

## **Pedagogy and Capacity Building: Critical Components of Non-Formal Education**

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**Abstract:** While education is widely considered to be an imperative for employability, it is increasingly evident that the problem of functional literacy and employability particularly in developing countries, need to be addressed by the creation of a flexible education system. As academic streams have diversified into formal education, non-formal education, adult education, continuing education, executive education, and vocational education/ workforce retraining, the pedagogy of adult education in determining the extent of need and offering specific programmes has intensified. The NFE system with emphasis on vocational training is gaining significance as an alternative to basic academic education. The most important function of new educational approaches is to establish linkages between learning outcomes from different contexts, levels and institutions. It is the level of competence attained by the individual that is recognized, not how or where this competence was acquired. This further necessitates that non-formal adult education institutes require a system of validation of prior experience or education. The challenges of this endeavour may be addressed by suitable capacity training programmes.

**Keywords:** Non-formal education, Life Long Learning Capacity Building

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### **I. Introduction**

As academic streams have diversified into formal education, non-formal education, adult education, continuing education, executive education, and vocational education/ workforce retraining, the pedagogy of adult education in determining the extent of need and offering specific programmes has intensified. Formal education does not always result in balancing qualifications with industry-readiness. For formal educational system to respond to the multiplicity of societal needs and challenges, it needs to be supplemented by non-formal education (NFE). NFE refers to a sequential structure of learning experience, which take places outside the formal system but is generally part of some other organization or programme.

There is increasing agreement among scholars that NFE offers a solution to the deficiencies of formal education and contributes to the varied needs of developing countries. Edward W. Taylor argues that NFE tends to be “present-time focused, responsive to localized needs, learner-centred, less structured [than formal education] and an assumed non-hierarchical relationship between the learner and facilitator” (Taylor 2006) [1]. Khawaja and Brennan (1990) [2] argue that the failure of the formal education system to fulfill its prescribed role of addressing the needs of the disadvantaged has been instrumental in the evolution of NFE as an alternative form of education. Its characteristics are its institutional purposes formulated in synchronization with its educational objectives, identification of disadvantaged target groups for training and organizational and methodological flexibility. Its low cost and adaptable nature comprising educational activities provides selected types of learning. The choice of courses and the curriculum in NFE has a ‘bottom-up’ approach with the needs of learners as the core purpose and to empower them to understand the surrounding environment (ibid). The need for NFE therefore, arises from the need to provide fundamental literacy and employability-based skills within the limitations of financial resources.

### **II. Relevance Of Non Formal Education In India**

The importance of NFE is reflected in the need for trained human resource in India. A coherent approach of national policies in the sector of education and training involves three distinct objectives: facilitating wider access to education and training systems; improving the quality and effectiveness of the education and training systems; and validation of NFE and training systems.

The National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) established in 2013 in India is a quality assurance framework system to organize qualifications in levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude. It subsumes and supersedes the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) established in 2011 and all other frameworks. The purpose of the erstwhile NVEQF was to provide a reference for combining and articulating common guidelines and parameters for establishment of nationally recognized qualification systems and standards for skills in vocational education. India’s unorganized sector accounts for 395 million constitutes

86% of the total workforce. Since the existing training capacity is only 3.1 million per annum, the challenge is to find avenues for the 12.8 million i.e. approximately 80% of the new entrants to the workforce who have no opportunity for skill training. The four theme areas are vocational education, vocational training in the organized sector, vocational training in the unorganized sector, and financing of vocational training. Funded by Ministry of Human Resource Development, vocational education courses are implemented at some senior secondary level schools to provide seamless integration between vocational education and higher education and to address the imbalance between overqualified youth with non-availability of appropriate jobs. The objective is to bridge the skill gap and to provide trained youth with choices and the opportunity of employment.

NSQF is anchored by National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), an autonomous body which will coordinate and harmonize the skill development efforts of the Government and private sectors to achieve the skilling targets of the Twelfth Five Year Plan. The emphasis is on learning outcomes which are imperative for learners regardless of whether they are acquired through formal, informal or non-formal learning. Human capital is considered to be the main resource available for progress and development, and therefore that the enhancement of this resource is considered to be essential with regard to the quality of life, employment, and social equality. This requires the development of a strategy for ensuring lifelong learning.

