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A Qualitative Appraisal of the Learning Materials of Continuing Education Programme

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Abstract: *Education of adults assumes great importance in educational planning and programmes of the country. Considering this, materials both for the adult learners and neo-literates should be properly designed so as to serve the purpose for which these have been prepared. The quality of the reading materials of neo-literates should be properly studied and thereafter the materials can be improved upon. There were four objectives of the study. On the basis of the objectives, a qualitative appraisal of the learning material of the continuing education programme was made. This study revealed the quality of learning materials in respect of content, mode of presentation, illustrations, and format; get up etc. of the existing materials for neo-literates. Accordingly suitable recommendations have been offered to improve the quality of learning materials being used in continuing education programme.*

Keywords: *Qualitative Appraisal, Learning Materials, Continuing Education*

Introduction

The destiny of a nation is moulded and fashioned through its education. In the context of universalisation of primary education, education for the adults is considered equally important as illiteracy is a great hurdle to an individual's growth and to the country's socio economic progress. According to Devadas (1979) "Education is essential for human development. Democracy cannot function without education. Eradication of illiteracy is basic to national development" (P.21).

The most important problem in free India is the problem of tackling the liquidation of illiteracy and the provision of at least a minimum education to all the people living in this country. In India in the year 1951, the literacy percentage of men was 27.16 as against 8.86 per cent of women. But in the year 2011, 82.14 per cent of the men were reported to have

been literate while 65.46 per cent of the women were reported to be literate. According to the census report, in Odisha in 1951, 27.32 per cent of men and 4.52 per cent of women were literate. But in 2011 it was reported that 82.4 per cent of men and 64.36 per cent of women were literate. These figures level the fact that a sizeable bulk of our population are still illiterate both at the national and state level. Under this background, education of adults assumes great importance in educational planning and programmes of the country.

According to Kundu (1984) “Adult education is the process whereby persons who no longer (or did not) attend school on a regular and full time basis undertake sequential and organized activities with a conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, understanding or skill, appreciation and attitude or for the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problems” (p.2).

In the words of Devi (1979) “Adult education has now emerged from mere adult literacy to man making where the emphasis is not only on physical, intellectual, social, economic and aesthetic aspects but also to make the individual educated and cultured in the true sense” (P.27). National Policy on Education (1986) emphasized the importance of adult education especially in the context of public participation in the national development programme. Thus, adult education in India is so imperative that all men and women must be helped to acquire the skills and knowledge that would enable them to properly fit into the new pattern of community life into which they are to move or moving.

Rationale of the Study

The National Literacy Mission calls for continuous feed back of the implementation process as well as the outcomes of learning. We have not only to make people literate but have also to keep them literate. It is said that literacy is an open invitation to further reading. According to Gupta (1971) “An ill-equipped literacy teacher is like a mason without his tools and the most important tool for the purpose is the reading materials that he would use to help the learners to develop the skills of reading, writing, understanding, expression and a little accounting.” (P.45).

Hence, production of follow up books is as important part of adult education movement as the conversion of illiterates into literates. Without a literature, self improvement through reading becomes impossible and the new-literates relapse into illiteracy. The follow up books should provide knowledge about what is required by neo-literates such that retains the literacy skills and develops himself as a self-directing learner. According to Mohanty (1988) the problem of relapse of illiteracy is closely related, among other things, to how interesting and useful the follow up literature is. It is, therefore, necessary that the materials both for the adult learners and neo-literates should be properly designed so as to serve the purpose for which these have been prepared.

Pati (1985) suggested that the reading needs of the adult neo-literates depend on the environments the learners live in, the needs of the learner’s community, learner’s profession and sex. Needs of the adult neo-literates also differ from place to place such tribal, industrial,

urban and rural areas. In the words of Nayak (1982) “However, production of teaching learning materials not based on scientifically developed curricula may not be relevant to the needs of the learners and may not go a long way if not allowed to pass through a built in system of evaluation and revision from time to time”. (P.3).

In Orissa books and other learning materials for neo-literates are prepared by the Directorate of Elementary and Mass Education, Odisha and State Resource Centre for Adult Education, Orissa, Bhubaneswar. It is necessary to find out to what extent the materials cater to the needs and interests of adult neo-literates. The reading materials if not prepared according to their needs and interests will not serve the purpose for which they are meant. Adults are generally practical minded and take interest in those things which are related to their daily life. If such materials are prepared with least regard to the interest of the adult neo-literates, they may take little interest in such materials and become unfit for coping with the practical problems of the daily life. It is therefore, necessary that prior to production of materials for neo-literates, their reading needs and interests should be properly studied and thereafter the materials may be prepared.

