Capabilities for Quality of Life: A Study on Adult Literate in Ajmer District of Rajasthan

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Abstract

The present study investigated how adult education can build individual capabilities and thus improve quality of life. In year 1978, National Literacy Mission (1978) adopted “Mass campaign approach for total literacy” as its principal strategy for eradication of illiteracy of adults in our country. Objectives of the National Literacy Mission were to teach functional literacy to the adults. For example, literacy helps to broaden the capability to find a job, or to inform people about their rights, or to read a contract, or open a bank account, or even to access health services and so on. In the case of women, literacy improves their ability to teach their children. Fundamentally, literacy is instrumental in providing the person with skills and understanding. Hence, literacy process must be sustained to enable the people to realize their potential, to help themselves and achieve self-reliance. For this reason, they need a prospect for enhancing their capability and their learning becomes meaningful only when they succeed in building up their capabilities for living a good quality of Life.

Key words: Capabilities, Quality of Life, Adult literate, Literacy.

Introduction

Literacy is a basic step towards adult education and further learning. In India, National Literacy Mission adopted “Mass campaign approach for total literacy” as its principal strategy for the eradication of illiteracy. Through its campaigns, this mission has brought many changes at grassroots level to eliminate illiteracy from our country for adults. Moreover, it also aimed for the enhancement of the existing capabilities of adults by providing them various programmes. This campaign and programmes have been recognized in several educational policies such as NEP, 1986, POA-1992 and it is also mentioned in our current National Education Policy. All these national policies stressed that imparting literacy is not sufficient for adult, as this age is called as ‘more reproductive & productive age’, therefore, they also required such a literacy & learning which can help them to build or enhance their capabilities to live a good life. However, five-six years experience showed that both in respect of acquisition of basic literacy, it is up gradation to self-reliant level and further learning on a continuing basis as well as the issue of its application in day to day life to improve one’s condition, Total Literacy and Post Literacy Campaign, proved inadequate. It was realized that a system of institutionalized set up of Continuing Education was the only answer.

This is one reason why Total Literacy Campaign was seen in the early nineties, pre-requisite to Post-Literacy & Continuing Education phase. As the literacy graduated from one stage to another. National Literacy Mission perception and approach also began to emerge with greater clarity about the objectives of each phase and its inter-relationship to the continuum of adult and continuing education. Initially these phases could not be seen as a part of an inter-related continuum with the level of clarity. Thus, to give good quality of life of the people, especially the adult literate, became the major agenda of NLM in respect of Continuing Education (CE) Programme, was introduced in 1996 in India.

There have also been many innovations in combining literacy with life, building capabilities and livelihood skills, in improving the avenues of Continuing Education programme and bringing about convergence of different departments and agencies within and outside government to enhance the capabilities of the beneficiaries from
Continuing Education Programmes. Literacy process have to be so continued as to result in release of creative energies of the people, which must be sustained to enable the people to realize their potential, to help themselves and achieve self-reliance. For this reason, they need an opportunity for enhancing capability and their learning becomes meaningful only when they succeed in building up their capabilities to have good living.

This study required to understand literacy intervention for contributing towards building up the capabilities of adult literate leading to the improvement of their Quality of Life. On the basis of existing literature and it is found that there is considerable relationship between literacy, and Capabilities. Studies have also provided basis and offered an important perspectives for developing component of quality of life. The present study needed to go deeper into the issue and focused on three major components of Quality of life- empowerment, sustainable livelihood and life skills; which have not been touched explicitly and there have been no empirical evidence presented so far.

Review of Literature & Theoretical Framework of the Study

First set of researches emphasized that empowerment gained by all women is due to being together in self-help group, which is a group of vocational programme of literacy. By being in such group, they are becoming empowered. As, it has brought awareness and judgments abilities to them. (Ramachandran, V., 1996; & Pant, M., 2004).

Second set of research studies stressed that literacy has a significant for building capabilities due to its functional nature, as in this programme, focus has been to their livelihood as well. It helps in attaining so (Alam, K. R., 2004; Bhola, H.S., 2006; & Islam, M & Manzur, K., 2007).

