CHAPTER III

IMPORTANCE OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Non-formal education along with its flexible nature and expanding scope is deeply rooted in the field of education in India. This process of education has been evolved to deal with illiterates, school drop-outs, that is the inadequacy of formal education and the shortcomings of the schools to meet the realistic needs of the learners to cope with the actual life situations. It is not true that all learning takes place in the schools, and it will be wrong to assume that no important learning takes place outside the school. In fact, for the most people, the largest part and some of the most important parts of their education take place outside the school.¹ This may be one of the reasons why non-formal education is playing such an important role in the process of education in India in the recent times.

In fact, non-formal education has come in the Indian scene in its formal way very recently. Institutions and organisations that use non-formal methods in India, function in a different way than the conventional schools and institutions of higher learning.² Also, there is a determined

effort towards developing and strengthening non-formal education as an instrument of social change particularly after the attainment of independence.

The official support of non-formal education in India came in the 1974 and 1975 sessions of the Central Advisory Board of Education, as stated earlier. The Board has recommended that the exclusive emphasis on formal systems of education should be given up, and a large element of non-formal education should be introduced within the system. All the state plans of education in India should also include programmes of non-formal education as an integral part of the educational provision and suitable machinery may be set up in each state. There is enough potentiality for the development of non-formal education in India, both from the official and non-official sides.

3.2. DEVELOPMENT OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

The development of non-formal education and its emphasis is more or less a matter of new information and ideas than a matter of new focus or emphasis. The need in this regard is to revise and renovate the instructional modes of formal education. It has also been possible, because,

the non-formal education movement has certainly opened the eyes of the people to see alternative arrangement to the traditional approach to instruction.

Non-formal education is a new thrust forwarded to accelerate the pace of development in self-expression, serving the purpose of a viable alternative in a developing society. This system of education focuses on the adaptability of the education system to relate the contents to the needs, interests, and environment of the learner and his ability to link education with other social and economic inputs in rural and urban areas all over India.

Non-formal education activities for development of the country, however, cannot be conceived as a subsidiary addition to economic plans. It must constitute an integral part of it. The abilities of the individual which non-formal education aims at are to—(i) stimulate intellectual, logical and epistemological processes and (ii) instil in his a new awareness of his unlimited possibilities and capacities of action.

The development of non-formal education in India is taking place in different age-groups. It starts from primary stage in the age-group 6-14 years giving emphasis on

school drop-outs in the age-group 9-14. Non-formal education for the age-group 15-25 is a major programme, launched during the period 1975-76 (Fifth Plan). It caters to the needs of the rural poor with particular emphasis on the weaker sections of the people of India. The programme has been implemented in 110 districts in the country. The break up is (i) 50 districts with central funds and (ii) 60 districts with state funds. The target of this programme is to cover about 6,000 centres of non-formal education all over India. The programme is further expanded in 1977-78 to cover an additional 25 districts under the central funds and 25 districts with state and Union Territory resources.

Non-formal education has been developed in almost all the 22 states and 9 Union Territories of India as an alternative supporting channel of formal education to take care of non-starters and school drop-outs. The total expected coverage during the Sixth Five Year Plan is 58 lakhs in 1,87 lakhs non-formal education centres. The position during 1981-82 was a coverage of 15.10 lakhs children in 73,000 non-formal education centres. There was also a target for an additional enrolment during 1982-83 in the tune of 45 lakhs children in the break up of— (i) 35 lakhs through formal education and (ii) 10 lakhs through non-formal education.


However, the trend towards non-formal education can be successful only when all the forces in the country get involved and equally shared the responsibility for the development of non-formal education. There are also a number of voluntary organisations actively engaged in the activities of non-formal education. A wide discussion on the main lines and practical measures for the development of non-formal education are also essentially required. In this way, the co-operation and co-ordination of all the concerned should be ensured.