No educational programme can be successful unless it is backed by research experiences. Without any research it is as good as groping in the darkness. Therefore, the Investigators decided to undertake a study to find out the quality of reading materials being developed for adult neo-literates. On the basis of the findings of the study, writers and other agencies involved in the production of adult materials can produce suitable learning materials for adult neo-literates.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:-

1. To make a survey of the existing reading materials for adult neo-literates.
2. To obtain feedback regarding the content, mode of presentation, illustrations, format, get up etc. of the existing reading materials for neo-literates.
3. To study the views of instructors of continuing education programme regarding the quality of materials being used in the centres
4. To suggest different measures for better production and utilization of reading materials.

Research Questions

As per the various objectives of the study, the researcher had formulated following research questions.

1. What are the existing reading materials for the adult neo-literates?
2. What are the views of the neo-literates regarding the content, mode of presentation, illustrations, format, get up etc. of the existing materials?
3. What are the views of adult education instructors on the quality of reading materials?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

Scope of studies on adult education is very vast. It can be exposed to any type of research treatment. Studies can be conducted on teaching-learning materials, reading interests and needs, retention and drop out in adult literacy class, different methods and media being used in the class, impact of adult education on the life of the adult people, characteristics of adult illiterates and their perception of learning environment etc.

But the present study intended to find out the quality of reading materials of continuing education programmes.

The present piece of research is delimited to three tribal districts of Orissa namely Bolangir, Sundergarh and Kalahandi where the programme of continuing education was being implemented since 2002. The study is further delimited to the post-literacy materials for the adult neo-literates prepared by the State Resource Centre, Orissa, Bhubaneswar. The study was restricted to books, charts and posters.

Method of the Study

The investigators had followed survey method for the present study. For the present study, the investigators selected 3 tribal districts where the programme of continuing education was being implemented from 2002. The sample districts were Bolangir, Sundergarh and Kalahandi. On the basis of the stratified random sampling procedure, the investigators selected 200 adult neo-literates for the present study from the 3 tribal dominated sample districts of Orissa. Care was also taken to select the sample from tribal population only. The investigators employed the following tools for data collection in her study.

- i. Documentation
- ii. Questionnaire for neo-literates
- iii. Focus Group Discussion

Major Findings of the Study

- As many as 54.16 per cent of the instructors viewed that the reading materials could partly cater to the needs of the neo-literates.
- A good number of respondents (45.83 per cent) viewed that the materials were partly suitable for neo-literates of different geographical areas.
- 48.33 per cent of the instructors viewed that the reading materials were partly based on the life and activities of the neo-literates.
- As high as 58.33 per cent of the instructors were of the opinion that the reading materials could develop interest and attention in the neo-literates partly.
- As many as 54.17 per cent of the instructors opined that those materials partly stimulated the neo-literates.

- As high as 70.00 per cent of the instructors opined that the PLC materials were not at all comparable with formal materials.
- Maximum number of instructors agreed that theme and the content were to some extent well-knit.
- The respondents agreed that the style of presentation of material was simple to some extent.
- Many instructors agreed that the presentation of material had novelty to some extent.
- As high as 55 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that language had clarity to some extent.
- According to 70.83 per cent of the instructors, pictures were fully depicted in order of different topics.
- About 52.50 per cent of the respondents agreed that pictures were partly adequate.
- 63.33 per cent of the instructors viewed that the pictures were partly accurate.
- To 56.67 per cent of the respondents, pictures were relevant to the topics partly.
- According to 53.33 per cent of the instructors, the pictures used in the materials supplemented in understanding the subject matter partly.
- A higher per cent 58.33 of the respondents were of the opinion that the pictures were partly purposeful.
- According to 47.50 per cent of the respondents, the pictures were partly realistic.
- 54.16 per cent of the instructors felt that the pictures were partly attractive.
- With regard to the distribution of pictures, 66.66 per cent of the respondents agreed that the pictures were partly distributed throughout the reading materials.
- As regards concretizing the abstract ideas, it was found that 48.33 per cent of the instructors were of the view that the pictures were partly helpful.
- As high as 59.33 per cent of the instructors opined that the size of the books was suitable for the neo-literates to some extent.
- According to 58.33 per cent of the respondents, the letter size was appropriate for the neo-literates to some extent.
- A higher percentage of the instructors i.e. 65 per cent agreed that the letter size for the cover page, title, text and end page was suitable to some extent.
- According to 65.83 per cent of the respondents, the paper was white and smooth to some extent.

