

Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in India: Prospects and Challenges in the light of NEP 2020

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Abstract

Adult education is a continuous learning process, where adults engage in structured and methodical activities to help them better understand and learn. Based on data from the most recent census, India's total literacy rate climbed from 74% in 2001 to 79% in 2011. Global data on countries shows a very strong relationship between GDP/per capita income and the literacy rate. By creating an adult education curriculum framework, NEP 2020 aims to greatly increase adult and continuing education programmes and to target a 100% youth and adult literacy rate by 2030. Foundational literacy and numeracy, key life skills, vocational skills, basic education, and continuing education are some of the key programme categories that must be included in the framework which must be adaptable enough to accommodate local demands. Thus, a person can advance both personally and professionally via the use of the vast array of personal, civic, economic, and lifelong learning opportunities that come along with basic education and reading. Government efforts alone are unlikely to produce the large-scale results that are needed; instead, strong national commitment, widespread community volunteerism, and mobilization are needed, together with strong government support. To genuinely accelerate the key goal of attaining 100% literacy in the country - volunteerism and community involvement must be resorted to, as soon as possible.

Keywords: *Adult education, lifelong learning, National Literacy Mission (NLM), foundational literacy and numeracy, basic education.*

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Introduction

The history of learning is as old as humanity itself, and the idea of lifelong learning (LLL) has long been a valued objective in India (Dutta, 1986; Bhatia, 2009; Shah, 2009, 2010). Within the framework of nation-building and social transformation, LLL developed as an essential and beneficial component of adult and continuing education programmes. However, in the post-millennium era, the (re)advent of LLL has taken on a distinct shape. LLL is currently seen as a philosophy for personal growth, skill acquisition, and lifetime employability. It has emerged as an overarching principle that directs the paths of education policies toward economic growth and is no longer confined to any particular field or fields (Field, 2006; Shah, 2009; Barros, 2012). Since the earliest records (c. 2000 BC to AD 1200) emphasized the value of learning above any other consideration, LLL has been an essential component of Indian culture (Shah, 2009, 2010; Mandal, 2013b).

The right to education and lifelong learning is inherently linked to adult education and learning, which is defined as “all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work.” (Adult Education and Learning, n.d.) It refers to the whole range of formal, informal, and non-formal learning processes, which people who are considered adults by their community learn to enhance their capacity for working and living in a way that serves both their interests and the interests of their communities, organizations, and societies (UNESCO, 2015, Recommendation on Education and Learning for Adults: Para1). While learning exclusively for adults, or AE as we refer to it now, emerged much later, the spiritual framework of “learn as long as you live” to achieve “moksha” or emancipation (Shah, 1999) was fundamental. Life-oriented education was the main focus of AE from 1947 to 1966, when social education began to take precedence in national policies (Shah, 1999).

Adult education is the process through which adults who are currently out of school, are no longer enrolled in school, or do not attend regularly or full-time, engage in structured and sequential learning activities. Adult education covers several topics such as agriculture, family welfare, environmental preservation, diet and nutrition, health, and child development. The institutionalization of lifelong learning and adult education in India has progressed extremely slowly. India’s policy on lifelong learning is still in its infancy and is now undergoing significant reform. India underwent economic upheaval in the 1990s as market-centric and neoliberal ideas were more widely accepted. This had a significant effect on how AE developed. National Five Year Plans noted that it was critical to continuously upgrade skills between the early

