women, who have largely contracted the virus from their husbands. Most of these women have no economic independence, lack power and decision making authority, especially in matters related to their sexuality or sexual health. Their vulnerability acts as a spur in the spread of HIV/AIDS, as these women have no autonomy over their lives and bodies.

In such situations, adult education programmes take the form of education and creating awareness amongst women about their rights within sexual relationships, using culturally contextualized and locally relevant. Such a measure was particularly critical, as Western education materials being promoted ignored the local social dynamics of men and women and assumed homogenous social structures. Further such material denies both women and men the opportunity to explore and find joint solutions, as their strategy laid the onus of prevention of HIV/AIDS in the woman denying sexual relations with her HIV infected husband/partner.

The adult education strategy underlined the importance of messages on AIDS in African nations to emphasize as much on ethical concerns of ostracism as on creating awareness to the spread of the disease. This is a critical lesson that underscores the need for adult education to be sensitive to indigenous knowledge and culture, if it is to be fully effective.

Learning is a community activity. The goals and purposes of adult education in Africa have a historical relevance. In traditional African societies, the purpose of education was to socialize an individual into the norms and traditions of the community (Cervero, 2006).

In contemporary contexts, it is essential that these forms of knowledge be tapped to increase learning in the context of HIV/AIDS awareness. The case study of Botswana presents a good example of how indigenous knowledge practices in adult education can help in dealing with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Given adult education's emphasis on learner-centred approaches, oral narratives through music and interaction, as in Africa can be more effective than their textual counterpart.

In the context of Botswana adults affected with HIV/AIDS participate in discussions wherein, the learner narrates his/her experiences of living with HIV/AIDS. In Giroux's terms, this act of conversation causes the teacher and learner barrier to breakdown with both parties moving beyond their social locations in order to learn, understand and work with each other.

(UNDP Country Office, Botswana, 2000)

Case Study 3: The Barefoot College

The Barefoot College has provided the economically backward from remote rural communities, the opportunity to access, own and manage sophisticated technologies. Recognising the difference between education and literacy, the college has trained illiterate men and women to develop skills and organize themselves to be gainfully employed, while serving their own community. The primary focus is the training of literate and semi-literate middle aged women, from 35 to 60, from villages the entire world over.

(Barefoot College, 2012)

Unit 2: Adult Education in Thematic Areas

Adult education can play a key role in tackling developmental problems related to health, environment, gender etc. For example, ecological problems for marginalised communities can consequentially create livelihood, health and very often economic problems too. Environmental adult education acknowledges that learning is a far more complex, extensive and important process than information transmission. Environmental adult education recognizes indigenous knowledge with regards to the environment and ecology. It promotes a sharing of this knowledge through dialogue and debate to create a new ecological understanding of our world (Lubyayi & Nakato, 2002). Particularly true of environmental or ecological adult education, is the concept of 'Teach-ins', borrowed from social movements across the world (Olson, 1999). Teach-ins bring together students, the elderly, artists, educators and activists, to discuss strategies and explore issues such as genetically modified foods, trade, militarism, corporatization, poverty and democracy.

The following case-study discusses an example of an environmental adult education programme that introduces participatory educational practices that emerge from the principles of environmental adult education.

Case Study 4: PENYA- Practical Empowerment and Networking Youth Association

PENYA is a project in Zimbabwe, aimed at building local capacities to appropriately and effectively manage and respond to environmental challenges and food security threats, through training and workshops. PENYA undertakes participatory programmes involving all the members in the community. The project has contributed towards protection of woodlands and the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources, which are currently under threat. The project started off with 100 households from 3 villages. The success of the project and important lessons learnt, were instrumental in taking a decision to replicate the initiatives, based on PENYA's previous experiences.

(Musarurwa & Hillary, 2013)

In South Africa's Eastern Cape Province, storytelling methods have been used by organisations working on climate change in order to encourage women shellfish harvesters to reflect on the degradation of biological habitats along the coastline (dvv International, 2011). The focus was on developing co-learning methods and was initiated by using a picture-based story approach.

In Australia and New Zealand, adult environmental education has been provided through zoo education. The role of zoological parks has changed from being entertainment venues, to places where environmental education, fauna conservation and research are carried out.

In the above examples, adult education principles are important because they enable a holistic approach to environmental learning. They address all sections of society: people, communities, public institutions, the private sector, governments, policy-makers and international organisations, thus making it meaningful to adults in their daily lives.

Case Study 5: Wainimate – Save the Plants that Save Lives, Fiji

Wainimate is an association of traditional healers, nurses, environmentalists and community educators living in Fiji. It promotes the use of safe and effective traditional medicines and the conservation of medicinal plants. It has established demonstration gardens growing medicinal plants, dealing with traditional medicine. Workshops focusing on traditional medicines used to treat common diseases, such as skin diseases have been conducted. Participants are invited to carry out ethno-botanical surveys to analyse how plants can be used in the treatment of diseases and for assisting people to record information about useful plants. In this way it promotes the preservation of important knowledge. The association also looks at income generation opportunities from traditional medicine.

(dvv International, 2011)

Adult education in areas of internal armed conflict and civil war can play a vital role in educating for democracy, peace and human rights empowering citizens to rebuild their lives. The Education for All Framework for Action, adopted at the World Education Forum in 2000 in Dakar included an explicit call for support to education in emergencies (World Education Forum, 2000).