Adequate provisions have been made for the development of non-formal education in the successive Five Year Plans for national development. The initiative in this regard has been officially taken in line with the recommendations of the Central Advisory Board of Education, as discussed above. It has been earmarked since the Fifth Five Year Plan and the subsequent Five Years Plans, even though adequate provisions had also been made in its allied fields in the earlier four plans of national development.

3.3. MAIN SCHEMES OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION UNDER THE FIVE YEAR PLANS

The Five Year Plans for national development beginning from the First Five Year Plan are making provisions for

8. Govt. of India : Main Schemes of Non-formal Education in the Fifth Five Year Plan 1976, p. V.
education including adult education and its allied sectors.\textsuperscript{9}  
It may not be out of place to have an idea of the provisions of education in general and that of adult and non-formal education in particular, in the different plan periods. The table below shows the expenditure on adult education and non-formal education during the Five Year Plans.\textsuperscript{10}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Total expenditure on Education (Rs. in million)</th>
<th>Expenditure on Adult/NFE (Rs. in million)</th>
<th>P.C. of Expenditure on Adult/NFE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Plan</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Plan</td>
<td>2,730</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Plan</td>
<td>5,979</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Plan</td>
<td>7,860</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Plan</td>
<td>12,860</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Plan</td>
<td>19,860</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The budgetary provision for education in the First Five Year Plan was Rs. 1,530 millions of which Rs. 50 millions had been set apart for social education excluding the expenditure under the Community Development Projects. These amounts were spent for the purposes of literacy centres.


community centres and rural libraries. However, the total expenditure on education in the Second Five Year Plan was Rs. 2,730 million with a provision of Rs. 40 million for adult education which was less than 10 million from the First Five Year Plan. The total expenditure on education increased to Rs. 5,979 million during the Third Five Year Plan. But the expenditure on adult education decreased to Rs. 35 million. The Fourth Five Year Plan made a provision of Rs. 45 million for adult education and its allied sectors out of the total education provision of Rs. 7,860 million, making the expenditure on adult education more than 10 million the provision in Third Five Year Plan. In this way, the background was prepared for introducing non-formal education in India.

It was in the Fifth Five Year Plan that non-formal education as a specific subject got a place for the first time in the history of education in India. A sum of Rs. 1,286 crores was earmarked in the Education budget setting apart Rs. 18 crores for adult education. A provision of Rs. 4.47 crores was made for non-formal education in the Fifth Plan even though an outlay of Rs. 24 crores were required for the implementation of the non-formal education programme.11 Thus, non-formal process of acquiring and imparting education was made for all categories of learners, namely for children, youths and adults during this plan period.

11. Govt. of India: Main Schemes of Non-formal Education in the Fifth Five Year Plan 1976, pp. 10, 18.
A sum of Rs. 1,980 crores was earmarked in the Sixth Five Year Plan for education with a provision of Rs. 200 crores for adult and non-formal education. Adult and Elementary Education also formed part of the 'Minimum Needs Programme' in the Sixth Five Year Plan with the objective of cent percent coverage of adults in the age-group 15-35 through non-formal education by 1990. Hence, the amount is not sufficient enough to achieve the target of non-formal education if it is not supplemented from other resources as this programme is a multi-purpose one.

Out of the total outlay in the Plan Budget 1963-64 a provision of Rs. 19.01 crores was made for school education of which Rs. 4.75 crores was set apart for non-formal education of the children in the age-group 9-14 years. In addition to it, a sum of Rs. 5.5 crores was also earmarked for the purpose of paper aid assistance to the States and Union Territory Governments for non-formal education.


Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. A sum of Rs. 25 crores had been made available in the Sixth Five Year Plan on a 50:50 sharing basis since 1979-80 for this purpose. The Central Ministry of Education also prepared a scheme of central assistance for non-formal education centres exclusively for girls for the above nine educationally backward States on the basis of 90:10 between the centre and states with a provision of Rs. 1 crore on an experimental basis. Unfortunately, Manipur is not included in the list of educationally backward states of India. Of course, the difference is only a matter of degree and not of kind as the problem of illiteracy and school drop-outs are still there.