### **III. Pedagogy Of Non-Formal Education**

Harpaz (2005) [3] defines effective learning as the process and understanding of the expected outcome of student involvement in the educational process. If effective learning is active learning, then knowledge and meaning are conditional and students are encouraged to construct their own learning methods. In the traditional educational setting, curriculum is at the center of learning; whereas, in the effective learning educational setting, the student is at the center of learning. The challenge is in adapting to a work environment in which education is applied to a job-based culture. Even though basic literacy and numeracy are desirable, new skill sets are expected. Matching job expectations with educational opportunities is necessary to meet the needs of a job-based culture. Employability skills are relevant skill-sets necessary for acquiring and retaining a job. In other words, employability skills or transferable core skills represent knowledge and attitudes required at the workplace.

The pedagogy of skill-based courses is based on the common notion of teaching-learning referred to as 'learning by or through doing'. Through its very name this suggests a physical, active, three-dimensional type of learning which is not primarily reliant on words or text but on hands-on learning requiring the exploration and communication of pedagogy of non-formal education in more visually-oriented formats. While skills may also be informally learned on the job, educators are challenged to provide sufficient instruction to enable students to become gainfully employed. Non-formal education offers hands-on skill training through experiential teaching-learning methods which are mainly the learner-oriented and based on dialogue between the learner and instructor.

### **IV. Validation Of Non Formal Education**

At the outset operational definitions of essential terms are necessary. *Certification* is a system of authenticated documentation of qualifications leading to the formal recognition of formal and non-formal education through degrees, diplomas and certificates. *Recognition* refers to the process of identifying and assessing a wider range of skills developed in informal or formal situations and contexts. *Validation* is the system of indicating appropriate value of the education and/or skill-training which are transferred from informal work or formal teaching/learning situations.

The individual undergoes various experiences in a complex environment and learns both in non-formal or informal situations. Such learning combines knowledge with contemporary realities. The value of learning emanates from the overarching objective and outcomes of learning. This requires the determination and assessment of the tools and techniques. Standards of assessment are generally determined by constricted approaches and standards which may inadvertently overlook important learning outcomes which affects the environment and the 'life-world'. Life-world is used as a term which includes the larger environment where the envisaged learning outcome is not only on the immediacy of work but on the heightened perspective of life. The new societal morphology requires different ways of education both within and outside formal education systems.

The NFE system with emphasis on vocational training is gaining significance as an alternative to basic academic education. The most important function of new educational approaches is to establish linkages between learning outcomes from different contexts, levels and institutions. It is the level of competence attained by the individual that is recognized, not how or where this competence was acquired.

Various manifestations of lifelong learning are possible in the modern educational system, the validation of which needs to be based on the consideration of all the forms and levels of education which may have different methodologies but are based on common principles and ideologies. This requires agreement on

common principles necessary to help further development and implementation of methods and standards. This presages a need to explore the possibilities and modalities of validation of NFE to facilitate a pathway between formal and non-formal learning through a framework of qualifications. This can create a progression in educational levels - from non-formal education to high technical education and higher education. National qualification frameworks and other qualification structures are envisaged to allow 'seamless' movement from one type of education or training to another, particularly where they are based on outcomes of learning. The traditional approach to learning in a formal system is gradually recognizing experiential learning within the non-formal mode. While this offers encouragement to those with experiential learning to seek formal qualifications, the wide-scale implementation of this model remains a challenge for the education system.

## **V. Role Of Teachers**

Teachers are instrumental in creating the learning environment focusing on skills related to the instructional field. They establish and maintain classroom procedures and standards on regularity, and progress of the course. It is the teachers who answer questions and redirect student inquiry using familiar examples which may build on the student's past experiences. Experienced teachers are capable of combining their knowledge and expertise of learning approaches with knowledge of pedagogical processes and content which is likely to be most effective in spurring student growth. Additionally teachers can leverage community resources to accomplish curricular objectives. Overall, it requires teachers to develop skills which are different from what is the norm for formal adult education.

