

VOLUNTEERISM IN ADULT EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Adult education is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values. It can mean any form of learning adults engage in beyond traditional schooling, encompassing basic literacy to personal fulfillment as a lifelong learner. The learning happens in many ways and in many contexts just as all adults' lives differ. Adult learning can be in any of the three contexts, i.e. formal structured learning that typically takes place in an education or training institution, usually with a set curriculum and carries credentials. Non-formal learning that is organized by educational institutions but non credential. Informal education, learning that goes on all the time, resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, community or leisure. Volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services. The purpose of this study was to examine the concept of volunteerism in adult education in rural areas of Pakistan. This study was undertaken by reviewing the literature in the field of volunteerism in adult education in rural areas of Pakistan. Data were collected from the internet, books and through interviews.

Key Words: Volunteerism, Adult Education, Literacy, NGOs, Adult Learning

1.Introduction

Education is fundamental right of every human being. Now a day's education is considered as a measuring tool for the progress of a country. Islam lays stress on learning and getting wisdom. Islam attaches so much importance to knowledge that it considers its acquisition to be among the superior acts of a Muslim. The first revelation that dawned upon Prophet Muhammad (SAWA) started with the word "Iqra", which means read. According to the verses of Surah Al Alaq, "Recite in the name of your Lord who created; Created man from a clinging substance; Recite and your Lord is the most Generous; who taught by the pen; taught man that which he knew not". (96:1-5). Famous Hadith of the Prophet (SAWA) says: "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave". It shows that Islam urges on lifelong learning and adult education.

1.1 Adult Education

Adult education is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values. It can mean any form of learning adults engage in beyond traditional schooling, encompassing basic literacy to personal fulfillment as a lifelong learner (Merriam, Sharan, B. & Brockett, Ralph, G, 2007). Adult education is the practice of teaching and educating adults. This practice is also referred as an andragogy. Andragogy is therefore, "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1970 p.37).

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Andragogy has six key principles. Good adult learning involves acting, reacting and participating. In its organized form adult education has relatively a short history of nearly two hundred years on this globe. In its informal matter, adult education can be traced back by a fanciful mind to the times of Socrates, Jesus and the Buddha. It gained significance in the form of social education after World War I (K. N. Seetharamu, 2004).

After World War I, views of education in both the United States and Europe suggested that adult learners did not learn the same way children learn (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). We define adult education as activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults” (Merriam and Brockett, 1997).

1.2 Characteristics of Adult Learners

Adult learners have characteristics that set them apart from ‘traditional’ school or college learners. All adult learners come to courses with a variety and range of experiences, both in terms of their working life and educational backgrounds. According to Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; following are the characteristics of adult learners:

- Adults have accumulated life experiences. They tend to favor practical learning activities that enable them to draw on their prior skills and knowledge.
- Adults are realistic and have insights what is likely to work and what is not.
- Adults relate new facts to past experiences and enjoy having their talents and knowledge explored in a teaching situation.
- Adults are intrinsically motivated and increase their efforts when motivated by a need, an interest, or a desire to learn.
- Adult students are mature people and prefer to be treated as such. Being ‘lectured at’ cause resentment and frustration.
- The term adult education has been used in literature with three different meanings (Rashid, 1999).
- Field of operations that encompasses all the organized activities in which mature men and women are engaged for the purpose of learning.
- A process of self directed inquiry through which individual systematically learn from their daily experiences and from other resources in their environment.
- A social movement that encompasses whole spectrum of mature individuals in infinite ways.

1.3 Principals of Adult Education

The learning happens in many ways and in many contexts just as all adults' lives differ (Fenwick, Tara J; Nesbit, Tom; Spencer, Bruce 2006). Adult learning can be in any of the three contexts, i.e. Formal - Structured learning that typically takes place in an education or training institution, usually with a set curriculum and carries credentials; Non-formal - Learning that is organized by educational institutions but non credential. Non-formal learning opportunities may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organizations and groups; Informal education - Learning that goes on all the time, resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, community or leisure (e.g. community baking class), (Spencer, Bruce, 2006).

Self directed learning is another central concept in adult education, suggests that the focus of control in learning lies with the adult learner, who may initiate learning with or without assistance from others. Some learners need varying degrees of direction and support, while others are ready to be self directed. Characteristics of self directed learners include

independence, willingness to take initiative, persistence in learning, self discipline, self confidence and the desire to learn more (Malcolm, 1990).

1.4 Adult Literacy Program and Community Role

In the adult literacy programs, the community not only provides space for adult literacy centers, but some of the literate individuals also provide their services as teachers. A major emphasis of NCHD adult literacy program was to provide learning opportunities to the illiterate population (11-45 years). Its innovative strategy involves social mobilization to identify keen learners and motivated teachers from within the community. NCHD implemented this program with partnership of provincial education department. Volunteerism for community Development (VCD) program in NCHD; was a social mobilization movement. The primary focus of the program is on the universal primary education and primary health care. VCD is a platform for all levels of Pakistani community to contribute voluntarily to the development of the country. This is the first ever program of the country, which focuses on individual volunteers from all strata of the society.