1990s and 2000 in order to generate the labour required for a market and society (Government of India, 1992). In unison with governmental and non-governmental entities, university departments of Adult Continuing Education and Extensions (ACEE) initiated skill development initiatives; however, they neglected to adequately focus on enhancing the professional competencies of educators and trainers (Shah, 2009). After 2000, there was a substantial drop in the funding of AE programmes, which had been falling gradually since the late 1980s. Shah (2008) examined funding patterns and found that although spending on education across all sectors climbed from 7.92 percent to 13.78 percent between 1951 and 1998, spending on AE fell from 5.30 percent to 0.31 percent, and then decreased even lower to 0.26 percent in the 2016–17 fiscal year. According to Shah (2008), the proportion of education expenditure to the overall plan for AE reached its highest point during the Sixth (1980–85), Seventh (1985–90), and Eighth (1992–97) plan periods, at 5.07, 8.60, and 7.33%, respectively. Following this, there was a significant decrease. Due to the lack of clarity in its disciplinary status and nomenclature, it is gradually implementing policy programmes and conceptual evaluations very slowly. According to Mandal (2015), lifelong learning has not yet become a definite guiding principle for educational planning, policy, and administration. Education is the process by which a person develops all the abilities necessary to take responsibility for their surroundings and perform their duties (Albina, 2016).

Types of Education

i. **Formal Education:** Both in higher education and in schools, formal education is purposefully and carefully designed through behaviour modification with a specific goal in mind. This educational system's primary drawback is that it is valid for a specified amount of time.

ii. **Informal Education:** Informal education is a phenomenon that refers to the combination of unintentional, unplanned, and methodical learning that affects people's attitudes and understanding, whether consciously or unconsciously. The most significant sources that play a major role in providing people with informal education are friends, family, co-workers, the community, the market, public spaces, technology, and media.

iii. **Non-formal Education:** Non-formal education refers to the structured delivery of learning experiences outside of the conventional school system, which continues throughout an individual's life. It is adaptable, focused on solving problems, environment-focused, life-based, and learner-oriented. Since continuing education, extracurricular activities, and moral counselling are all considered types of non-formal education, adult education falls under this category.

Pre-Independence Adult Education in India

India's literacy rate was at 6% in the years 1836–1837. The provision of adult education was not a top priority for the British government. Following the Industrial Revolution, night schools became popular in England, and this affected India. The Indian Education Commission (1882–1883) acknowledged that adult education was necessary for the advancement of the population's economic status. The steadily growing cooperative movement from 1918 to 1936 offered a foundation that was crucial for launching adult literacy. The Bihar education minister, Dr. Syed Mahmud, chaired the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) at its fourth meeting. The Committee stressed the importance of literacy for adults, the necessity of literacy training, the need for teachers to encourage adults to utilize divisional media in the classroom, and initiatives to support adult literacy retention and lifelong learning. By 1836, it was discovered that the adult population in the nation was facing several difficulties and obstacles when attempting to access various employment opportunities.

A primary factor was illiteracy. According to the Indian Education Commission, 3919 people in Mumbai attended 134 night schools. 4934 students attended 223 night schools in the southern region of the presidency. In Bengal, there were over a thousand night schools, while in Madras, there were 291. The committee firmly advocated for the programme's expansion throughout all provinces. There were various obstacles to the night school programme, and the structure was inadequate.

Post-Independence Adult Education in India

In India, adult education has been available since the time of colonization. It is referred to as a non-formal education system, and it serves to balance out the unique features of the formal education system. It serves adult illiterates who have never attended formal schooling, such as farmers and labourers. One of the main objectives of adult and continuing education in India has always been to achieve universal adult literacy and to produce a literate society of citizens. After independence, adult education in India has taken on various meanings and interpretations, from citizen training to redefining the practice as an alternative to formal education with three main goals. The first goal is to concentrate on the target demographic of young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, specifically those in the 15 to 35-year age range. The second goal is the integration of formal and informal education to make the best use of the available resources. The third goal is to emphasize the need to develop functional skills as an essential component of growth.

The National Literacy Mission, which was introduced in 1988, included developmental literacy in addition to the earlier adult literacy programmes. In addition to the previously mentioned emphasis on the 3Rs (Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic), it incorporates other components such as social awareness, the development of pertinent social skills, women's empowerment, health and hygiene, population management, the importance of national integration, and environmental conservation.

In India, lifelong learning is not a brand-new concept. The Gandhian Basic Education Schemes contain India's first formal and well-articulated concept of lifelong learning. The goal of Gandhian Basic Education is to provide students with 3H with a comprehensive and integrated education through the use of useful handicrafts.