It has been estimated that a sum of Rs. 100 crores would be required in addition to the earlier provision of Rs. 200 crores for implementing the various schemes of non-formal education within the Sixth Five Year Plan. Thus, during the Seventh Five Year Plan, funds will be needed to the tune of Rs. 1,312.5 crore so as to achieve cent percent literacy by 1990, as stated above. But it is very difficult to comment for the time being as we will have to wait and see the development of non-formal education during this plan period.

3.4. TARGET GROUPS OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

The target groups of non-formal education are the children in the age-group 6-14 years, school drop-outs, out-of-school youths and illiterate girls and women in India including in Manipur. Non-formal education programmes for these diverse groups differ not only in emphasis but also the purpose for which it has been imparted. However, they form the bulk of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other socially and educationally backward rural population, which are being discussed here.

CHILDREN IN THE AGE-GROUP 6-14

Non-formal education for this age-group children coincided with the children for whom free and compulsory primary education will have to be provided according to our constitution. But many children in this age-group could not enroll themselves in primary schools at proper age. Thus they became non-starters as they are made non-school going children. Some of the reasons for which they are made non-starters are given below. 16

(i) They are required to work at home, at family farm and help their parents towards the maintenance of the family.

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(ii) Girls in poor families look after their younger brothers and sisters in addition to helping their mothers in household chores, handloom and handicraft industries.

(iii) Boys help their fathers by tending domestic animals, helping in agricultural works, joining in hotels and workshops for supplementing the meagre family income.

Non-formal education will have to be provided for this group of children for solving the problem of illiteracy and bringing them to the appropriate stages of formal education. The scheme of education to be adopted for them may include—(i) part-time education, (ii) multiple entry at primary schools and (iii) remedial programmes by means of adopting condensed courses and private study.17

SCHOOL DROP-OUTS

Children drop-out of schools at different stages. These school drop-outs, specially at the primary school stage, are the most important target group of non-formal education. They may be either boys or girls. But the phenomenon of girls drop-outs are very common in different parts of India including Manipur. On the whole, the school drop-outs in the age-group 9-14 are taken up at top priority in India and Manipur

17. Ibid.
as they form the majority of the primary school leavers. It is based on the justification that self-learning is a major feature of non-formal education and hence children below 9 years of age are not likely to be benefitted from non-formal education. The matter is also closely associated with the successful introduction of free and compulsory primary education.

School drop-outs can be found out by various methods. There is an indirect method of finding out the drop-outs. In this method, the difference between the number of students enrolled in a class and the number of students who could not appear in the final examination as regular candidates are treated as the number of students who drop-out of the school without completing the course. Thus, if a student stops coming to school for a whole academic year, he or she will be taken as a school drop-out. Non-formal education aims at bringing the school drop-outs to their appropriate stages in the main stream of formal education in spite of the reasons making them school drop-outs.

REASONS FOR SCHOOL DROP-OUTS

There are various reasons for the creation of school drop-outs. Some of the most important reasons are—(i) poverty of the parents, (ii) apathy towards education in the family,

(iii) distance of the school from the residence of the learners and teachers, especially in rural areas, (iv) lack of interest and sympathy among the teachers towards the students and (v) rigid curriculum not suited to the needs of the learners. 19

The programme of non-formal education for school drop-outs covers the activities for developing (i) health, (ii) vocation, (iii) environment, (iv) social awareness, (v) literacy and (vi) numeracy. 20 In this way, special attention should be given in the educational programmes of school drop-outs by establishing extension education centres in rural areas as majority of them are residing in such areas. These centres will educate them as to their rights and duties so that they will be in a position to play an active role in the socio-economic development of the country. 21 This non-formal education programme can also be extended for the out-of-school youths.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTHS

Non-formal education for the age-group 15-25 years corresponds to the educational programmes of out-of-school youths. This group may also be regarded as senior school drop-

