CHAPTER - III

INCIDENTAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND THEIR INTERACTION IN COMMUNITY LIFE
CHAPTER - III

INCIDENTAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION -
THEIR INTERACTION IN COMMUNITY LIFE

INCIDENTAL EDUCATION : ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE

Introductory Note :

Incidental education can be treated as informal. In literary parlance, incidental education means that type of education which an individual acquires automatically in the process of living. Informal education takes place almost all the time informally and incidentally. Such education is greatly influenced by the environment in which the child grows up and lives for his existence. It is only through incidental education that in the early years of
life, every child learns about the basic control and use of his body, mother tongue, languages of the locality, where he lives and other social behaviour patterns including do's and don'ts. As he grows up, he familiarises himself with the basic elements of the traditional culture of his family, or his group. Thus incidental education continues to exercise profound influence right from his early childhood.

As a young man and later as an adult, he learns and experiences many things, such as the development of his identity, maturity and adulthood, love and sex, joys and agonies, responsibilities of marriage and parenthood or duties as a useful citizen.¹

In fact, incidental learning is universal and a life-long process. Universal in the sense that it covers all stages of learning, acquisition of knowledge of yesteryears, present and future, covering global perspectives. Again, it is a life-long continuous process in the sense that it commences at birth and so to speak at the womb of mother and continues till the last breath.

¹ Naik, J.P: Some Perspectives of Nonformal Education, p.2.
People acquires skills, knowledge, etc. through some agencies informally. These are family, religious institutions, cinema, newspapers, radio, television, art galleries, zoos, libraries, archives, natural archaeological and ethnographic monuments and sites and historical monuments and sites of a museum, besides institutions displaying live specimens, such as botanical and zoological gardens, aquaria, vivaria, nature reserves, science centres and planetaria, etc.

It is a common knowledge that an individual continues to learn from day-to-day experiences of his family life, from his social environment, by exchange of his thoughts and ideas both in the cultural and economic sphere. Spontaneity and intimate human relations are the major factors in incidental education which form the basis of community life. Children living and growing in such an environment begin to learn spontaneously. But with the process of growing urbanization, people are often found alienated from such human contacts and disintegration of families into smaller ones has accelerated this process.

At birth, children do not meet the natural world but a social world through which the natural world is projected. As they grow up, they begin to hear a wide
variety of speech and learn to speak and it is the language which directs and controls the soul's development.

Incidental learning is as old as the humanity itself, but the type, level and quality of incidental education always depend upon the environment of the social background in which the individual grows up and acquires knowledge from day-to-day experience. As for instance, the incidental education received by a child of an indigenous tribe living in the interior place of North-eastern region of India is distinct from that of a child of a senior government official growing up in metropolitan city of Delhi or a growing town like Guwahati or Shillong. This statement can be substantiated by interviewing two or more children belonging to different environments. Incidental education can be called most non-formal or traditional non-formal.

An individual acquires incidental education through a variety of media, such as, information, skills, values, etc. In a primitive society, incidental education was the only education channel through which an individual acquired knowledge. But at the dawn of civilization, this proved inadequate and gradually the idea of formal as well as non-formal education developed in the human mind to cater to the social and environmental needs.
Though education is frequently regarded as a distinguishing mark of civilized society, the view is evidently erroneous. After all, the basic needs of men are same, though their modes of satisfaction vary widely with their habitat and culture. Training and education are universal, but the quality of educational process may change depending upon the level of development of society. Education—physical, mental and moral—was one of the outstanding features of primitive life, though apparently, it is an unconscious process, its significance cannot be minimised.

In India or elsewhere in the world, in the remote past, in the very simple primitive tribal societies, incidental education was the only available channel for their social interaction. In fact, this is the situation even to-day. Every individual is acquainted with incidental education in his life span through one form or another. Incidental education or learning results from merely living in society or engaging in work or through contact with other members of the society including exposure to social events and movements. Generally, incidental education is most effective in the early years of life. Incidental or most non-formal education is a traditional society trends to be conservative and seeks to maintain status quo in values, beliefs and life-styles,
while formal and new non-formal channels try to modernise them, though often with little success. Incidental, traditional non-formal or most non-formal education by whatever name it is called still continues to dominate the scene. Through incidental education, the bulk of the people received education and gathered knowledge and thus they socialised. As for example, many agricultural farmers learn the vocational skill from the family farms by practical experiences. Likewise, artisans, craftsmen, such as potters, blacksmith, goldsmith, silversmith learn their trades, folk arts by working as apprentices under their parents. So the very idea of science and technology was hidden with them in incidental form. Child rearing, home crafts, such as spinning, weaving, cattle rearing, bee-keeping, kitchen gardening, music, dancing, varied types of arts, etc. are learnt by girls through apprenticeship from their mothers or from elderly female members of the family. Thus it is apparent that vocational skills are generally passed on from ancestors to descendants through the traditional or oral transmission from one generation to another.

Traditional education acts like a broad spectrum covering a wide range of fields like folk games, folk arts, folk music and folk drama, about
which it has already been discussed elaborately in Chapter II of the thesis.

It is pertinent to notice that even in this modern era of space craft, the values, beliefs, lifestyles of common people are still dominated and influenced by traditional, incidental, and most non-formal education. Of course, it is true that incidental education has its lacunae or limitations for which it is not possible to fit into or to adjust to the modern advanced civilization and it is here that the importance of formal education came to the forefront for ensuring a richer community life.

Early history tells us that the members of primitive society learnt by living and participating in the activities of the home and the society. Thus they gradually developed the art of living. This means that incidental education is not an education for living but education through living. There was no difference between socialization and education. If fact, very many tribal communities of India, which did not have easy access to schools, the incidental, semi-nonformal or early non-formal channels of education are still the only forms of education available to them.
Incidental education, to a great extent, is in unorganised form. But yet it has exercised profound influence on the life of the individuals, since a vast majority of population in India and elsewhere who have had no access to formal schooling either because of poverty or lack of facilities earn their livelihood on the basis of knowledge accumulated over the years by means of incidental education.