HAND: work-based problem-solving practice and universal education.

HEAD: mental cognitive process.

HEART: character building education.

This contrasts with the 3Rs method of skill acquisition. In India, the conversation about education policy has been slowly but steadily giving more weight to lifelong learning as the fundamental idea that will underpin the restructuring of the whole formal education system of the country.

Some of these prominent government policy documents in India with components of lifelong learning policy are:

i. **Kothari Education Commission (1964-1966):** To uphold the dignity of labour and advance vocational and agricultural education, the Kothari Education Commission placed a strong emphasis on the curriculum's inclusion of practice and productive work. Adults must comprehend how rapidly their world is changing and how complicated society is becoming. Every adult citizen is entitled to opportunities for professional growth, educational enrichment, and active engagement in social and political life.

ii. **National Knowledge Commission (NKC, 2005-2008):** Meeting 21st-century issues and strengthening India's competitive edge in knowledge-based industries are two of NKC's goals for both the lifelong learning and formal education systems. The following recommendations were made by the Indian National Knowledge Commission:

a) The advancement of lifelong learning in India to foster an inclusive and people-centered knowledge society.

b) Preparing a blueprint for establishing a national lifelong learning programme that will provide high-quality education to all citizens.

c) The sharing of elite institutions' intellectual capital through open courseware and learning tools, as well as the open education of people looking to brush up on or catch up on their education.

iii. **Planning Commission of India (PCI) 11th five-year plan (2007-2012):**

The Planning Commission centered on a comprehensive strategy that would reinforce every aspect of the national education system, emphasizing the need for lifelong learning. Because of this, adult education and LLL are still only offered within the very specific traditional parameters of basic literacy, functional literacy, extension education, and community outreach programmes. In the past ten years, however, there has been an increased focus on skill development to meet the demands of emerging markets and new technologies. One important step toward the extension of the concept of LLL is the integration of elementary and secondary education with the labour market.

iv. **The University Grants Commission's (UGC) 11th plan guideline on LLL and extension education:** This document alone may be the first comprehensive national policy document on lifelong learning in India, which includes comprehensive guidelines. The university's Department of Adult and Continuing Education took steps to change its name to the Department of Lifelong Learning, and it broadened the scope of adult and continuing education through a new programme called the Lifelong Learning Education and Awareness Programme (LEAP).

v. **PCI's 12th five-year plan (2012-2017) guideline on LLL and extension education:** To enhance and improve personal, civic, and economic circumstances—including employment—this document places a strong emphasis on the lifelong learning perspective in all learning activities that people may engage in throughout their lives in formal, non-formal, and informal settings. The primary focus is on acknowledging prior learning, which is a paradigm shift in lifelong learning and literacy, as evident in the 12th five-year plan document. The Indian government's Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM) was established in 2009 to advise people to adapt to the new paradigm of lifelong learning.

vi. **Ministry of Labour and Employment:** Both the National Policy for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (NPSDE 2015) and the National Policy for Skill Development (NPSD 2009) are explicitly focused on meeting the skilled labour demands of the nation's expanding global market. With a focus on the demands of the market and employers, they seek to raise the calibre and extent of skill training and education in India. In both policy texts, they also stress the importance of including marginalized groups in social justice discourse and envisioning them as empowered in real-world situations. The spread of open and distance learning, or MOOCs (massive open online courses), is further emphasized in both the Ministry of Labour document and the Ministry of Employment document; however, they have not been able to do so effectively.

Need and Challenges of Adult Education

One can advance both personally and professionally by making use of the vast array of personal, economic and lifelong learning opportunities that come with literacy and basic education. Literacy and basic education are potent force multipliers that significantly increase the effectiveness of all other developmental initiatives at the societal and national levels. Global data from several countries show a very strong relationship between GDP/per capita income and literacy rates.