NCHD draws upon at the grass root level in the field of education, health and income generation activities. The energies of the volunteers have been channelized which has increased the rate of progress to a noticeable extent (Rahat, 2004).

1.5. Social Mobilization

Social mobilization is a process in which people are made enable to discuss their problems, analyze their problems and make plans to solve them, utilize their existing resources, solve them and sustain it (Ahmad & Zubair, 2009). These are the main features of social mobilization process.

1. Influential volunteers
2. Identification of learners and teacher
3. Influential volunteer categories

1.6 Volunteerism

Volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services. Volunteering is generally considered an altruistic activity, intended to promote good or improve human quality of life, but people also volunteer for their own skill development. Volunteerism, in its conceptual form includes the individuals, known as volunteers, to act in ways, which work towards the betterment of oneself, other individuals, communities, and/or society (Fischer, 1993).

Volunteering is the most fundamental act of citizenship and philanthropy in our society. It is offering time, energy and skills of one's own free will. It is an extension of being good neighbor, transforming a collection of houses into a community, as people become involved in the improvement of their surroundings and choose to help others (Schaffer, 1993).

Human beings are social entities. They need others to interact with and in this process reciprocal relationships are created. Volunteers who are doing voluntary work in fact have social reasons for doing it (Rahat, 2004).

Following are some benefits of volunteerism (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993);

1. Self satisfaction
2. Potential learning & acquisition of new skills
3. Relaxation & Socialization
4. Career opportunities
5. Community improvement

1.7 Importance of Volunteerism in Pakistan

Volunteering is the most fundamental act of citizenship and philanthropy in our society. It is offering time, energy and skills of one's own free will. It is an extension of being a good neighbor, transforming a collection of houses into a community, as people become involved in the improvement of their surroundings and choose to help others.

The identification of volunteers in our society has a predominantly religious and moral connotation. People believe that they should do good work, help the needy without asking any kind of return in this world because God will reward them in their lives after death. In other words this indicates the belief of volunteers in 'Fi Sabilillah' meaning for God (Rahat, 2004).

Pakistan had a strong tradition of volunteering, as verified by its large voluntary part in October 2005, earthquake. Pakistan considers volunteerism to be one of the important tools for addressing the problem of exclusion. It provides a vehicle for empowering excluded population groups to gain access to opportunities. Pakistan believes volunteerism as a valuable asset, which needed to be strategically factored into development policies and programs. Local voluntary involvement is always a valuable and indispensable contribution to the improvement of social conditions, promotion of economic development and empowerment of people to take charge. It reinforces a sense of collective responsibility and brings about a tangible difference to the lives of many (National Volunteer Movement's Home Page).

1.8. Current Literacy Situation in Pakistan

According to the government of Pakistan (2009), at present about 55 million Pakistanis above the age of ten unable to read and write or do simple calculations. Amongst the 175 world countries Pakistan stands at 136 positions. No country can make rapid progress if the majority of its people remains deprived from the basic skills of reading and writing.

Pakistan, India and China had more or less the same rate of literacy in late 40's when they achieved independence. Today China's literacy rate is more than 80%, India approaching to 65% and Pakistan claims 53%. In the 1998 census the figure was 43%. According to a conservative estimate about 55 million Pakistanis above the age of ten are absolutely illiterate

1.9. Adult Literacy Situation in Rural Areas

Adult literacy has not yet been accepted as a dire need in Pakistan especially in the rural areas. Feudal culture in rural Pakistan is not conducive for the promotion of education. Illiterate male adults in rural areas are generally not interested in acquiring literacy skills because of age factor and on account of pre-occupation as bread earners of the family. They are also generally not in favor of women going to literacy centers because of imperative work in the home. Inadequate schooling opportunities also hurdle for girls to seek education.

2. Methodology

Volunteerism is required in society to help community at large. No research was conducted in rural areas of Pakistan prior to this study. Therefore to familiarize the community with this approach, the said study was conducted. The objective of the study was 'to examine the concept of volunteerism in rural areas of Pakistan'. The government of Pakistan has been doing efforts to improve literacy rate and education standards in the country since its creation. In this regard various models and designs were used. This particular research is very significant because very little work had been done in Pakistan. This study provides pathway to new researchers.

The method and procedure of the study were comprised upon population, selection of sample, development of tool, administration and analysis of data. Different literacy and adult volunteerism programs were reviewed in this regard. Six personnel were got interviewed, i.e. one district literacy officer (DLO), two dy. district literacy officers and three NGO managers in the

district Chakwal. Collected data were administered and analyzed in descriptive form. In the present research six personnel were interviewed to collect data and collected data was analyzed. Recommendations and conclusion were made accordingly.

2.1.1 Sample

Following is detail of the sample.