20. Meheini et al. (Eds) ; Towards a Comprehensive Adult Education Programme, IAEA 1983, p. 17.
Out-of-school education for youths is, therefore, a form of adult education as they are in the upper age limits of the adolescence period. One of the purposes of out-of-school education is to challenge the traditional school system and to be free from the numbing effect of traditional administration. Wastage in education is also challenged by this process of education. It enables each learner to break through the constraints, imposed by examination which is a permanent feature in formal education.22

The majority of out-of-school youths are either illiterates or semi-literate. They are, however, playing an important role in the society on the grounds that—(i) they are often engaged in productive occupations, (ii) they render socially useful services, (iii) they are also involved in a number of community activities, (iv) most of them get married and start household life and (v) they are in the most dynamic stage imbued with curiosity and desire to learn.23

The content of education for out-of-school youths include—(i) improvement of vocational skills to enable them to increase their income, (ii) an understanding of the problems facing the society and the country, (iii) general education, (iv) sports and games, (v) hobbies and recreation, (vi) health

22. Ibid., pp. 26-27.
23. Govt. of India: Non-Formal Education in the Fifth Five Year Plan 1976, p. 5.
and family planning and (vii) participation in the programme of social and national service. 24

On the whole, non-formal education programme for out-of-school youths aims at preparation for the future which is the characteristic feature of formal education. It also aims at turning its clientele to be persons capable of assuming the responsibility in their immediate present even though they received inexpensive second chance in education. 25 Thus it aims at practical education leading to practical living.

ILLITERATE GIRLS AND WOMEN

The girls and women are also another important target groups of non-formal education. The only difference between non-formal education for girls and women lies on the fact that one emphasises on the girls as the future mothers while the other emphasises upon the women as the present mothers. Hence, non-formal education for the girls and women may be taken up together. This group include non-starter girls, girl drop-outs, out-of-school girls and illiterate women, even though the factors responsible for making them underprivileged may be different. Majority of them attending schools are also generally withdrawn from the institutions attended by them and as such they became school drop-outs.

REASONS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN DROP-OUTS

There are various reasons of girls and women drop-outs. Some of the important reasons are—involved in domestic works, confining in handloom and handicraft industries, looking after their younger brothers and sisters, participation in agricultural works, apathy of the parents towards girls education, change of residence after marriage, taking care of new born babies, teachers being younger than themselves etc. The chances of attending a non-formal education centre are also not bright as they will have to take permission from their parents and in-laws who have been instrumental in their withdrawal. The result is that the illiterate girls and women remain as illiterates and the semi-literate else forget what they had learnt at school and automatically relapse into illiteracy.26

The situation can be improved only when some non-formal education courses suitable for girls and women are introduced at suitable time, the parents and in-laws are made conscious of the importance of educating their daughters and daughter-in-laws and husbands make some sort of arrangements for giving spare time to the housewives, so that they can attend a non-formal education centre to improve their deprived conditions.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION COURSES FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

Non-formal education for the girls and women should start from the family and the kitchen. The art of home management, need based education and raising socio-economic conditions of the family should be an integral part of non-formal education for them. For this purpose, non-formal education for girls and women should be based on the learning of the skills of weaving, embroidery, knitting, tailoring, home science, correct methods of cooking, balanced diet, personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, maternal health, child care etc. Hence, non-formal education for girls and women should take care of all these aspects for leisure utilisation in addition to literacy education.

The success of any non-formal education programme meant for the girls and women, however, depend on the initiative taken by the animators and availability of suitable reading materials prepared for them. It clearly indicates that non-formal instructors for the girls and women should be girls and women of special aptitude, having dedicated ideas for serving humanity. Two types of social changes are also required for making non-formal education for girls and women more meaningful viz. (i) the employers should

provide some leisure hours during the time of working and (ii) the male should take over the burden of child-care and household work so that the house-wives may get some time in the evening to attend non-formal education centres.  