Table 1.1: Youth and Adult Literacy Rates 2018

Country	Youth Literacy Rates (%) (15-24) Years			Adult Literacy Rates (%) (15+ Years)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
World	91.54	92.84	90.27	86.24	89.77	83.02
China	99.78	99.78	95.15	96.84	98.46	95.15
Brazil	99.20	99.77	99.45	92.80	92.57	93.02
Russian Federation	99.69	99.65	99.74	99.73	99.72	99.73
India	91.66	92.99	81.85	74.37	82.36	65.79

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (uis.unesco.org) September 2021

Table 1.2: Youth and Adult Literacy Rates 2023

Country	Youth Literacy Rates (%) (15-24) Years			Adult Literacy Rates (%) (15+ Years)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
World	93	94	92	87	90	84
China	100	100	100	97	94	96
Brazil	99	99	100	95	99	95
Russian Federation	100	100	100	100	100	100
India	97	97	96	76	83	69

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (uis.unesco.org) September 19, 2023

After analyzing the data on the adult literacy rate in many countries, it is understood that India's adult literacy rate is very low, which is why we need to boost it. A country's fate is mostly in the hands of its young and adults, and the advancement and progress of every country heavily depends on adult education. The ability to protect families, raise children, prosper, and mature to contribute to the growth and development of the country will only come from educated adults. Unfortunately, a significant number of today's adults never had the chance to enrol in or finish school as a result of our previous generations' failures to achieve universal education. The government attempted several times to reach 100% adult literacy, but was unable to do so. As a result, NEP 2020 outlined numerous plans to accomplish 100% adult literacy by 2030. This will be achieved with the help of volunteers, political will, organizational structure, careful planning, sufficient funding, and the development of an Adult Education curriculum framework that includes five programme types: Basic education, Vocational skill development, Foundational literacy and numeracy, and Critical life skills.

NEP 2020's Comparison with Existing Policies wrt. Lifelong Learning and Adult Education

NEP 2020 promotes continuous learning through adult education to prevent people from becoming obsolete in terms of their modern skills, knowledge, maturity, and contentment with their lifestyles (Aithal & Aithal, 2020; Alsaadat, 2018; Bordoloi et al., 2020; Singh, 1991; Mandal, 2019). Three essential paradigms—educability, opportunity, and motivation—are required for adult education programmes to operate efficiently (Mandal, 2019; Aggarwal, 2012; Antunes, 2020; Volles, 2016). Adults can be encouraged to become self-reliant through appropriate incentives such as vocational training that helps them acquire a variety of skills with intrinsic value and financial possibilities (Kaplan, 2016; Jedlikowska, 2014; Asiksoy et al., 2017; Milana, 2019). As a result, NEP 2020 has incorporated this paradigm, which previous policies did not prioritize. Strawn (2007) gave detailed elaborations on several policies encouraging the expansion of adult education programmes.

He has pointed out the need for postsecondary education, training, and workforce development programmes to help the community obtain jobs so that they can support their families (Reder, 2020; Morrissey, 2002; Aker et al., 2012). For example, using a smartphone has become an essential skill for every member of a community, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic and Digital India (Aker et al., 2012). Thus, teaching online and tech-savvy abilities, as well as digital coding, are important additions to a lifelong learning curriculum (Iivari et al., 2020; Livingstone et al., 2007; Mariën et al., 2014). Different pedagogical approaches that emphasize the strengths

and skills of adult learners rather than their deficiencies have proved to be an efficient approach for motivating lifelong learners (Crowther et al., 2010; Black et al., 2013). Amaral (2019) described a critical comparative analysis of 54 lifelong learning programmes that have been put into practice in about nine European nations. The association between the aims and approaches of these programmes and the impacts, outcomes, and opinions of adult learners has been thoroughly examined. In the current context, policies supporting lifelong learning are designed to organize, prepare, make amends, and enhance the transition from school to the workforce. This is particularly important for early school dropouts, as these policies enable them to secure jobs after acquiring the required education and training (Amaral, 2019; Levitt et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2008; Jarvis, 2014).