The need for bridging curricular content with life skills instruction is increasing in significance. Integrating life skills teachings into the scope and sequence of traditional curriculum, across the grade levels, has been advocated in recent years (Brolin, 1991 [4]; Cronin & Patton, 1993 [5]). An additional problem is the preparedness and competence ability of teachers to teach life skills. Life skills comprise concepts and skills needed to everyday life ranging from first aid, women's empowerment, national integration and so on. Teachers in NFE segment must have knowledge of the life skills their students need to acquire as well as methods of life skills instruction. However, teachers often find it difficult to provide adequate exposure to both academic and life skills instruction (Sands et al. 1995) [6]. The assessment of acquisition of life skills cannot be done in terms of formal certification, but rather by the individual's ability to imbibe and demonstrate essential qualities necessary for individual and social benefit and to be gainfully employed. These outcomes then become the measuring stick by which the evaluation of life skills is accomplished.

## **VI. Need For Capacity Building In Non-Formal Education**

Capacity building is an expansive term with its roots in the concepts of institutional building and organizational development involving decision making about specific programs. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines capacity building as "the creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks, institutional development, including community participation, human resources development and strengthening of managerial systems". It recognizes the fundamental goal of capacity building to be the enhancement of abilities of stakeholders to evaluate and address crucial questions related to policy choices and different options for development.

There is a need for the transfer of knowledge to bring about a change to meet the goals and challenges of non-formal adult education through vocational education and training. The overarching objective of non-formal adult education institutes of imparting employment-based vocational programmes to maintain their demand requires professional development of instructors and trainers in tandem with institutional goals. The lack of knowledge-skill upgradation is traceable to i) Prevalent systems which ignore existing or emerging requirements, and ii) Lack of systematized opportunities of appropriate training for instructors within the non-formal adult education system to upgrade their knowledge-skills. The mapping of skill deficiencies and planning of skill development programmes in specific areas underpins the need for instructors to deal with the challenges of preparedness for target groups. Teachers training in terms of preparedness to teach new courses particularly in non-formal education, needs to be related to the new demands in non-formal settings. Need assessment of trainers is a way to identify needs and problems within an organization/institution to initiate necessary changes depending on the institution's goals and resources (Soriano 1995) [7]. It is important to inculcate new teaching-learning methods. Since the core issue is of the quality of training for knowledge-skill development, the tools and opportunities provided by capacity building programmes can contribute to the human resource development.

To develop and capitalize on the full human potential within an institution, it is necessary to explore a different approach to that enables a capacity building perspective which supports the development of new concepts, tools and techniques, enabling a wider consideration of strategies integrating content, processes, and implementation mode. Capacity building can be supported through suitable training structures for ensuring that the content and learning modes enhance potentiality. This requires the consideration of content and process as

inseparable components of a programme framework. This underscores the need for developing a approach incorporating the identification of the components of a suitable training programme, and the availability of trainers for effective implementation. The objective is to explore the need for constructing capacity programmes that can address today's non-formal adult education climate to create a resource pool of instructors in different subject areas.

As facilitators and instructors, educators who are in positions of instructing other young adults to develop or upgrade their knowledge-skills, need opportunities to continuously improve themselves in their subject areas. If adult learners attending non-formal programmes are to receive the skill training necessary for them to lead productive lives, the instructors responsible for providing this education must receive adequate training to develop or upgrade their own knowledge-skills.

## **VII. Conclusions**

Employability skills are transferable knowledge, attitudes and skills required at the workplace. By raising the trainer's perception of the importance of skills, the awareness levels of the students will also increase. Educators can integrate more real world experiences by integrating employability skills with curricular activities in the classroom. The use of experiential learning can be used as a viable teaching methodology for non-formal adult education. Need assessment of trainers is a way to identify needs and problems within an organization/institution to initiate necessary changes depending on the institution's goals and resources. Need analysis followed by the suitable training and development of human resources can create an environment of supportive inclusion both independently and through institutional collaboration.

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