It will not be out of place to point out here about the Scheme of Awards for Excellent performance for girls and women Education under which Madhya Pradesh has been honoured to be the best state in 1982-83, by the Government of India the scheme of adopting a particular girl of a poor family in Maharashtra, the policy of making girls' education free upto M.A. in Madhya Pradesh and upto secondary level in Maharashtra and renaming of Adult Education centres for women as "Mother Welfare Centres" in Bombay. All these schemes and policies may definitely stimulate, as well as, emulate for the proper development of non-formal education for girls and women not only the other states of India but also Manipur. Hence, adequate precautions should be taken for the upliftment of these sections of the people by all the concerned including their own organisations to be established at grass-roots level. An arrangement should also be made to reserve 50 percent of the non-formal education centres to be opened for girls and women and under no circumstance they should be diverted to any other channel.


3.5. DIFFERENT PROGRAMMES OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

As stated earlier, non-formal education programmes are quite different from formal education in terms of the achievement of the learners. It aims at promoting the quality of life, incorporating healthy membership of home and neighborhood, inculcating awareness regarding health, hygiene, economic and social life of the learners. It is conducive to learning in a free and frank atmosphere, providing better opportunities for innovation and experimentation. And as such, non-formal education programmes can be used to strengthen and supplement for formal system of education ensuring people's participation. It will also help in bringing back the school drop-outs, non-enrolled children, illiterate masses and other deprived sections of the people into the national mainstream.\(^{32}\) Here lies the importance of the different programmes of non-formal education in India and also the state of Manipur.

As the target groups of non-formal education, are representing a wide range of beneficiaries with diverse needs, aptitudes, social and economic background so the identification of local programmes, their co-ordination and administration should be decentralised. It should contain the seeds of germinating awareness through understanding, imparting knowledge and skills relevant to the clientele. Adequate

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provisions should also be made even for employed persons to provide better jobs by means of part-time education and short orientation courses. As such the different non-formal education programmes are designed to facilitate voluntary participation of the children, youths and different categories of learners according to their needs and requirements. Some of the important programmes of non-formal education may be discussed under the following sub-heads:

PROGRAMME FOR GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL NEEDS

Non-formal education programmes may be organised either for general education or to serve the purpose of vocational needs depending on the needs and requirements of the clientele. They can cover both children and adults including girls and women. These programmes are generally based on subjects of common interest and general needs. There are also ample scope within the framework of such a programme for young people for learning by doing, developing positive attitudes, motivations and leadership qualities. It can be organised either in co-ordinated fashion or in isolation, depending on local situations and needs of the learners. All the sections of the people can also participate and take the benefits of such a programme as per their convenience.

This programme can be linked with specific development activities and conveyed to the clientele through the medium of extension lectures, group discussions, practical demonstrations, dance, drama, music, fair and festivals. The learning opportunities can also be provided by stories, social and cultural activities with the help of the mass media like newspapers, radio, cinema, television etc.\(^\text{34}\) It can give the participants sufficient knowledge and skills on the subjects of their interest and problems of their vocations. Thus both literate and illiterate children and adults can be benefited by the non-formal education for general and vocational needs.

PROGRAMME FOR FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

The concept of functional literacy is of recent origin in the process of education. The range between 'Simple' and 'Functional' literacy is very wide. It ranges from bare ability to read a word and reproduce it in writing to ability to communicate with other persons by means of written messages or even to understand, appreciate and produce literature.\(^\text{35}\) Functional literacy is, therefore, one of the important programmes of non-formal education meant for different groups.


In this way, Farmers Functional Literacy Programme is the biggest on-going country-wide programme of out-of-school education. It is an inter-disciplinary programme implemented jointly by the Ministries of Agriculture, Education, Information and Broadcasting.

The aim of functional literacy is to develop an individual's mental equipment, corrective powers, technical and vocational abilities. It offers educative functions to broad sectors of society by promoting formative parts and defining the principles and practical methods of education. Functional literacy has, therefore, been evolved out of traditional literacy. It is work oriented learning. Hence, functional literacy programme is the literacy integrated with the occupation of the learner and it is directly related towards the development of his economy. This is the reason why the functional literacy component is conceived as more than a literacy programme. It is a method of training for development purpose and a comprehensive non-formal education programme opening to continuing education.