Current lifelong learning policies focus on two essential parameters: social inclusion and economic prosperity (Gough, 2015; Schneider et al., 1993; Walther, 2006). However, policies should be designed based on research data and evidence-based techniques from both provincial-level and national-level scenarios, according to the comments and reactions received from the targeted groups. This is attributed to the requirement of knowing each state's function, influence, and worldview to modify techniques for delivery. Another crucial strategy to encourage the growth of adult education initiatives is the role of gender equality and equitable involvement of women in this programme (Añonuevo et al., 2011; Berrozpe et al., 2020; Addae, 2021). This is due to research findings indicating that the societal impact on adult literacy programmes influences the way lifelong learning projects are implemented (Addae, 2021; Maruyama, 2009; Evans, 1996; Burt, 1997).

NEP 2020's Contribution to the Advancement of Adult Education for National Development

Adult education has enormous potential for the advancement of the country. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) states that adult education is essential to a country's progress. NEP 2020 seeks to offer educational opportunities to all, regardless of age, in recognition of the value of lifelong learning. According to Tikader (2023), a country can optimize the potential of its adult population, improve its skills and knowledge, and build a more successful and inclusive society by funding adult education initiatives.

NEP 2020 highlights the following important points about adult education and national development:

i. **All-encompassing Development:** NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on inclusive and equitable education, making sure that learning opportunities are

available to people of all ages. The objective of this strategy is to empower individuals from diverse backgrounds and facilitate their active involvement in the advancement of the country by offering adult education.

ii. **Skill Development:** The policy acknowledges the importance of improving people's knowledge and skills throughout their lives. Programmes for adult education are focused on acquiring new skills or improving current ones, allowing adults to adjust to the ever-changing demands of the labour market. Consequently, this enhances the country's GDP growth.

iii. **Human Resource Development:** The general growth of a country's human resources is dependent on adult education. NEP 2020 seeks to develop a highly skilled workforce by giving adults the chance to expand their knowledge and skill sets. An educated adult population could accelerate national development in several areas, such as industry, research, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

iv. **Active Citizenship:** Adult education fosters democratic principles, critical thinking, and social responsibility, all of which contribute to the growth of active citizenship. Adults can actively participate in social and civic activities, make decisions, and improve the welfare of their community and country by acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills.

v. **Bridging the Education Gap:** Adult education assists in narrowing the education gap for those who were not able to finish their formal education during their early years. It provides a second opportunity to individuals who, due to a variety of circumstances, may have lost out on educational possibilities. By eliminating this divide through adult education, we can guarantee lifelong learning for all people, fostering equitable educational opportunities and social inclusion.

Curriculum Framework for Adult Education for Nation Development

India's New Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) acknowledges the value of adult education for country's development. The NEP 2020 adult education curriculum framework is essential in providing individuals with the skills, information, and abilities required for their career and personal growth. NEP 2020's goals for adult education include:

i. **Universal Access:** The programme's purpose is to make adult education accessible to all adults, especially those from underprivileged and marginalized communities, so that they can pursue lifelong learning.

ii. **Functional Literacy:** The goal of the policy is to help individuals develop the fundamental reading, writing, and numeracy abilities necessary for daily life. This facilitates people's effective participation in different spheres of life, including work, community service, and personal growth.

iii. Lifelong Learning: NEP 2020 seeks to establish pathways for adults to increase their expertise, proficiencies, and understanding of lifelong learning. It stimulates adults to pursue endless learning to cope with changing social and economic standards.

iv. Vocational Skills: The policy emphasizes the need to offer opportunities for people to get training and development in occupational skills. It aims to provide students with pertinent skills that improve their career prospects, entrepreneurial skills and promotes financial independence.

v. Digital Literacy: NEP 2020 acknowledges the significance of digital competence in the current digital era. It ensures individuals' access to training in digital skills and concentrates on equipping them with the knowledge and abilities necessary to utilize technology efficiently, obtain information, and engage in the digital economy.

vi. Personal Development: The policy places a strong emphasis on personal growth via adult education. To foster holistic growth, it seeks to enable adults to follow their strengths, preferences, and personal aspirations.

vii. Inclusive Education: NEP 2020 advocates for inclusive education by targeting the specific educational needs and obstacles encountered by women, minorities, adults with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. It seeks to give all adults equitable access to adult education programmes.

