

A. Specialised Documents on Adult Education

1. ADULT EDUCATION IN BRITISH INDIA

Report of the Adult Education Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education, 1939, New Delhi: Manager, Government of India Press, 1940, pp.58.

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Members

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2. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur
3. Mr. W.H.F. Armstrong (Director of Public Instruction, Punjab)
4. Mr. C.J. Varkey (Minister of Education, Government of Madras)
5. The Educational Commissioner (Government of India)
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7. Mr. W.A. Jenkins (Director of Public Instruction, Bengal)
8. Mr. J.J. Chandy (Manager, Tata Iron and Steel Company Ltd., Jamshedpur)
9. Mr. K.G. Salyidain (Director of Public Instruction, Kashmir State)
10. Prof. J.B. Raju (Vice-President, Indian Adult Education Conference).

Terms of Reference

- (i) To define the sphere of adult education in the general system of education,
- (ii) To consider whether it is desirable to distinguish between adult education in the strict sense and other forms of part-time continuative education e.g. those of a vocational character;
- (iii) To consider whether pupil or students already undergoing full-time instruction should be encouraged or allowed to attend adult education classes. If so, whether any minimum age should be fixed;
- (iv) To consider how far the problem of providing adequate facilities for adult education can be solved by using and developing existing agencies in urban and rural areas; (and) in this connection to consider the function of the University and the Technical, Commercial or Arts Colleges in relation to adult education.
- (v) To explore the possibility of finding new ways of attacking the problem;
- (vi) To consider questions of method and technique including the introduction of mechanical aids to learning wherever practicable;
- (vii) To consider the question of the supply and training of teachers for adult schools and classes;
- (viii) To consider the provision of library facilities and of suitable reading material in urban and rural areas;
- (ix) To consider what special arrangements should be made for Women's adult education-its nature and organization;
- (x) To consider what steps can be taken to enlist the practical support of large employers of labour, trade and provision of adult education for their employees and members;

- (xi) To consider the general administrative arrangements necessary to promote the spread of adult education including ways and means to finance the same;
- (xii) To consider the advisability of starting a bureau of adult education in each province with the object of collecting and furnishing information regarding the literature suitable for adults and giving publicity to the new methods and experiments being tried in different places.

EXCERPTS

1. The sphere of adult education in the general system of education

... The early and general establishment of a compulsory system of primary education is the only effective and permanent solution of the problem of illiteracy, so far as the great bulk of the population is concerned. When this is in full operation, the problem in case of the educable will be confined to those who relapse into illiteracy after their school days are over.

....[However] the fact cannot be ignored that the existence of a large number of illiterate parents, who attach no value to literacy in others including their own children, will undoubtedly prove one of the greatest obstacles to the introduction of a compulsory system of primary education. The problem, therefore, has to be approached from both ends ... (p 2)

The function of adult education in the general system of education may be defined as follows :

- (a) to make grown-up people literate in the narrow sense;
- (b) to encourage adults who are already literate or who become literate as a result of [a] to continue their education and to provide them with facilities;
- (c) to enable adults who show the capacity for it to proceed to the more advanced stages of education.

Considered from this wider aspect there must always be a recognised place of adult education in any well-ordered system of public instruction. (p 3.)

In view of the widespread prevalence of illiteracy throughout India and particularly in certain classes of the population, both in rural and urban areas, the Committee regard (a) above as the objective towards the attainment of which the main effort should immediately be directed ... Official efforts may be supplemented with equal enthusiasm by all those voluntary agencies which are interested not only in education but also in the wider aspects of social amelioration.

It is hardly necessary to point out that if a man or a village or a district is made literate and then through lack of stimulus or facilities is allowed to lapse into illiteracy, the effort and money expended is not merely wasted but the last state will almost certainly be worse than the first. A very essential part of any scheme, therefore, will be the arrangements for consolidating the ground gained. The success of the literacy campaign in any area must depend the Committee's opinion on the ability of those responsible.

