

## **B. General Document having a coverage on Adult Education**

### **1. ROLE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BRITISH INDIA:**

**Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture**, Bombay: Government Central Press, 1928.

*The Royal commission comprising of ten members was set up in April 1926 under the Chairmanship of Victor Alexander John Marques of Linlithgow to examine and report on the prevailing conditions of agriculture and economy in British India, and make recommendations for the improvements of agriculture, and also suggest measures to promote the welfare and prosperity of the rural population. On the basis of the premise that agriculture provides livelihood either directly or indirectly to the vast majority of the rural population in India, the report focuses on the type of education best suited to the needs of an agricultural population in the rural areas. Considering adult education as the main concern of non-officials rather than the Government, the report highlights the importance of literacy to agricultural communities in British India.*

#### **EXCERPTS**

It is clear that while a universal system of rural education for children is obviously indispensable for the future, it cannot affect the present situation and if it is not to be supplemented by a determined effort to spread adult education, many of the improvements in agriculture which we so earnestly desire to see must be postponed until a new generation has sprung up fitted by early tuition to reap the advantages we seek to place within their reach. That appreciable progress has been achieved in popularising the idea of adult education indicates that the people are willing to accept new opportunities and to depart from old custom. The very fact that adult schools have been started is evidence that some great and failure many, but it is encouraging that efforts have been made, have been responded and have even met with some measure of success. Active steps to and have even met with some measure of success. Active steps to promote adult education date from about 1920-21. Since then their progress has been rapid and in 1925-26, the number of pupils undergoing instruction was 122,649. The movement is still, however, practically confined to two provinces, the Punjab, and Bengal... The impetus in rural areas has, in the main, been furnished by the Coperative Department and once schools have been successfully established by that department, they are handed over to the Education Department. It should be mentioned that provision is made for female as well as for male education. In Bengal, where there were in 1926, 926 adult schools with 20,319 pupils on the rolls, the movement has not the same intimate connection with the Co-operative Department as it has in the Punjab and it is perhaps for this reason that doubts have been expressed whether, in many cases, the schools are functioning with success. The figure for Bengal include 17 schools with 442 pupils situated in urban areas. In addition to schools in the large cities, government in the Bombay Presidency maintained 116 primary schools for education of adults and in 1925, 4012 pupils were educated in them at a cost of Rs. 17.038. These schools were chiefly night schools. Some 37 schools under the auspices of the Provincial Co-operative Institute were started in 1922 for the education of the adults. A private donor supplied the necessary funds for three years. After his death in 1924, the schools had to be discontinued for want of funds.

We are much attracted by the possibilities which a development of adult education on a large scale

holds out. Such a development would antedate by at least a generation that great advance in literacy which, in our view, is essential to progress in all direction. Its influence in enlarging the scope of the cultivators horizon and in increasing his willingness to adopt agricultural improvements and his capacity to watch over his own interests in buying and selling commodities and produce would be immense. Valuable time would thus be gained at a somewhat critical period, since conditions may not remain as favourable as they have been, and skill are for the introduction of the agricultural products of India to the worlds markets with the beneficial reactions on internal prosperity which may be expected to follow. Even more important is the stimulus which would be given to the spread of primary education amongst the youth of both sexes. As we have seen a great obstacle to educational advance is presented by the apathy of the parents and no better method of overcoming this can be devised than by inducing them to realise in their own persons the benefits of education. When that apathy is overcome, the financial difficulty is also in a fair way to removal, for a community which is convinced of the benefits of education may be expected to be willing to tax itself to secure them. Again, what may be described as the "after care" of the literacy won at the primary school stage will be immensely facilitated, for the spread of literacy amongst the parents will create a demand for a supply of the printed matter which is still seldom met with in rural districts in India and will thus give to the village libraries, which now require fostering care from educational and other official authorities, the secure basis of popular support.

We have considered whether the education departments might not participate in the movement for adult education to a much larger extent than they do at present in view of its great possibilities for good. We have, however, come somewhat reluctantly to the conclusion that such participation would impose too great a strain on the primary school organisation. Village school masters if they do their duty properly by the children under their care, cannot be expected as a body to undertake the additional work involved in night classes for the parents of those children and the same consideration applies to the school inspectorate and to the educational organisation at headquarters, which would inevitably have additional work thrown on them if the government were to start an extensive campaign to further adult education. Work of this kind is in our view, work which co-operative societies and associations of public spirited individuals who are anxious to promote the development of the country - side are specially fitted to undertake. We trust, however, that there will be the closest possible co-ordination between the education departments and the co-operative departments and of both with associations which may interest themselves in the promotion of adult education. In suggesting it as a field for non-official activity, we would express the hope that the lessons to be drawn from the failure of the schools started under the auspices of the Co-operative Institute, Bombay will not be overlooked. If the movement is to be successful, it must be based on popular support and not on funds and initiative supplied from outside. Popular support can be secured as the result of active propaganda and much preliminary spade work.

Whilst we hold that the advance of adult education is a matter for non-official activity rather than for the government departments, we consider that there may be a case for assisting co-operative societies financially in the matter of adult education. Such assistance might take the form of a pro-rata contribution from provincial revenues. It should however be made an invariable condition of all such assistance that the schools buildings should be freely placed at the disposal of organisers and every facility compatible with the due discharge of their primary duty of educating the young should be given to teachers who are willing to undertake the additional work involved.

...illiteracy presents the most formidable single obstacle to rural development in the widest sense the

fact that of the population of twenty years of age and over, nearly ninety per cent cannot be reached directly by the printed word creates a barrier between them and money which are available are entirely unequal to the task of helping the mass of the cultivators by the evidence we received shows that the rural community is by no means slow to adopt any form of improvement, of the value of which it is convinced. We are persuaded that the only hope of substantial progress lies in the mobilisation of all the available forces, both public and private, in a determined attack upon illiteracy. It is not to be expected that all provinces or indeed all parts of the same province, should advance at equal speed. This apparent drawback has the advantage that the more advanced areas, always provided that there is effective liaison between the various educational authorities... (pp. 559-60).

**Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations:**

- 1) The spread of literacy among the women of India is of great importance to rural development.
- 2) The influence of the young female education in spreading lasting literacy among should be ascertained with a view to demonstrating the true relation between female literacy and the spread of general literacy.
- 3) The advancement of adult education is a matter for non-official activity rather than for government departments but the latter should assist it in all possible ways... (pp.560-61).