Incidental education cannot be isolated from formal and non-formal education. Any reform or innovation made for formal or non-formal education directly or indirectly helps to promote the standard and quality of incidental education. For instance, all programmes of Adult education of the masses are primarily intended for improving the environment and raising the conditions of living in their families. This in turn will provide better incidental education to their children and make them more receptive to the programmes of formal and non-formal education. A child exposed to rich incidental education in his infancy or early childhood is mentally better equipped and has wider mental horizon than a child who is born and brought up in unhygienic environment of society like slum areas, where he has got least opportunity for personality development.
Sankardev, the spiritual founder of the Assamese society, had his formal schooling only at the age of 8 years. This shows that in his early life, he acquired his childhood knowledge from incidental education from his family and social environment in which he grew up. So was the case with Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. Before he was initiated to formal schooling, incidental education which he received from his home environment had cast profound influence in his later life. These two cases have been cited only by way of illustration. There may be numerous instances to show that incidental education contributed greatly to the making of big personalities.

Again, the quality of social life undergoes transformation when the people as a whole are initiated to the scientific ways of thinking, accompanied with new concept of social philosophy. This new social atmosphere will necessarily add another important dimension to the incidental education which will ensure further qualitative improvement in formal and non-formal education.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACT:

Generally speaking, though non-formal education is a new concept, yet its origin dates back to a remote past. In India, it is the concept of 1970's
designed to give a new scholastic thrust to accelerate the pace of self-development by self-education. It has a very pivotal role to play in realising the goal of education and its development. Development through education is a continuous process. To maintain its continuity, organised educational efforts are to be canalised to attain maximal development of various age-groups, occupations, interests, and aptitudes. The process of formal education, traditionally adopted in the Indian situation is imparted through schools, universities and other educational institutions. But unfortunately, the formal system proved itself inadequate to cater to the diverse needs of the heterogenous population, possibly due to rigid restriction imposed upon its functioning. To extend the utility of education to a wider population, the present system of education should be re-oriented to be more effective and purposeful and remedial measures need be taken before it is too late. Thirty nine years have already elapsed since India's independence and it is high time for India as a developing country to take the lead and to acquire a place of pride among the advanced countries of the world.
The Report of the International Commission on the development of education, Faure Report 1971 entitled 'Learning to Be' defined the term non-formal as learning activity, which may take place outside the usual setting of the class room and is dependent upon the age of the learner. The Faure Report summarised the new pattern of learning as follows:  

"The concept of education limited in time (to school stage) and confined in space (to school buildings) must be superseded. School education must be regarded not as the end but the fundamental component of total educational activity, which includes both institutional and out of school education. A proportion of educational activity shall be deORMALised and replaced by flexible diversified models".  

Among the educationists in the seventy's who gave definitions of non-formal education, special mention may be made of Klois, Lang and others. According to them, non-formal education is any institutional and systematic educational enterprise, usually outside the purview of traditional schooling, in which, content,  

media, time units, admission criteria, staff facilities and other system components are adopted for particular student population or situation in order to maximise the maintenance constraints of the system.

Another writer Philip Coombs defined non-formal education as "one which is imparted through organisations outside the formal educational institutions". He stressed that the term 'education' should not mean merely several levels and types of formal education, such as primary, secondary, post-secondary, general and specialised but covered all those systematic programmes and processes of education and training beyond the formal education. The non-formal programmes include, for example, workers' and farmers' educational training. It covers the entire gamut of organised systematic educational activity carried on outside the ambit of formal school system to provide selected type of learning situations to particular subject groups in the population including adults and children.


In non-formal channel, education is imparted deliberately outside the formal system, but in the case of incidental or informal channel of education, it is picked up incidentally in different situations of individual's life.

According to Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, "Non-formal education is not a second class education for second class people. Non-formal education is the people's power, the power to change our society and make it move towards path of justice, tolerance, understanding and charity."  

As the available knowledge began to increase in dimension and the need for specialised skills began to grow, incidental or most non-formal (traditional incidental) education lost much of its importance with the accompanying change in its incidental form. As for instance, fighting, fishing, cooking, child care, etc. though were of incidental form, gradually, owing to advancement of civilisation, necessitated specialised skills through apprenticeship to a member of the family or some other suitable person outside it. Thus the idea of non-formal education began to take shape. When the idea of establishment of formal school was not developed, then the incidental, semi-nonformal or early

---

The Unesco study also observed that there are many educational programmes for family and community improvement but typically they are fragmented, limited in scale and weak. Another interesting finding of the Unesco study was that in the same rural area, there were a series of small separate programmes for health, nutrition, home-economics, family planning, co-operatives, local governments, sports and recreation, etc all of which were aimed at much the same audience, though sponsored or operated by different public and private agencies, with little or no co-ordination or co-operation. On the other hand, the study revealed that occupational education typically claimed the largest share of non-formal education in the rural areas of developing nations, with farmer's education playing the predominant role. It also stressed the role of women in agriculture who comprised a large part of the agricultural labour force in many developing countries including Asia and Africa. It is, therefore, obvious that educational needs of girls and women for knowledge of improved agricultural practices may often be considered as great as the needs of boys and men.

The programmes for developing nonfarm rural skills for artisans and small entrepreneurs are not only inadequate but often ill-adapted to their actual
needs. According to this Unesco study, most rural areas in developing countries are characterised by poverty in their educational as well as in their economic resources. The informal learning environment, while often rich in culture and tradition, suffers from inadequacy of material resources, such as print and other media, which are necessary for augmenting the general fund of knowledge and skills to promote development. Organised educational programmes, both formal and non-formal serve only a minority of young people and adults and thus have neglected important rural learning needs among out-of-school children and youth, among women and among small and marginal farmers. The reasons for these educational imbalances and overall poverty in rural areas are varied and complex. But the fact remains that in general, the educational conditions in rural areas are partly traceable to policies at national and international levels and therefore appropriate measures should be taken in keeping with past and present patterns in the allocation of educational resources.