Last set of research studies reveals that functional literacy is seen as a tool to enhance other capabilities for quality of life and empowered adults at socially & economically (Karim, N.A., 1992; Roberson, D.N., 2004; & Nagpal, V., 2010).

This part also illustrates the conceptual meaning of Quality of Life which has been derived from Amartya Sen’s ‘Capabilities Approach’. Concept of quality of life is differing person to person, it is subjective in nature, however, from pilot work, following theoretical terms have been generated:

**Empowerment:** Its influence gained through literacy to make choices, decides for oneself, living as per own norms, to change others’ perceptions by democratic means etc.

**Sustainable livelihood:** It is defined all necessary items, resources & means an individual required to survive, all basic needs of living.

**Life skills**- It is defined as all abilities to deal with all challenges & adapt accordingly in productive manner.
Objectives of the Study

- To study the role of functional literacy in context of Capability Approach.
- To study the contribution of functional literacy among marginalized section of society, vocational groups & basic literacy groups.

Methodology

Design of the study
On the basis of the nature and objectives of the study both quantitative and qualitative research methodology approved out and the present research was carried out using the methodology of Survey Research in Ajmer District of Rajasthan.

Sampling Technique

Multistage Cluster (Area) sampling is used in this study; researcher firstly has selected highest number of beneficiaries of functional literacy programme from Ajmer district of census tracts. Then in the Second stage Block from a sampling frame consisting of all blocks. In Ajmer there are eight blocks, for this study researcher has selected only one block Kishangargh. The third stage consists of sub-areas of urban & villages of rural area contained in the block drawn in the second stage of cluster sample. The fourth stage consists of choosing the adult literates within each household drawn in the third stage from respective area.

Sample
Sample comprises of all the beneficiaries (1220) of the Continuing Education (CE) programmes which mainly include the adult literates who have completed the phase of the Post-literacy programme and still they are part of the continuing education programme in Jan Shiksha Sansthan (JSS). They are mainly categorized as: (i) School dropouts; (ii) Pass-outs of primary schools; (iii) Pass-out of non-formal education programme; and (iv) all other participating members of the community, including marginalized groups particularly Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribe and women. The criteria of identifying selected adult literacy depends on many factors such as proximity of the village area from urban area, demographic profile of the village, population size of the village, size of the centre and kind of the learners of JSS. The total sample size is 1220. In urban area, there are 300 adult literates from basic literacy and 400 adult literates from vocational group, whereas in rural area, there are 240 adult literates from basic literacy and 280 adult literates from vocational group have been chosen.

Tools Used
Both quantitative and qualitative tools were used to collect the data. Following tools have been used after completing the standardization procedure:

Questionnaires on adult literate which includes the items related with functional literacy’s role for enhancing capabilities mainly focusing on empowerment, sustainable livelihood and life skills.

Format of Case Profile on 50 adult literate to collect the Narratives of adult literate.

Standardized Rating scale to assess the enhanced capabilities of adult literate.

The Interview Schedule administrated on 5 policy makers & 6 administrator of literacy programme.
Result and Discussion

Results have been analyzed on the basis of qualitative methods. Thematic and narrative analyses have been applied for data analysis. Analysis reveals that literacy intervention in Ajmer has impact in building capabilities of adults for improving their quality of life. The themes of awareness, empowerment, self-direction and cognitive and behavioral changes have been emerged out by thematic analysis of focused group discussions. Narratives analysis of successful adult literates is also equipped for qualitative analysis which also shows their capabilities for living good life.

Cognitive and Behavioral Changes: The adult education has helped adult literates to change their attitudes, behaviors, and styles of communication. Adult literates have the knowledge of Akhsar Gyan, they read newspaper and suggests other as well to read. Adult literates have changed their thoughts towards the women, they stated that being born and brought up in Muslim family, we had orthodox views towards women life as our elders considered women as a curse in the family, our parents believed that to provide education to a girl is wastage of time and money. They had consideration that there is no benefit if we educate the girl as she has to leave parental home one day. Therefore we also believe that what we will be benefit of education or to be literate, after all we have to get marry and produce children. But once , they became literate, their gender stereotype beliefs have been changed, now they doesn’t consider woman only for household work, they can also help in managing the home in much better, as literate women have power to think and understand.