The adult education curriculum framework serves as an orientation document outlining the main ideas, objectives, and subject areas of the programmes. A competency-driven approach, flexible paths, appropriate content areas, instructional methodologies, assessment and evaluation criteria, goals and objectives, and assistance services for adult learners are some of its components. India can make sure that adults have an opportunity for high-quality education and prospects for professional as well as personal growth by implementing the adult education curriculum framework. As a result, the country develops its workforce, lowers poverty and inequality, encourages active citizenship, enhances health and well-being, promotes social cohesion and integration, and fosters an atmosphere of continuous learning. In a nutshell, the New Education Policy 2020's adult education curriculum framework seeks to meet the varied learning needs of adults while advancing their social, cultural, and economic prosperity and eventually the country's overall development.

Expansion and Advancement of Adult Education Programme through Various Platforms

Several platforms are essential to supporting the expansion and advancement of adult education. These platforms are made to meet the particular needs and difficulties

faced by adults studying in India. It is essential to analyze several platforms to promote adult education's development and expansion, which are as follows:

i. **New India Literacy Programme, or NILP:** An important platform that the Indian government has approved for the fiscal years 2022–2027 is the NILP. In keeping with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the goal of NILP is to offer online adult education programmes. Its main objectives aim to teach fundamental education, key life skills, vocational skill development, foundational reading and numeracy, and continuous learning. Through the participation of Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, teachers, and other community volunteers, the initiative promotes volunteering. The goal of this all-encompassing strategy is to give non-literate adults who are 15 years of age and older access to adult education.

ii. **Skill Development Programmes:** Programmes for skill development are essential to adult education because they increase employability and potential earnings. Adults can obtain technical skills and vocational training through skill development programmes offered by the Indian government and other organizations. A wide range of industries is covered by these programmes, such as digital skills, manufacturing, healthcare, agriculture, and tourism. Initiatives aimed at developing adult skills include Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and Skill India.

iii. **Digitalization and Online Learning Platforms:** Technology's incorporation into adult education has greatly aided in its expansion and advancement in India. To close the digital gap, the government places a strong emphasis on digital literacy and improves internet infrastructure in rural areas. A variety of courses and materials are available for adult learners on online learning platforms such as SWAYAM, SWAYAMPRAKASH, and National Digital Library. Adult learners can access instructional materials at their convenience, which offers them flexibility in the learning process.

iv. **Community-Based Groups and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** They are essential for the advancement of adult education in India. They collaborate closely with neighbourhood groups, disseminate awareness about the value of education, organize resources, and offer adult learners support networks. These groups run awareness campaigns, job training programmes, and adult education courses that are customized to the community's needs. In order to develop a long-lasting framework for adult education, they also work in conjunction with other stakeholders and governmental organizations.

v. **Government Programmes and Policies:** To encourage adult education, the Indian government has established a number of programmes and policies. Among the well-known programmes aiming at raising adult literacy rates and offering potential for skill development are the National Literacy Mission, Saakshar Bharat Mission,

and National Skill Development Mission. The infrastructure, resources, and financial support for adult education programmes are the main goals of these efforts.

vi. **Accreditation and Certification:** These two elements are crucial in guaranteeing the quality and acceptance of programmes for adult education. Accredited credentials give adult learners a sense of accomplishment and improve their employability. To increase credibility and motivate learners, the government supports adult education programmes that are accredited and certified.

vii. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Working together with businesses and private sector associations can give adult learners access to more resources and possibilities. Public-private collaborations make it easier to create apprenticeships, job placements, and training programmes that help adults gain employable skills. These collaborations increase the efficacy of adult education initiatives by utilizing the resources and experience of the commercial sector. In general, a multifaceted strategy incorporating government-sponsored efforts, skill development programmes, digital platforms, volunteerism, accreditation, and collaborations is necessary for the continued expansion and development of adult education in India. Together, these approaches and platforms address the unique difficulties encountered by adult learners while offering them access to the kind of education they need to improve their knowledge, abilities, and socioeconomic prospects.