Non-formal education is an organised one outside the formal system. Every system has its own merits and demerits. Non-formal education is a non-system or an open system, according to Indian Educationist
J.P. Naik. On the merit side, it serves the learning needs of a variety of people, such as children, youth, adults, men, women, rich farmers, poor farmers, artisans, merchants, etc. according to their requirements.

As regards its demerits, it diminishes the systematization of knowledge, so it cannot be taken as panacea for all educational ills. Programmes for non-formal education are also subject to the same social constraints that hamper the growth of formal education; although the latter have somewhat greater potential to overcome those constraints and more prestigious than non-formal education.

A wrong impression is gaining ground that non-formal education is only another name for adult education and that it is only a second rate education for second rate people. It is relevant to mention here that Gandhiji believed that all education should have a political content so that it could inculcate a deep commitment to basic values and give the people courage to fight against all forms of injustice and wrongs through the peaceful methods of Satyagraha or non-cooperation.

In fact, Gandhiji started the campaign of non-formal education outside the ambit of formal system between 1920 and 1947. During the pre-independence

period of India, the people soon realised that the educational system they had at that time helped to preserve status quo rather than to promote rapid changes in keeping with the needs of an egalitarian society.

At the call of Mahatma Gandhi, people participated in their millions in the freedom struggle for independence and got political education outside the formal educational system which infused in their mind a patriotic feeling to love the country and to fight against the Crown through non-violence. It was the non-formal education introduced by Gandhiji that roused the sentiments of nationalism which helped the Indian people to win freedom. It was Count Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian thinker who inspired Gandhiji to think about the idea of achieving the goal through that type of education which was out and out national in outlook. Indian experiment on nonformal education is definitely an offshoot of this example. These two great thinkers exchanged their views on amelioration of the lot of down-trodden people of the poor developing nations. As a result, an offshoot of thinking was found out in the form of new education or 'Nai-talim'. Later it was named as 'basic education' by the Wardha Scheme of Education, 1937. With some modifications here and there, at the beginning of seventy's non-formal system was established by some enthusiastic Indian educationists.
along the line of other developing countries of the world. A new impetus is to be given to nonformal education which has an increasing important role to play in realising our goal of education and development.

Gandhiji also taught us that if education is to be meaningful, it must be co-related with the living and working conditions of the people. To him education is the primary method of development. This implies that emphasis is to be laid on the process of development rather than mere outcomes. It also implies that development planning for a future is more important than emphasis on immediate gain. On the whole, the significance of nonformal education lies in its linkage with development.

**Philosophical aspect of Non-formal Education**

If we turn over the pages of history, we find that in ancient Indian society, education was the prerogative of the upper castes, namely, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas. The vast majority of the population consisted of Shudras. They were mostly poor, illiterate and weak. The Antyajas comprising of lower castes and tribes lived on the social fringe and they were always oppressed, suppressed, and depressed by the elitist segment of the society. Till the early part of the 18th century, the common people had no access
to formal education. It was only after coming of the Missionaries from different parts of the world, including British, American, Portugees etc that they took up the matter of spreading education among the masses, which opened up new vistas in the field of modern system of education. Thanks to the untiring efforts of the British Administrators of East India Company which laid the foundation of the modern system of education in India.

In a democratic society, everybody has right to acquire knowledge, i.e. power by which he can make his life worthliving. But due to population spurt of our country coupled with knowledge explosion of modern world, the act of acquiring knowledge through formal system of education is made an uphill task.

According to Julius Nyerere's statement, 'development is the development of man' Our ancient Sanskrit epics tells us that education is that which liberates, i.e. liberation from ignorance, poverty, inequality and injustice, etc. In order to adjust with the changing environment, both economically and socially, it is

necessary that every individual should have some kind of education. Thus the necessity of non-formal education figured prominently. It covers the greater number of individuals and provides an interaction between knowledge acquired and its practical application. Non-formal education is recent innovation in learning process and behind any innovation or radical change, there is always a philosophical thought, that thought is the main inspiring agent to fulfil the ultimate goal.

The ideal of non-formal education and democratic ideal of our country are very closely related to each other. In modern world, democracy is a widely accepted political system and non-formal education becomes an inseparable component of education in democracy.

Firstly, the essence of democracy lies in the value of human personality and the ultimate power always rests on the people, who are capable of taking care of their own problems and they should have the freedom to do so. Gandhiji also stated 'Democracy means the capacity of the people to regulate and control authority in the best interest of the community.'

Secondly, an individual can shape his destiny according to his desires and abilities. The mere fact
of birth in a particular caste and class should not debar an individual to build up his own future.

Thirdly, democracy believes in the power of education, by which one can acquire self-discipline, which is the most essential factor for contributing to the progress and development of a society. Imparting knowledge to the masses is the foundation of democratic ideal but unfortunately, it has been observed that only a small percentage of population has enjoyed it. Like political, economic and social consciousness, consciousness for knowledge is also birth-right for a citizen of democratic country. The synthesis between knowledge and work is the main objective or theme of non-formal education. It is analogous to the synthesis of culture and utility. The utility of a rich culture can ensure the progress of a society in the ladder of advancement like the two sides of the same coin, knowledge and work, culture and utility are complementary to each other, proceeding forward together to attain total development of individual as well as community life.

Non-formal education is primarily intended for learning purpose and not for certification, although it has provision for the award of certificates. People can enter and leave non-formal channel of learning according to their own interest, need and capacity. The
main content of it is awareness and emphasis is given on skill mainly. Hence, it is an important instrument of community development or community advancement. In it the potential of culture can be tapped and integrated with some aspects of academic culture. It greatly helps in minimizing and gradual abolishment of gap and rank between intellectual and manual stream or discipline; or so to speak general and vocational education. The obsolete and outdated knowledge can be updated only through nonformal education which is flexible and can be modified according to the pressing needs of community life.