1. One district literacy officer & two dy. district literacy officers Chakwal i.e. 3, 100% sample
2. Three managers of NGO's in district Chakwal i.e. 3, 100% sample

Table 1 Sampling frame for the analysis of data

Sr. No	Category	Population	Sample	Respondents	Percentage
1	Administrators	3	3	3	100%
2	Managers	3	3	3	100%

2.1.2. Development of Instrument

Interviews were conducted to collect data. It was a structured interview. All statements were close ended except the last one. To get quantitative, productive and meaningful judgment each respondent replied according to his/her knowledge and jurisdiction. The researcher personally conducted interviews.

3. Analysis of Data

The data was analyzed and on basis of this analysis recommendations were suggested and conclusion was developed for the future research. The researcher conducted interviews of one district literacy officer (DLO), two dy. district literacy officers and three NGO managers i.e. (PLAN, HEAL & PODA) to analyze the implication of volunteerism in adult education.

The researcher interviewed the DLO & Dy. DLO's to examine the volunteerism in adult education in the district Chakwal. The DLO & Dy. DLO's were responsible for implementing government literacy programs in the district. Eighty ALC's and 200 NFBE's were working under the supervision of DLO. The DLO & Dy. DLO's who had professional experience, found rare volunteerism in adult education. The DLO & Dy. DLO's were facing challenges, especially providing mobilization and motivation to the learners in basic non formal education and literacy programs. The DLO & Dy. DLO's were monitoring the literacy programs. They were also providing directions to these basic literacy centers. The DLO & Dy. DLO's were responsible to establish basic literacy centers in the district. The DLO & Dy. DLO's were helping the learners to complete their literacy programs. The DLO & Dy. DLO's found some influential volunteers and simple volunteers in the district Chakwal. The DLO & Dy. DLO's were acting as facilitator by helping the volunteers and learners as a mediator. The DLO & Dy. DLO's were facing problems in finding volunteer teachers to carry out adult learning programs in rural areas of the district.

Teachers qualification was very low i.e. Matric. The honorarium for teachers was insufficient. Adult learners were being provided books and other material by the government. There was no ALC available for men in the district. Time duration was a big problem for adult learners. After completion of basic literacy program active students were enrolled in the formal education system. The DLO & Dy. DLO's had established the district literacy management information system cell. The researcher had also conducted interview of three NGO managers (PLAN, HEAL & PODA) to examine the volunteerism in adult education in the district Chakwal. The NGO managers were helping and facilitating DLO & Dy. DLO's to implement government literacy programs in the district Chakwal. Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN) was

supporting community to access their rights to education, basic health care and nutrition. Pothohar Organization and Development Advocacy (PODA) were working in the district for adult learners. PODA launched awareness seminars and campaigns for adult education in the district. PODA was providing supplies to the adult literacy centers (ALCs) in the district. PODA were providing supplies to 300 ALC's and the target was 400 ALC's.

The Health Education and Literacy (HEAL) was working along with PLAN Pakistan for adult literacy in the district Chakwal since 2009. HEAL established 29 ALC's and 10 NFC's in five union councils of the district Chakwal with the help of volunteers. The NGO managers were facilitating and assisting literacy programs in the district.

4. Conclusions & Recommendations

There is a need of integrated awareness programs in which scholars, teachers, parents, social workers, social organizations, businessmen, religious leaders and all other government and semi government departments may be involved. The data was briefly described in descriptive form and it was concluded that adult literacy centers and non formal basic education schools are being provided literacy at district level, some volunteers have been found, and NGOs are coordinating and providing assistance to district literacy programs. Teacher's qualification and honorarium should be enhanced. DLO and Dy. DLO were facing challenges in mobilization and motivation. DLO and Dy. DLO were monitoring literacy programs, providing directions, playing mediator role, established district literacy management cell and basic literacy centers. Books and other material were being provided by the government. No ALC was found for male learners. Active students got enrolled in formal education system. NGO's were assisting and facilitating district literacy office in implementation of government literacy programs.

Educational institutions vary greatly in their acceptance of adult and continuing education as an important part of their operation. At one extreme are schools and colleges whose predominant mission is to serve young people who attend full time. At the other extreme are literacy centers and NGOs, which have a commitment to both preparatory and continuing education. Between these extremes, there is a continuum of institutions which the adult education function ranges from being marginal to central. One limitation of this study was the lack of research available about volunteerism in adult education in rural areas of Pakistan.

This study was conducted to examine the "concept of volunteerism in adult education in rural areas of Pakistan". This study was undertaken by reviewing the literature in the field of volunteerism in adult education. The data was briefly described in descriptive form. It was concluded that ALC's and NFBE's were being providing literacy at district level; some volunteers have been found in the rural areas of Pakistan. It was recommended that through awareness and provision of adult education volunteerism may be reinforced. With the inclusion of volunteers, social workers and NGO's adult education can be more useful. The adult learners can enjoy their social status by having more NFBE's and ALC's in the rural areas of Pakistan. There is also a clear need for consensus on components of continuing education. Knowles position is that andragogy presents core principles of adult learning that in turn enable those designing and conducting adult learning to build more effective learning processes for adults. Research has documented the benefits of volunteering therefore social mobilization and influential volunteer's participation should be appreciated.

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