Impact of Adult Education on Individual's Life

Mukherjee et al. (2024), in their research paper, discussed the phrase “*Sa vidya ya vimuktaye*”—which emphasizes that education releases one from oppression and ignorance—is deeply rooted in our ancient writings. Literacy is an essential component of education. Therefore, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of literacy and adult education. The development challenge facing humanity today is to constantly improve skills and expand the number of people with the skills needed to meet social demands; it has been closely related to adult education and aligns with national goals. These goals include reducing poverty, preserving the environment, stimulating cultural creativity, supporting small-family values, and advancing gender equality. To properly accomplish these goals, current adult education programmes will need to be thoroughly reviewed and strengthened. Mr. Humayun Kabir clarified that social education develops social cohesiveness and citizenship consciousness.

Adults frequently have to put other obligations ahead of their schooling, which causes them to unintentionally overlook skill development. Under such conditions, adult education becomes an essential path for individual and community development, and NEP 2020 emphasizes that age is not a barrier to learning. The fact that everyone

agrees on the value of education emphasizes how important it is to start the process of learning. A systematic adult education programme is being introduced by NEP 2020 to improve literacy and proficiency in significant domains related to people's careers. Adult education might improve a person's life in the following ways:

i. **Autonomy in Monetary Transactions:** Adult education fosters independence and confidence by providing people with the literacy skills they need to conduct monetary transactions on their own.

ii. **Financial Access to Opportunities:** People who are more proficient in reading and writing can more easily fill out applications and forms for opportunities that fit their goals and interests, which expands their prospects for both career and personal development.

iii. **Contributions to Education:** Adult education enables people to teach young adults their expertise and abilities so they can actively influence the development of future generations.

iv. **Personal Growth and Development:** People can improve their quality of life, widen their horizons, and successfully pursue personal growth and development by receiving the right kind of education through adult education programmes.

v. **Conformity to Safety Measures:** Adult education promotes personal safety and well-being by ensuring that people truly understand and can adhere to instructions and safety measures, especially in times of emergency.

vi. **Fostering an Awareness of Literacy:** Adult education fosters a broader understanding of the value of literacy, which in turn encourages people to support literacy efforts and argue for the importance of literacy in society. Following the New Education Policy 2020, Punjab University in Chandigarh has extended additional weighting to candidates who have made significant contributions to adult education. This includes those who run NGOs, operate adult education centres, or volunteer with these organizations in addition to government programmes. This particular idea was first reported in the Times of India on May 20, 2024. By establishing the NEP 2020 on May 8, 2024, the V.C. of Punjab University set up the admission facilitation committee to promote lifelong learning and encourage more young people to enrol in adult education programmes. There are eligibility requirements for this additional weightage. Applicants must present a certificate from an accredited institution or non-governmental organization that teaches illiterate adults. Students who operate adult education centres are eligible to apply for weightage based on the number of adults they educate to read and write. For example, a credit of 0.35% will be awarded for teaching 10 adults, 0.65% for 20 adults, and 1% for 30 adults. In the same way, student volunteers also coordinate a mass functional literacy campaign. Credits are awarded based on the number of illiterate people they assist; for every ten adults,

they get 1%, and for every five adults, 0.65%. This important P.U. programme seeks to steadily raise literacy rates to inspire young people in this nation to support lifelong learning.