Nonformal education will certainly be able to meet the challenge of time, if it is properly implemented, though it is in its infancy and experimental stage. It depends on the innovative capacity, clear vision, proper utility of both educator and learner of the society, to make it a powerful and productive instrument for a self-dependent individual as well as self-generated meaningful community life.
In this context, it is relevant to cite the example of China as mentioned by Mary Kay Hobbs according to whom China is a large country equal in area to that of the U.S.A. but with a population of 850 million, nearly four times as many as in the U.S.A. Yet China is able to feed her people without depending on outside sources. Over 90 per cent of China’s children receive at least five years of primary school level education. Adults of all ages and occupations are entangled with a variety of continuing education programmes with linkage in increased productivity, in agriculture and industry. There are many worker’s colleges run by factories, farms; short term training courses run by universities, correspondence courses, vocational and technical schools to serve agriculture.

In China to-day, the number of university, middle and primary school students is more than one-fifth of the total population, compared to one-sixth

for India. In China, backward and isolated regions are also brought within the net-work of educational system. Their method of teaching is very interesting. To make attendance convenient, classes are arranged to suit the characteristics of life in farming in pastoral areas. Besides the usual schools, in China, there are mobile schools. Teachers also travel who make the rounds of remote villages composed of only a few families. The demarcation between formal schooling and out-of-school learning has been substantially narrowed down by introducing out-of-school components in the formal system encompassing work in industry or agriculture sector. The people of China think that this change would bring about further development of their plentiful resources and would lead the country to peace and prosperity.

Here in India, the education system which is currently in operation caters to less than 2 per cent of the weaker section of the society.  

As a result, the existing formal education becomes a peripherial system, which serves only the 'well-to-do' classes, who can afford to send their children full-time to schools. Learning should not be time-bound and confined only to formal system but it should be a continuing process with open system of learning.

The high drop-out rate in the present system of education in our country is a clear pointer to the fact that our education is not related to the needs and aspirations of the people. There has been colossal wastage and stagnation in every level of the system. This proves the inadequacy of linkace between educational policy and requirements of the people.

Education Ministry's statistics\(^\text{11}\) show that of those who come to enroll at the primary stage, only 15 to 20 per cent manage to go through school. This shows that about 80 per cent of the drop-outs are left ill-equipped to face the realities of the world. More than 70 per cent of our population is

---

illiterate and 50 per cent of the children drop out of school after first or second year of schooling and 25 per cent reach up to Class VII. It reveals the unhealthy condition of Indian formal system of education which is partly effective for only half and fully effective for one-fourth of the population of students entering formal channel of learning.

Because of the rigid curriculum coupled with single point entry, sequential process of learning with theoretical bias and academic approach of teaching and examining, the formal system of education has become outmoded and outdated, and not related to the needs of a dynamic society. The famous Swedish Economist Gunnar Myrdal has rightly pointed out that the formal system is the 'British legacy of authoritarianism'. It is therefore, easy to see that the continuation of the outmoded system will lead to enormous national loss unless the system is thoroughly overhauled in keeping with the diversified interests of the multilingual and multiracial country like India.

Recent innovations in science and technology have opened up new avenues in the learning process. Possibility should be explored to make extensive use of information media like radio and television through
satellite for spread of non-formal education in urban, rural and slum areas.

According to Mandal Commission Report, about 75 per cent of the population in India are backward who comprise of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. They are not only economically backward but also educationally and socially. Therefore, the imbalance between the have-nots cannot be wiped out unless this vast segment of the disadvantaged class is brought to the level of the advanced section of the population.

India being a multilingual country, there are as many as 165 mother tongues and innumerable dialects among different tribes of different regions. Out of these not even 50 are used as the medium of primary education and only 15 are used as medium of higher education. The difference between home language and school language further accentuates the artificiality and superficiality of the existing formal system. From the age-group of 15 to 25 years, only 10 per cent of the total population are acquiring education and 90 per cent are deprived of educational facilities and they are virtually alienated from the learning society. After thousands of years, it has not been
possible to provide educational facilities to every child in this age-group, because population explosion has far exceeded knowledge explosion.

In Assam also, there are as many as 19 tribes, viz. Bodo, Bodo-kachari, Miri, Kachari including Sono-wal, Dimasa (Kachari), Deori, Lalung, Rabha, Hmar, Chakma, Mikir, etc. having different dialects. So far, besides Assamese and English; other languages, viz. Hindi, Garo, Hmar, Nepali, Bodo, Bengali, Manipuri and Lusai are used as mediums of instruction in Primary schools. In the Middle level schools, besides Assamese and English, other languages, viz. Hindi Garo, Bengali, Bodo, Manipuri and Nepali are used as mediums of instruction.

In the context of modern agriculture, instead of educating the farmers only the 3 R's, it would be necessary to impart knowledge about the functional application of science and technology to them through non-formal educational programmes. It will also strengthen and supplement the formal system of education so that an individual would be able to continue to learn throughout his life and in the process, a
learning society will be established with functional utility.

Methodology of Non-formal education

The method of teaching should be work-oriented and organised through active interaction with the materials to be taught. The lag between learning and application should be minimal. The method of non-formal education is related to:

(i) Workers or learners
(ii) Training programme of learners
(iii) Materials used
(iv) Production
(v) Teaching and evaluation
(vi) Organisation and finance.

The learners of non-formal education are mostly disadvantaged segments of the population. So the use and evaluation of new and dynamic methods will be more profitable for them, which will make them fit to the changing needs and modernise their mind towards utilization of science and technology.

Non-formal education for whom and why?

The non-formal system of education has been developed to cater to the needs of the following groups
of population.

(1) Pre-school children in the age-group 3-5 years:

During 1984-85, in Assam also, as in the case of India a little more than 2 per cent of the children were receiving education. The bulk of the children in pre-school were from urban middle class and well-to-do families. Thus it is apparent that a big chunk of the children in this age-group was deprived of educational benefit.

(2) Non-school going children in the age-group 6-14 years.