The non-formal education programme for youths and adults was merged with Farmers Functional Literacy Programme in 1979 under the new nomenclature of Rural Functional Literacy Programme (RFLP). The RFLP was implemented in

Manipur with cent percent financial assistance from the Government of India by the Social Welfare Department. However, consequent upon the setting up of the Adult Education Directorate, the entire responsibility for the implementation of NALP has been shifted from the Social Welfare Department to the Directorate of Adult Education, Manipur.

POLYVALENT EDUCATION

Polyvalent education is a recent introduction in the process of non-formal education in India for the workers. Though provision had already been made for establishing such education centres in the Fourth Five Year Plan, actually it was not successfully implemented. It was designed to cater to the educational and training needs of all classes of workers and community members in various age-groups. The diverse needs of the workers in both organised and unorganised sectors are met by polyvalent education programmes. It is also known as Shramik Vidyapeeth. In the new Schemes of Shramik Vidyapeeths, the earlier schemes of Workers' Social Education Institutes and Polyvalent Adult Education Centres have been merged.

The main objectives of Shrasik Vidyapeeth are to provide non-formal education and training facilities to industrial workers and their families for the enrichment of their personal life, supplementing their income, helping them in self-employment, developing self-confidence and creating interest in learning. The main thrust of the programme of Shrasik Vidyapeeth is on the involvement of women and upliftment of the weaker sections of the people which is the backbone of non-formal education.39

This non-formal education programme tries to develop the conditions of the workers by enriching their intellectual, professional, moral and aesthetic qualities. There are some advantages in organising such programmes since its clientele are compact and easily accessible.40 It also provides an opportunity to the workers to improve their educational needs and upgrade vocational efficiency. And thereby, they are not easily exploited by their employers.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Education is a continuous life-long process. The concept of equality of access to education is broadened now so as to include the equality of opportunity to succeed in

It is in this regard, non-formal education programme for continuing education can play an important role. It provides a total system of all education consisting of all groups of people. This education programme includes all learning systems for full life span of each and every learner. Hence, an operational framework of continuing education includes goals, assumptions, formal and non-formal patterns of education in the home, school and community.

Literate persons are likely to be benefitted by continuing education with its programmes like correspondence course, part-time education, morning and night schools, colleges etc. To organise extension lectures, short courses, seminars and workshops on family life improvement, health and sanitation, girls and women education, environmental education, social, political and economic issues may be of great help in non-formal education programmes of continuing education. Hence, short and long term technical and vocational courses may also be organised for economic and vocational improvement under this education programme.

The programme has been taken up by the Government of Manipur by setting up a Continuing Education Centre in the State Institute of Education (SIE) with financial assistance from NCERT. It is hoped that this Continuing Education Centre will be able to cope with the need of the State with

41. Ibid., p. 11.
its proper functioning in the near future. There is also another B.Ed. Training Centre run by SIE for clearing the backlog of untrained graduate working teachers. Similarly, the State Institute of Educational Technology (SIET), Government of Manipur is taking up a programme of continuing education for the untrained working matriculate and undergraduate teachers with mass media support. The SIET has also prepared a multimedia package for training the teachers teaching science at the primary level. In this way, elaborate arrangements have been made for implementing continuing education programmes in Manipur.

It is also a very good thing that the National Committee on Elementary Education appointed by the Government of India to monitor the process of universalisation of Elementary Education, is now reshaped to look after both universalisation of elementary education through formal and non-formal programmes for the children in the age-group 6-14 and adult education programme for adults in 15-35 age-group. Likewise, the Scheme of Award for Excellent performance in the programmes of universalisation of elementary education and adult education for girls launched in 1983, has been planned as an integrated scheme and it pays emphasis on area approach rather than isolated institutional approach. It shows that non-formal education is becoming more and more important in the present day context in our country including Manipur State itself.