Awareness: Literacy has become the tool for bringing the awareness among the adult literates. They have known its value as it has brought the openness in their mind and it gives them different ideas. They are updating themselves with any new information of Government Scheme running in their village such as if there is any new scheme has been initiated about domestic welfare, agriculture, environment protection etc. It is also exposed through the discussion that adult literates also have religious, historical and national awareness and therefore they visit to such places to gain more awareness. They are well known with their rights and duties towards the home, family and country. They are wakeful with the national issues such as women’s equality, economic crisis & election process of the country. Adult literate are now aware of the all the significant things including health knowledge, family planning etc.

Adult literates are now becoming aware of their children education as well. They are now sending our children to school, and paying full attention and guiding them for their future. They daily check their notebook to see whether they have done their homework or not. What school teacher has written on their diary, what is their achievement; they are supervising their children education in better ways.

Empowerment: Women adult literates became more confident and their self-esteem has also increased. They are also participating in community activities at Panchyat level. Few are also representing themselves a leader or sub-leader at block level. They are also engaged in co-ordination work e.g managing self-help group, coordinating with administrator of literacy programmes, Zila Parishad administrators etc. Those who have been under the four walls are now able to step out and go out of home to do work for their family. Their economic independence also enhanced their capabilities to live a meaningful and respectful life. They feels part of society in terms of their participations at all level, they are now economically & socially empowered. Moreover, they can raise voice if something wrong happens with them.

Role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Empowerment:
Due to the formation of SHG in their respective villages, they themselves are becoming empowered as these groups create a synergy among them; positive feeling of belongings is making them more expressive. Not only this, they collect the money from all members and save this money. Later, whenever if any needy in group required money for any reason e.g. for marriage or to start any income related work or children education etc, they can withdraw for such purpose. Moreover, they collectively brought any sewing or embroidery machine to start any entrepreneurship in their areas. By such formation, they have become economical empowered. Their saving accounts are helping them to start small business entrepreneurships for expanding livelihood.
**Benefits of Literacy at all level specifically for women adult**

*Narrative* of successful case studies point out that literacy has resulted in empowering them “*Once after reading the price of a commodity I went to shopkeeper and told him that he had overcharged me. The shopkeeper returned me the balance. I realized that basic literacy helped me, I am leading better life now*” (quoted by adult literate).

Further it is found that adult -literates have enhanced existing capabilities, they are participating in social services as well, e.g. protecting land, helping farmers, participating in workshops related with seeds, farming etc. They described functional literacy as an opportunity which has provided education not only leading their present life but also for their future benefit.

At individual level, it is found that this programme is all about the bringing the awareness for literacy among the people as there are some adult literates they even can’t read correctly, but are aware of literacy benefits as it has brought up the desirable changes in their thoughts, behavior and attitude. At community level, the researcher has personally drawn some valid conclusions that the adult literates have developed the some sort of feelings of belongingness within the different communities. The revelation is that the discrimination is not visible among them and they have been placed with optimum utilization of their knowledge resource base.

At last it could be said that literacy leads to education and results in empowerment with the acquisition of knowledge & skills which have made adult -literates enable to engage in activities required for effective functioning and also enhancing their capabilities which in turn improve the quality of life.

**Conclusion**

Functional literacy plays a very instrumental role for not only building capabilities but also enhancing the existing capabilities specifically for adults. As adult age is most productive age. Adult has previous experience, but if they don’t have functional literacy, they feel themselves educationally handicapped. Therefore, this study has analyzed contribution of functional literacy for bringing quality of life among adult. Literacy is a fundamental requirement which enable all individual to be dynamic. The Capability Approach suggests that if a person is illiterate, person can survive but without having the choices & good opportunities to live a quality of life. This is called a Capability Deprivation. It means person should have opportunity i.e. programme, choice i.e to enroll in income generating
programme or functional literacy and all required resources i.e., infrastructure, reading material etc. then a person can build his capabilities and expand it to have a good quality life. In this study, quality of life is measured qualitatively by understating the meaning of it from adult literate. It can be concluding that “literacy itself is a significant capability”. It has both inherent and instrumental consequence. It has future oriented capacity, potential and all essential effects in enhancing individual capabilities.

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