During 1984-85, enrolment of children in this age-group in the schools of formal system in Assam accounted for about 70 per cent compared to 78 per cent for all-India. The drop-out rate in this age-group for the country as a whole was also quite substantial, i.e. about 50 per cent. Therefore programme


for non-formal school for the children of this age-group who have not entered the formal system will not only help promote universal elementary schools but will also prevent drop-out rate substantially.

(3) Youths 'out-of-school' education in the age-group 15-25 years:

During 1984-85, about 16 per cent of youths in this age-bracket were receiving formal education as against 17 per cent for all India. The rest formed the bulk of the illiterates and semi-literates.

(4) Socially and economically backward classes, underprivileged working class, tribals, poor and oppressed who neither have good incidental education nor in a position to take adequate advantage of formal system.

(5) The unemployed and underemployed illiterate people, both men and women.

(6) Child labour or working children, youths and adults who are deprived of education for one reason

14. ibid, pp. 256, 265-267.
or the other.

(7) School drop-outs, push-outs who never get admitted into formal schooling.

(8) Physically handicapped and for those people who never get the chance of having educational facilities.

The non-formal learning seems to be the only alternative means to educate the aforesaid categories of people. This system is expected to accelerate the process of life-long education for everybody in a developing country like India on the lines of the advanced nations.

**Agencies of Non-formal education:**

System should be developed whereby the different programmes of non-formal education can be carried out through different agencies and people of various walks of life. They broadly consist of:

(a) Development and utilization of educational infrastructure for implementation of non-formal education in the society. This will call for some amount of sacrifice on the part of teachers of primary, middle and high schools, colleges, universities, vocational
institutions, of all categories to render their service for effective implementation of this programme on a part-time basis.

(b) Willing and active participation of voluntary organisations, private agencies, retired doctors and teachers, sportsmen, artists, social service groups, government, semi-government and non-government groups, women's organisations, farmers, workers, youths, etc. in the spread of education in the non-formal channel.

(c) Involvement of people from different strata of society, such as lawyers, community teachers, village headmen, shop-keepers, housewives, school drop-outs, educated unemployed youths, even knowledgeable persons without formal educational background.

Thus there should be proper utilisation of all resources, both men and material, of existing institutions including varied educational resources available in the community for improving the quality of community life. Unfortunately, these resources to serve as agencies for the spread of non-formal education often remain untapped. The utilisation of these agencies in the spread of non-formal education appears
to be important primarily on two considerations.

Firstly, it would be economical and secondly, it is the only means to make up the leeway in the existing educational system which is in doldrums. As for example, (i) Industrial Training Institutes (I.T.I.s) or allied institutions can provide instructions on technical know-how for development of cottage and village industries to the school drop-outs and others for self-employment as well as for generation of employment for others.

(ii) Agricultural universities and allied training institutes can play an important role in the dissemination of knowledge on improved methods of agriculture including progressive use of high yielding varieties (HYV) of crops like paddy, wheat, etc to the farmers. These institutions can also educate the people about veterinary science for maintenance of livestock, piggery, etc.

(iii) Medical institutions can provide necessary training on health care, sanitation, family welfare including family planning, etc which are useful for the healthy growth of the society.
(iv) All members of the community irrespective of religion, class and caste should make significant contributions according to their capacity in a spirit of co-operation, and good-will for implementation of this programme, to provide a non-stop continuous lifelong education to the community at large. Then only the objective of achieving cent per cent literacy within a specified time period will be fulfilled. The type of non-formal education conceived as above should ultimately provide a forward linkage with the formal system of education.

Centre for non-formal education:

When we speak of education, the first thing that comes to our mind is the school building equipped with at least one or two black boards, a pair of tables and chair for the teacher and a few benches for the students. But in rural areas where illiteracy is widespread, such facilities hardly exist, even there are areas in the villages where the school buildings are in most dilapidated condition.
Therefore, there is need for alternative channels. The non-formal programme of education can be imparted at the following centres which exist in every locality in both urban and rural areas. What is required is the people's participation in a big way to help start the non-formal centres. These include:

(i) Religious institutions, such as temples, namghars, kirtanghars (place for religious recital in the Brahmaputra valley), satra, tol and pathsala (school of classical languages), maths, mosques, churches, etc.

(ii) Private homes, gardens, groves, place of village panchayats, public buildings, factories, libraries, children's recreation centres, youth centres, hotels, transport offices, airline offices, railway's offices, police stations, etc.

(iii) Educational institutions, such as university, college, and school campus, etc.

Thus these can serve as net-work of centres for the spread of non-formal education with maximum involvement of people at the minimum of cost, making use of local talents and materials. What is important
is to look out for a machinery for motivating and mobilising the people into the process of learning and then only it would be possible to realise the dream of having a richer community life where the economic and educational disparity will be substantially reduced.

Programmes of non-formal education:

Non-formal education is an open learning system in the sense that its door is open to everybody and unlike in the formal system, it is not time bound. It acts not only as a substitute for formal education but also provides functional benefits to the learners of every stratum of society. It is a new name given to a system. It is a response to a new situation and an approach to de-schooling society. Its role as an instrument of mass education is very great.

Generally, the programme of non-formal education is quite comprehensive in that it covers every learning material of individual's life as well as society where he lives and interacts. To enjoy the benefit of a rich community life, he has to acquire
knowledge to adjust himself through programmes of non-formal education, according to needs and requirements of society.

(i) The programme of non-formal education helps to prepare pre-school children for formal education through kindergarten, nursery schools, day-care centres, children's radio and television programmes and so on.

(ii) It serves and helps as complementary to formal school by providing extra-curricular learning experiences for students through various sports, cultural and other activity groups and youth organisations.

(iii) It helps to follow up formal education by offering varieties of continuing education and offers further educational opportunities to older youths and adults who have completed formal schooling.

The non-formal education offers programmes for school drop-outs as well as for non-starters and thereby tries to achieve twin objectives.

Firstly, the willing children are able to get admitted in formal schools at multiple points and thus
they are getting chance to improve the quality of life.

Secondly, it is suitable for the children who are from poor and under-privileged classes.