The following case-studies showcase the efforts of various organizations in the sphere of adult education in conflict situations:

Case Study 6: International Rescue Committee (IRC), Afghanistan

Adult educators can recognize inequality and prompt swift social participation. An example of such an initiative was in Afghanistan where the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has been running home-based schools since 1997 (Winthrop, 2006). These home-based schools were developed in response to the Taliban's active repression of schooling for girls and women. Under the most difficult circumstances, trusted members of the community opened their homes for educating girls and women. The IRC provided educational materials and teacher training. Although the Taliban regime was overthrown in 2001, the home-based schools programme continues. Its goal is to provide schooling for those youth who have no access to government schools. As the education system recovers in Afghanistan, home-based schooling is now being integrated into state schools.

> ### *Case Study 7: HAGURUKA – Defending women's' and children's rights in war*
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> In times of war, women, internally displaced people, refugees, people with disabilities and children especially the girl child are the worst affected. This point has been proved by the studies conducted in Rwanda (Bucyensenge, 2012). HAGURUKA (meaning "wake up") is a non- profit and politically neutral organization, set up in 1991, to defend the right of women and children through training, social-legal assistance and education (ACHPR, 2013). HAGURUKA believed that post-conflict development would not be possible, if this huge section of the population was not facilitated to participate in the country's development efforts and their emancipation.
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> In Rwanda's patriarchal society, many widows were not allowed to inherit their deceased husband's property. Through advocating legal amendments, HAGURUKA, have helped women inherit their husband's property. As a result of this intervention made by HAGURUKA women's representation, numeracy, literacy and political representation has also shown a stable increase. HAGURUKA also funds and facilitates human rights groups, where women and men participate by role plays and dramas to educate the population about literacy programmes and reconciliation.

Similar examples include an NGO named Centre for Development in Central America, Nicaragua (CDCA). It works within the local community and holds the strong belief that the community is capable of sustaining itself. Adult educators fill in the gaps where people have not had exposure to their basic rights or formal education.

It may be remembered that education can have negative impacts, where it further stratifies ethnic groups. Such impacts can take place when these programmes or interventions are not implemented or developed, keeping participatory and community oriented principles of adult education programmes in mind. Negative consequences have been seen in places such as Rwanda where scholars have found that colonial education policies led to stratification among different ethnic groups (Alexis, 2004).

Similar examples are available for South Africa and Northern Ireland. Differences in availability of opportunities to access secular education among various castes, has been witnessed in colonial India, as widening the gap between upper castes and Dalits.

Unit 3: An Introduction to Adult Education in the 21st Century

With increased international funding, one can expect a greater focus on adult education programmes and activities. These adult education programmes should especially emphasise on adult populations that are disadvantaged due to exceptional circumstances like famine, poverty and war and live in situations that compromise dignity and the living of a full-life (Walters, 2010).

New innovative techniques of providing education in conflict zones are being devised such as M-Learning. These technologies increasingly act as democratising forces, particular in a future where digital literacy is becoming increasingly important. A pre-emptive focus on adult education actually saves governments money, by reducing societal healthcare, public assistance, and incarceration costs. Adult education also improves and expands the nation's available pool of human capital by helping motivated but undereducated people achieve gainful employment in today's increasingly high tech- and global market. Further, this is achieved at a far lower cost per learner, when compared to formal education.   For an adult learner, basic technology goes hand-in-hand with societal integration. Thus adult education must look at digital literacy as another realm within which elements of critical thinking need to be applied (Mayo, 1999). Adult educators are now moving from considerations about the role of technology in adult education processes, to also considering social and political considerations about the role of adult education in a technologically driven society. Can adult educators, together with learners, find creative ways to use digital technologies as learning-teaching tools, in an effort to promote greater social inclusion of all people in our society?

Mark Warschauer argues for an emphasis on social inclusion saying that the objective of using information communications technology in the context of marginalized groups is to further a process of social inclusion and not to overcome a digital divide. He further adds that it is the extent and the motivation of individuals, families, and communities to fully participate in society of and control their own destinies that acts as a driving force to face and overcome such challenges. (Warschauer, 2003)

However, not all innovations in adult education have to be digitally driven – UNESCO has documented some of the most interesting innovations in adult education in recent times (Papen & Uta, 2013). The book *Common learning - collective research: innovating adult education* contains a series of case studies and contributions prepared, as part of an international research project on 'Innovations in Adult Education' (INNAE). The project, managed by the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) and the German Foundation for International Development (DSE), examines how adult educators and facilitators have evolved innovative educational practices and programmes, in order to better serve the needs of their clients.

The project is also uniquely collaborative in that it enabled participants to develop a common frame of reference for the analysis of educational innovations and this process is detailed in the introduction to the book. The book is included in this course's supplementary reading list.

Summary

Education is of paramount importance in efforts that seek to increase social inclusion of adults, especially in marginalised communities. Specifically, adult education initiatives work better when developed along thematic lines, to address the specific challenges that communities face - these could range from acts of war to ecological or social inclusion challenges, including health epidemics. Going forward in the 21st century, digital literacy is going to become of prime importance, as are social innovations with regard to including hitherto excluded adult populations from social development.

With the help of case studies, we have looked at how adult education is pivotal in making appropriate interventions to address issues. Be it the case of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe, or of education of girls and women in Taliban's Afghanistan, the results of these programmes have been unprecedented. But the participatory component of adult education must be emphasised, without which education could become the basis of further societal stratification according to levels of education.

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