- (i) to ascertain which members of the adult population are illiterate
- (ii) to provide instruction in such forms as may be most likely to awaken the interest of the adult student and create in him the desire to continue his education;

- (iii) to bring such pressure as may be practicable on the illiterates to undergo instruction;
- (iv) to recruit an adequate supply of competent teachers for his purpose; and
- (v) to provide facilities so that literacy may become permanent

...While it was agreed that, in the beginning at any rate, every effort should be made to persuade illiterates voluntarily to undergo instruction, doubts were expressed as to whether a real measure of success could be achieved without sanctions of some kind. It was accordingly suggested that after due notice literacy might be made a condition of the franchise and or of any employment under a public authority, that enlightened employers should be asked to adopt a similar attitude and that after a certain date thumb-impressions instead of signatures on legal documents should be made invalid. The committee, while recognizing the stimulus which the adoption of such measures would give to the movement and realizing the possibility that action on those or similar lines may ultimately become necessary, feel that their adoption in the early stages may provoke opposition in otherwise, sympathetic quarters and bring the matter to the notice of the Board without making any specific recommendation. They are agreed, however, that continuous and effective propaganda of all kinds is essential. (p. 4)

...In the beginning at any rate, the utmost freedom should be allowed to experiment in methods of teaching, particularly in view of the varying aptitudes both the teachers and students and the very diverse conditions which obtain in a country as large as India.... whatever the subjects of instruction, it is essential that it should be made intelligible and interesting to the student by being closely related to his occupation, his personal interests and the social and economic conditions under which he lives. It is further suggested that when new schools are built or existing ones altered the planning and equipment should be of such a character as will make them convenient and attractive for adults as well as for children. (p.4)

...The function of Adult Education cannot be confined to promotion and maintenance of literacy... Every encouragement must also be given to the many adults, fully literate so far as the 3 R's are concerned, who will feel that the need to continue their education, whether their object is to improve their efficiency as workers or citizens or simply to increase their capacity for intellectual enjoyment and recreation. Suitably graded part-time courses or classes should be held in the evening but the possibility of starting part-time day classes in urban areas, particularly for women, should receive

consideration. In this connection every effort should be made to enlist the help of Universities through their extramural departments as well as the co-operation of industrialists. (p. 4-5)

II. The desirability or otherwise of distinguishing between adult education in the strict sense and other forms of part-time continuative education, e.g. those of a vocational character.

... It is neither necessary nor expedient in India and above all in the Indian village to define too strictly the sphere of adult education. The main aim (of adult education) is to arouse the interest of illiterate, whether a villager or a town-dweller, and make him wish to learn. The best way of doing this may well be through activities closely associated with his daily work. Any form of instructions that will help him to improve the economic position may not only increase his respect for education but may also contribute

indirectly towards securing a better education for his children. The worker for adult education should not be limited in his ways of approach by restrictions.... The studies of the village adult centre, therefore, should be based on agriculture and the crafts related to it and instructions in literacy should be correlated therewith. Apart from vocational considerations and whatever the age of the student, the importance of learning by doing things in the earlier stages of education is almost universally recognised.

III. Attendance of pupils or students already undergoing full-time instruction at adult education classes.

.... There are, however obvious disadvantages in teaching boys and men together. The former tend to be a disturbing element and many adults, who are conscious of their educational shortcomings, are shy of exposing them in the presence of children. More important is the fact that grown-up people are capable of learning at a different rate from children. Furthermore there is a distinct technique for teaching adults.

The Committee is also conscious of the risk of young children being exploited if parents instead of sending them to school in the day time can make them work during the day and attend school at night. After very careful consideration the Committee came to the following conclusions :

- (a) that a boy under the age of 12 should not be admitted to an adult centre under any circumstance;
- (b) that a boy, so long as he is attending a full time day school should not be encouraged to attend evening classes as well; and
- (c) that subject to (b) above and where ever the numbers justify it separate classes should be organised for boys between 12 and 16 (pp 5-6)

IV. To consider how far the problem of providing adequate facilities for adult education can be solved by using and developing existing agencies in (a) urban and (b) rural areas; in this connection to consider the function of the university and the Technical, Commercial or Art College in relation to adult education

....[Existing voluntary] bodies might be invited to help, e.g. by raising funds, recruiting workers or providing buildings, apparatus and literature. In order to prevent some of them becoming sources of weakness rather than strength, strict supervision over the activities of voluntary agencies would have to be exercised by the provincial authorities responsible for adult education.

...Universities can render great service to adult education if they will expand and popularise their extramural activities. They might appoint tutors, each of whom in co-operation with other workers in the same field would devote his whole time to stimulating the demand for adult classes in a given part of the area served by the University. The tutor would also conduct formal classes extending over two or three years for the more advanced students.... Universities should award diplomas to students who had successfully completed such a tutorial course. Facilities should also be provided for the occasional student of outstanding ability who may be thrown up by the Adult Education Movement; to proceed to