**Principles adopted for Non-formal pattern of Education**

Whatever the objectives, geographical area, clientele, topics, etc, it should be based on the following principles.

(i) Flexible in nature with regard to duration, time, location, instructional arrangement, etc.

(ii) Systematic in all aspects of organisation but not rutinized.

(iii) Relevant in nature to the environment and learners' needs and problems.

(iv) Diversified in nature in regard to curriculum, teaching and learning materials and methods.  

When we speak of new technology for non-formal education, we generally mean films, radio, television, and more recently computers and communication satellites. Broadly speaking, educational technology, should, also include all the various means and methods, old as well as new, that can assist an educational process to achieve the desired learning results. The interest in educational technology arises from two considerations.

First, the cost-effectiveness of any non-formal education programme is determined not only by what it has to teach but by the means it employs to teach it.

Second, the ability of any developing country to cater for the learning needs of its rural population depends not only on the resources it can afford to spend for the purpose but on the availability and the efficient use of educational technologies that
are both inexpensive and educationally effective.16

Unfortunately, non-formal education as a whole has toed the line of formal education to employ traditional, costly and inefficient instructional means and methods, failing to take advantage of the available alternative technologies.

Therefore, available opportunities should be utilized for increasing the cost-effectiveness of existing programmes through improvement of their technologies.

Another major cause of drawback to expanding non-formal education is the over-reliance on face to face instruction of learners by teachers. Among the inexpensive and low-cost educational resources, which could remove these drawbacks, are print materials, radio, tape recorder and the enormous capacity of people to learn for themselves by making available good self-instruction materials to them.

In seeking to improve technologies for education in rural areas of poor countries, the emphasis should be on promoting the indigenous use of effective low-cost technologies that already exist, and not on introducing sophisticated new media that are beyond the reach of poor countries for a long time to come. Of course, development of new technologies should certainly be encouraged on experimental scale, where it can be afforded.

The diverse educational needs for rural development may be grouped into four heads as indicated below: 17

1. General or basic education: It embraces literacy, numeracy, elementary knowledge and understanding of science and surrounding environments. These objectives can be achieved through primary and secondary schools.

2. Family improvement education: It covers the knowledge, skills and attitudes, which are useful in improving the quality of family life as well as community life in the matter of health care and nutrition.

17. ibid, p. 15.
home-making and child care, family welfare including family planning, home repairs and improvements etc.

(3) Community improvement education: This is designed to strengthen local and national institutions and processes by providing instructions on such matters as local and national governments, Co-operatives, Community projects, etc.

(4) Occupational education: This is designed to develop particular knowledge and skills relating to various economic activities useful for improving the quality of life.

Educational Technology Cell
in Assam

In the year 1973, at the national level, the Centre for Educational Technology was established under the auspices of NCERT. The UNICEF has also made substantial contribution towards strengthening this Organization. The activities of the Educational Technology Cell (ETC) in Assam were started in the middle of 1979. This scheme has been put into operation in other States of the country also. This is a new area in education that has been explored popularising the concept of educational technology among the illiterate.
and semi-literate people in the State through its various programmes.

Following are the major works undertaken by the Educational Technology Cell.

1. **Organisation of Radio Programmes of educative value for teachers and students through (i) SEBA (ii) State Institute of Education (iii) State Institute of Science Education and (iv) All-India Radio (A.I.R.).**

2. **Preparation of low-cost play materials and teaching aids.**

3. **Film shows and film making. This programme includes exhibition of film shows and film making on the theme of how best the environment can be utilised in teaching at primary level.**

4. **Organization of puppet shows based on certain lessons of the primary textual materials.**

5. **Rural Science Contest Programme for popularisation of science and to develop a scientific outlook among the masses in the backward rural areas of the State in collaboration with other departments and**
agencies like Agriculture, Veterinary, Public Health, Assam Science Society, etc.

6. Hardware schemes through which it has been planned to supply radio sets to all primary and middle schools in a phased manner to facilitate listening of educational programmes. 4,500 Radio Sets have so far been supplied to Primary and Middle schools in the State of Assam of which 1,262 Radio Sets have been distributed in Kamrup district.

7. Expansion of educational technology: Proposal to include Assam in the INSAT Programme is underway and during the Seventh Plan, it is proposed to cover the entire rural areas by the T.V. network on educational programme.

Implementation of Non-formal Education in Kamrup district vis-a-vis in Assam

The failure of formal system of education in achieving the universalisation of elementary education and universal literacy is the main germinating ground of innovation of various educational concepts and programmes. The programmes assume different names in
different levels of environment in different ways. These emanate from similar social and educational environment and are interdependent or interrelated to each other. As stated above, non-formal education is the outcome of the failure of formal system like basic education, fundamental education, functional literacy, adult education, out-of-school education, recurrent education, extension education, further education, distance education and life-long education etc. These act as an instrument of mass education, especially in the developing countries of the Third World. In fact, it emerged as an alternative to the traditional formal system of education.

The Government of India and other developing countries have organised the programmes, viz; Co-operatives, Youth Farmers' Clubs, Rural Training Centres, Village Polytechnics, Youth Land Settlement Schemes, non-formal education for school drop-outs (age-group 9-14 years, but in Assam from 8-14 years), Non-formal education for Youths (age-group 15-25). Agricultural Extension Programmes, Farm Training Programmes, Adult Literacy Programmes, Occupational Skill Training Courses, Farmers' Training and
Education, Extension education, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Weavers' Training, Carpet Weaving Training Centres, Integrated Child development scheme, Functional Literacy for Women, Cultural Programmes, Health Education, Mass Education, Population education, Environmental education, Motivation Programmes, Civic education, Workers' education, Griha Kalyan Kendras etc. Thus non-formal education provides channel for education in all circumstances. It may be called a 'second chance' for those members who missed schooling or those drop-outs who left schools early for whom it serves as re-entry into formal system.