In conclusion, a philosophical inquiry into adult education, lifelong learning, and workable solutions in the framework of NEP 2020 uncovers a complicated network of related ideas and possible paths for revolutionary change. NEP 2020's integration of theories of lifelong learning with its guiding principles emphasizes how important it is to cultivate a continuous learning culture that encompasses an array of age groups. The background provided by the historical development of adult education in India is insightful and helps to guide current initiatives. Although there are acknowledged obstacles, such as societal perceptions and practical difficulties, a philosophical examination of practical solutions offers pragmatic interventions based on well-established educational theories. These theoretical underpinnings offer a strong framework for additional study and real-world applications, suggesting an achievable path in the direction of a more egalitarian society.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the importance of adult education and incorporates important provisions to support adult learning and skill development. The role that various platforms and policies play in the implementation of adult education programmes is crucial in determining how effectively high-quality education is disseminated throughout the community. Adult education is vital to a country's overall growth. Countries can use adult education to accomplish economic growth, eradicate poverty, achieve social advancement, promote greater wellness, and foster a culture of lifelong learning by addressing the issues and putting NEP 2020's recommendations into practice.

Adult education empowers people with the information and abilities they need to support the country's economic development. As a result, adults can find sustainable employment, establish businesses, and participate in various economic sectors, which eventually promotes productivity and the general economic growth of the country. Additionally, adult education assists people in ending the lifelong pattern of poverty. Adults can increase their earning potential as well as employment opportunities by learning new skills and knowledge, which will help them support themselves and their families. As a result, dependency on welfare programmes is decreased, which lowers poverty and improves living standards. Another important effect of adult education on the country is social development, which encourages community

engagement and empowerment by giving people the chance to develop their ability to think critically, build interpersonal skills, and understand social challenges.

Adult learners who are knowledgeable and informed are better able to take an active role in democratic processes, support social justice, and engage in community activities, all of which contribute to the growth and cohesion of society. Additionally, adult education improves people's general health and well-being as well as the health of their communities. Adult education encourages better decisions about well-being by equipping adults with information on health-related concerns, wellness strategies, and healthy habits. This leads to better health outcomes, lower medical expenses, and a more robust society. Therefore, adult education promotes a culture of lifelong learning, which is critical in today's quickly evolving world. A society that appreciates and encourages adult education fosters creativity, personal development, and resilience by encouraging people to continue learning and developing their skills throughout their lives.

Limited access, low literacy rates, learning opportunities for the underprivileged, qualified facilitators and teachers, prior learning, sustainability and resource allocation, awareness and sensitization, and the integration of technology are some of the major obstacles to adult education implementation under NEP 2020. Countries can create an inclusive and holistic adult education system that meets the various learning requirements of adults by putting these guidelines into practice. This will guarantee sustained growth and enable people to realize their full potential while also advancing the country's general prosperity (Mukherjee et al., 2024).

Taking into account the everlasting significance of lifelong learning, the New Education Policy (NEP) is a shining example of inclusivity, supporting universal access to education. Programmes for lifelong learning and adult education are important ways to remove obstacles that impede a person's development, regardless of age, occupation, way of life, or acquired skills (Gandhi, 2022). The NEP heralds an era of empowerment by recognizing the different demands of social groups, especially those who have historically been excluded or lacked access to education. Government agencies and academic institutions working together to create innovative guidelines, personalized educational programmes, and strong apprenticeships will make sure that no one is left behind in their pursuit of knowledge and skill development. Additionally, the incorporation of infrastructure and technology expenditures emphasizes a dedication to updating adult learners' educational delivery formats. Although the NEP does not impose a strict timeframe for implementation, the proactive actions taken by several state governments and educational institutions

indicate an optimistic move in the right direction toward achieving its goals. In the end, the NEP's unflinching endorsement of adult education opens the door to a more prosperous and inclusive society where education's transformative power breaks down barriers and promotes development for all. The foundation of democracy must be strengthened, and the qualities of the ideal citizen must be fostered, through adult education. It gives people the information and abilities they need to ethically and actively engage in democratic processes. Adult education helps ensure that people understand the value of democracy and their roles in society by improving literacy and civic awareness. By enabling people to make meaningful and productive contributions to society's advancement, this education promotes social cohesion and political stability. In the end, adult education is a major factor in both individual development and the general well-being of a democratic community.

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