- As high as 61.67 per cent of the instructors were of the opinion that the quality of paper was thick to some extent.
- According to 54.17 per cent of the respondents, printing was partly clear.
- As many as 55.83 per cent of the instructors viewed that printing was partly even throughout the books.
- A significant per cent i.e 64.17 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that inking was partly balanced.
- About 54.17 per cent of the respondents agreed that the text had been printed partly in deep black ink.
- According to 53.34 per cent of the respondents, margin was left partly on all sides of each page.
- To 56.67 per cent of the respondents, the books were partly free from printing errors.
- As many as 59.17 per cent of the respondents viewed that the overall printing of the reading materials was partly attractive.
- According to 52.50 per cent of the respondents, the cover page was partly attractive.
- According to 56.67 per cent of the respondents, the cover page partly indicated the theme of the books.
- 54.17 per cent of the respondents observed that the colour combination of the cover page was partly soothing.
- According to 50.00 per cent of the respondents, the title of the books was partly placed at the proper place on the cover page.
- As many as 48.34 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that the cover page was not at all durable.
- A higher percentage i.e. 66.67 of the respondents observed that stiff board was not at all used for binding.
- 50.83 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that the stitching of the book was partly strong.
- A very high per cent (84.17 per cent) of the respondents were of the opinion that books were not at all bound in cloth, side sewn with soil resistant washable cover.
- As regards the price of the books, 82.33 per cent of the instructors stated that the reading materials were supplied free of cost by the Government.
- The following suggestions were offered by more than 50 per cent of the instructors for the improvement of reading materials of adult neo-literates.
 - Content should cater to the needs of the neo-literates

- Reading materials should be prepared to solve the day-to-day problems of neo-literates.
- Too much content should not be given in one book.
- The book should be written on content useful to neo-literates
- Reading materials should be written on content arousing social consciousness
- Story should be taken as the effective style of presentation.
- Coloured but simple and attractive pictures should be used in the books.
- Pictures should be given in appropriate places of the books.
- Printing errors should be avoided as far as practicable.
- Important points should be highlighted by printing in bold letters.
- Papers of uniform quality and thickness should be used in a book
- Cover pages should be made attractive with coloured pictures
- Books should be centrally stitched.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings mentioned above, the investigators seek to offer the following recommendations for improvement of post-literacy materials for the neo-literates.

- i. The PLC materials should be qualitatively improved to cater to the life, needs and aspirations of the neo-literates.
- ii. There should be adequate provision to impart different types of skill training for the neo-literates.
- iii. Post-literacy materials should be linked with different occupations, work and specific productive requirements of the neo-literates residing in different tribal areas.
- iv. To meet the specific social, cultural, economic and other needs of the neo-literates, the material should be made flexible and diversified.
- v. Self-learning and supplementary reading materials may be developed for the neo-literates.
- vi. Books and other reading materials may be written in the mother tongue of the neo-literates.
- vii. Language and style used in the reading materials should be made easy, simple and comprehensible.
- viii. Suitable topics should be selected for writing books according to the interests and needs of the neo-literates.

- ix. The theme and content of the books should be well-knit, and the form of presentation should be appropriate to the content.
- x. The style of presentation should be simple and free from direct preaching.
- xi. The presentation of material should have appealing sense of wit and humour.
- xii. The technical words and ideas should be explained properly.
- xiii. There should be adequate number of relevant and accurate illustrations.
- xiv. The illustrations should supplement, enhance and clarify the subject matter.
- xv. The illustrations should be realistic, purposeful and self-explanatory.
- xvi. The book size, letter size and quality of paper, printing and binding should be as per the prescribed norms.
- xvii. The size, placement and colour combination of pictures should be suitable and attractive to the neo-literates.
- xviii. The size, colour combination of illustrations and title of the books printed on the cover page should be attractive and durable.
- xix. The cost of the books should be reasonable as far as possible if priced.
- xx. There should not be too much content in individual books.
- xxi. The books should be free from printing errors and there should not be different types of papers in a book.
- xxii. These materials should also be evaluated from time to time and necessary modifications be brought about according to the findings.
- xxiii. Books and other reading materials should be adequately prepared in the following areas.
 - ✓ Celebration Puja and rituals at home,
 - ✓ Different occupational information and skill training
 - ✓ Kitchen garden/vegetable cultivation, rotation of crops and its protection
 - ✓ Home sciences (preparation of different kind of foods, Care of dress, role of ideal mother, Food at low cost, happy married life etc.)
 - ✓ Small family norm
 - ✓ Health and sanitation
- xxiv. Special care should be taken to make the books and materials more relevant and useful to the neo-literates on the following areas.
 - ✓ Pothi, puran and other mythological topics
 - ✓ Freedom fighters and national Leaders

- ✓ History
- ✓ Mathematics,
- ✓ Our culture and identities
- ✓ Science and technology
- ✓ Protection of environment
- ✓ Family welfare
- ✓ National integration
- ✓ Biographical sketches
- ✓ Legends

xxv. In post-literacy materials emphasis should be given to those poems, essays, dramas and stories which are appealing to the neo-literates and based on local issues and events.

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