There already exists one Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Na-Pam near Tezpur in the present Sonitpur district of Assam to cater to the needs of the farmers. A few more Krishi Vigyan Kendras are proposed to be set up in this State to train up farmers in the latest methods of agriculture technology including animal husbandry, fishery, poultry raising etc. by the process of learning through work.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{18.} The Assam Tribune dated 20th September, 1984 News item under caption "More Krishi Vigyan Kendras for Assam"; p. 5.
Again under 20-Point Programme, weaving training camps are being organised to give training in the art of weaving to illiterate girls of tea garden community under Biswanath Block in Sonitpur district. This picture is by non means complete but cited only by way of illustration. Mention may be made of NREP (National Rural Employment Programme) sponsored Bamundi Fodder Farm under Hajo Development Block.

As already stated, in Assam non-formal channel of education was introduced since 1974, especially in backward areas, tribal areas, slum areas, etc. Till 1980-81, 1,360 non-formal centres were started in Assam. At the end of the Sixth Plan period i.e. during 1984-85, about 6,508 non-formal centres were in operation.

19. The Dainik Asam dated 20th September, 1984; p.2
Currently the non-formal education in Assam is under the administrative control of the Directorate of Elementary Education. The hierarchy of the non-formal education in this State is shown in a diagram given below.

**DIRECTORATE**

**Under the Director of Elementary Education**

**Academic**

- State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT)

**Administrative**

- Joint Director of Elementary Education (Non-formal)

**At Headquarters**

- Senior Consultant (one)

- Consultant (four)

**Sub-divisional level set up**

- (Under D.I./Addl.D.I. of Schools)

**Co-ordinators (one in each sub-division)**

- S.I. of Schools

**Gram Sevak**

- (Generally one for each Block)

- No district level set up

- (Under D.I./Addl.D.I. of Schools)
The non-formal education in Assam is at present in the nebulous state. With a network of non-formal centres to be established throughout the State, its prospect is very bright. With gradual expansion of the scope of non-formal education, there is a distinct possibility of having a separate organisation for non-formal education.

During the Sixth Five Year Plan period (1980-85), 3.25 lakh children of the age-group of 6-10 years were covered to give education through non-formal channel. They were given instruction not only of 3 R's but also functional occupation education.

Arrangement was also made to impart education through these centres to those children of age-group 8-14 years who had never enrolled themselves in formal schools as also those who were drop-outs from schools. For this purpose, a suitable curriculum was prepared and text books were distributed among children of the primary level (age-group 8-10 years). Unfortunately, no suitable text books have been written to...

---

22. Source: 'Aanaanustanic Siksha'; November, 1980; p.3
Issued by Educational Technology Cell, Assam.
cater to the needs of the children of the middle level of the non-formal education. It is expected that educationists would prepare suitable text books in the near future and the teachers would also come forward in a big way to impart education in the non-formal institutions. The notable feature in this type of education is that more emphasis is given on decentralization of education.

There will be some amount of flexibility in the curriculum of middle level non-formal education so that some changes can be accommodated keeping in view the requirements of the learners. This is more so in the case of work-oriented technical education. The curriculum for middle level non-formal education for the children of the age-group 11-14 years would be of three years' duration. To implement this scheme, some amount of difficulty will have to be faced.

Firstly, children of this age-group who had never been to school will present serious problem because their numbers will be, comparatively speaking quite large. It will be difficult on the part of the
teachers to impart education straightaway according to specified curriculum. Therefore, it will be necessary to make special arrangement for the children of this age-group who had never attended school. It would be necessary to complete primary level of education within one year, so that within the next two years, three year middle level course could be completed. This would call for special attention to be given for these groups of children.

It is pertinent to note that the curriculum for this non-formal system of education has been prepared purely on experimental basis. The course content for this non-formal middle level education will be 50 per cent theoretical and 50 per cent work-oriented.

In the non-formal channel, education is imparted mainly through mother tongue. The non-formal syllabus has been designed exclusively to cater to the needs of drop-outs from the middle level schools and also for those students who could not continue formal schooling beyond the terminal point of lower elementary stage.
The target learners for this course would include pupils from rural, urban and industrial areas for the two categories stated above. The purpose of imparting non-formal system of education as an alternative of formal system to these learners is to acquaint them with the basic knowledge of language and other subjects so that they can join the main stream of the formal education system at the secondary stage in Class VIII.

As the course is designed to suit the needs of a special category of learners, it has a limited range of objectives as compared to the formal course for general students.

Lack of improved communication facilities in several semi-urban and rural areas is to a large extent responsible for educational inadequacies in Assam. Recurrence of annual floods during the monsoons causes extensive damage to crops and other properties in the flood-prone areas enormously affecting the life-style of the rural population. The developmental activities

23. Source: A draft syllabus in English for Middle level learners (age-group: 11-14 years); Directorate of Elementary Education, Assam, Guwahati; p. 2
are thwarted on account of seasonal floods which occur three to four times within the span of four months from June to September. Thus the flood creates both physical and mental set-back among the children of the flood-affected areas of the Brahmaputra valley and Barak valley and as a result, a sizeable proportion of children is deprived of the benefits of formal schooling. This has largely contributed to the high rate of illiteracy in the State of Assam, which is around 72 per cent.

A workable model for non-formal education has been suggested by a Committee set up by the Govt. of Assam consisting of eminent educationists and State Government officials. The salient features of the model are as follows.

Workable Model

1.00 The basic assumptions of non-formal education primarily cover three aspects, viz. (i) Economic (ii) Cultural and (iii) Humanistic.

24. Source: A syllabus and curriculum for Non-formal Education (primary level: age group 8-11 years) prepared under the guidance of the Text Book Review Committee and Directorate of Elementary Education, Assam.
2.00 Following objectives are accepted in the preparation of its curriculum.

2.01 To enable the willing children to get entry in formal school at double points for the time being and at multiple points in future.

2.02 To improve the quality of life of children through non-formal education.

3.00 It is felt that in matter of preparation of curriculum, the accepted objectives as referred to at 2.01 and 2.02 require specific identification for their intensive use at the time of preparation of curriculum. They are as follows:

(i) Health, (ii) Vocation, (iii) Environment (Physical and Social); (iv) Social awareness, (v) Literacy and (vi) Numeracy. These are the ways of objectives to achieve the means.

4.00 There are three specific differences of a non-formal system curriculum from the formal one. The identified ways and means are treated as more integrated, more practical and the specific areas are identified on the basis of interest of the
The national pattern of Non-formal system has been accepted in two phases:

(i) Age-group 8-11 (1st phase)
(ii) Age-group 11-14 (2nd phase)

The difference of age by one year will not create any problem in implementing the curriculum. Therefore, the Committee accepted two stages for non-formal system in Assam to cover the children in the age-group 8 or 9-11 and 11-13 or 14 as the terminal point of the lower primary and middle school stage respectively.

The curriculum is of two years' duration for the first phase and two years for the second phase.
Considering the entry point in Upper primary stage (Class V) and other needs of life, the Committee recommended to prepare a curriculum covering general knowledge and geography of the formal education in stages III and IV.

It is expected that the curriculum in four different sequential stages would cover all the broad areas of identified objectives in a convenient manner. The examination is conducted through Semester system.

During 1980-81, an estimated 9.61 lakh children in Assam in the age-group 6-14 years were illiterate. Only 26.06 lakh children were enrolled in schools of formal system and about 7.27 lakh children in this age-group were left out of the formal system of schools. Therefore, any scheme for non-formal education should cover both illiterates as also the drop-outs. During the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85), about 3.28 lakh children were educated through non-formal system of education in the age-group 6-10 years.25

25. Source: Directorate of Public Instruction, Assam, Guwahati.
Thus it is apparent that the existing formal system of education has proved inadequate to match with the increasing number of children in the age-group 6-14 years on the one hand and to cope with the changing milieu of the complex and dynamic society on the other. Formal education has done very little to enable the rural masses to improve their socio-economic status, and to understand what is going on in and around the community, to improve their conditions and to tap government resources. The major weakness of our present formal schooling is that it is aimed at children and it is subject-oriented rather than work-oriented; which means that it will take many more years before they can take part in the decision-making process, and by that time it is quite likely that they would forget whatever they have learnt.

Therefore, non-formal education is extremely essential in any rural development programme for the diffusion of information and knowledge of new ideas for the benefit of the masses. The main purpose of non-formal education is to prepare rural men, women, and youth for enjoying a better life in their families and communities.
To achieve universalisation of elementary education in 6-14 years age-group by 1990, at the national level, it has been envisaged to enroll 640 lakh children during the Seven Five Year Plan period, of whom 250 lakhs or 39 per cent in the formal system and the rest 390 lakhs or 61 per cent in the non-formal system. To fulfil this objective, the working Group on Elementary Education constituted by the Planning Commission recommended an outlay of Rs. 6,200 crores which represent a substantial step up over the Sixth Plan outlay for elementary education of Rs. 905 crores accounting for nearly seven-fold increase in the outlay of the Seventh Plan.26 There are at present 1,70,000 single teacher schools for the country as a whole which would require another teacher for each school. The findings of the All-India educational survey conducted in 1982, revealed that physical facilities of elementary schools, particularly in rural areas, is deplorable. About 40 per cent of 4,70,000 primary and 14 per cent of 1,12,000 middle schools are housed in unsatisfactory structures, in kutch thatched huts and even in open space. The

Working Group, therefore, recommended that vigorous efforts should be made for removal of the backlog in physical facilities. In particular, construction of school buildings, provision of essential equipments, construction of toilets and provision of drinking water in schools should receive priority. The Working Group also recommended that non-formal part-time education programme for elementary age-group children should be continued in a big way in the Seventh Plan.27

Both incidental and non-formal education play an important role in the life of the individual in particular, and the community in general. For creating a harmonious environment in community life through different programmes of non-formal stream of education, in the different circumstances, this becomes the sole developmental agency next to the formal system of education.

The sociologists, teachers and responsible citizens have to play a crucial role for popularising non-formal education to raise the level of living of the people by linking non-formal education with productive activities.

27. ibid; p. 1
Non-formal education has tremendous prospects for community interaction. To get proper response from the community in the society, the programmes of non-formal education have to be designed in such a way that these programmes have relevance to their way of life, their social and religious ideals, their culture and occupations, etc.

In Assam, though non-formal education has made a good beginning, it has yet to expand its scope so as to catch up with the progress of non-formal education in other States. In course of my field investigation in the villages of C.D.Blocks of Kamrup district, it was found that non-formal education was confined to only the children in the age-bracket 6-11 and 11-14 years i.e. at primary and middle level and implemented under the scheme of non-formal education by the Directorate of Elementary Education, though there is scope for extending it to higher levels of learning subject to enthusiastic participation of the learners.

At present, the classes for non-formal education are generally held either before or after the normal school hours of the formal system making use of the same school building. As most of the students in the rural
areas have to assist their parents in their work, either at home or in the agricultural field, holding of classes in the non-formal system according to their convenient time has facilitated their attendance without hampering in their day-to-day work participation.

In course of time, it is hoped that Assam will follow foot-steps of other States in the country, which have introduced non-formal education in higher stages of learning like the open learning system introduced in some universities through correspondence course.

It is seen that incidental education helps an individual to acquire knowledge at different stages of life in the process of his growing up in the environment and this in turn contributes to the development of a prosperous community life. If the non-formal educational programme could be imparted at the various levels of education, viz. primary, secondary, and higher education with appropriate methods and techniques, this could immensely help in attaining a variegated community life and in that case, to some extent, non-formal education would become complementary to the formal stream of education.
The survey findings in the C.D.Blocks of Kamrup district incorporated in Chapter-VI of the thesis indicate that there has been a tremendous impact of incidental and non-formal education in community living and their interaction is manifest in life-style of the people, their behaviour pattern, their attitudes to life and work matching with the changing environment of a dynamic society and gradual improvement in the standard of living.

In short, incidental and non-formal education should serve as an effective instrument in improving the intrinsic quality of life of the people, which is so essential for the growth of a healthier community life.