

STRATEGIES THAT FACILITATE SUSTAINED PARTICIPATION OF SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN IN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME OF DELHI

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The present study is a descriptive survey study of the existing practices of adult education programme and its effect on a segment of population i.e. Scheduled Caste women with a view to suggest strategies for their sustainability in the programme. The study was undertaken with the following objective (1) To study the profile of enrolled, non-enrolled and dropout Scheduled Caste women learners. (2) To study the reasons given by Scheduled Caste women learners for joining, staying-in and dropping out of literacy classes. (3) To study the opinion of Volunteer Instructors on enrolling and retaining the Scheduled Caste women in literacy classes. (4) To analyze and synthesise the opinions of functionaries and beneficiaries about the strategies instrumental for sustaining Scheduled Caste women's participation in literacy classes.

Multistage random sampling technique was used to select the sample, which constituted of 300 beneficiaries and 135 functionaries. Beneficiaries were enrolled, non-enrolled, dropout and Neo-literates Scheduled Caste women. Functionaries were volunteer instructors, their supervisors and N.G.O. personnel.

The principal tool for data collection was the interview technique and focus group discussion with beneficiaries and functionaries. The profile study of literacy centres beneficiaries and functionaries had been done as a prelude to search for strategies. The variables for viewing the profile of beneficiaries and functionaries were age, marital status, literacy level, occupational status, type of family, size of family and monthly income. Statistical measures and techniques used were percentages, rank order and correlation technique. Qualitative and Quantitative analysis of the data was done.

Findings of the study:

1. Findings revealed that all type of women have accessibility to the literacy classes. Mostly married women of age group 15-35 years joined the literacy classes more oftenly than the unmarried ones. In some places, young girls of the age of 12 years and women of age group 35-45 also joined literacy classes. Majority of unemployed women joined in the hope of getting some employment in future. Most of the women in literacy classes were from families which are pursuing either traditional occupations of scavenging, leather work, washing of clothes, vegetable selling or working as labour, performing menial pursuits.
2. Profile of the non enrolled and dropout women learners revealed that the tendency of abstaining from adult education classes increase with age as it has been

observed that women beyond the age of thirty five years are more prone to dropout. Married women belonging to youth period, abstain from adult education classes due to child bearing and child rearing. Employed Scheduled Caste women are not much interested in achieving literacy due to their pre occupation with job. Members of joint family have the tendency to abstain from adult education classes, may be due to lack of encouragement by the elders in the family or it may be due to higher level of responsibilities. Women belonging to poor economic status having income below Rs 2000/- per month abstain more from adult education classes as compared to women with higher income slab.

3. Findings revealed that volunteer instructors find attitudinal differences in the opinions of Scheduled Caste and Non Scheduled Caste. The Scheduled caste Women seem to suffer from indecisiveness and have a liking for economic incentives. They also require someone to call them to the centre.
4. Findings revealed that women learners had joined the literacy classes with great hope and expectation i.e. to learn and use literacy in their life and become self dependent in all aspects of life The popular response was to learn with a view to be able to earn.
5. Women reported that after joining the Adult Education Programme, they had gained confidence in day to day matters; had become more functional in matters of use of literacy and numbers in specific situations; developed social awareness on many aspects, and become conscious of healthful living. Another tangible outcome of literacy attainment has been the development of interest in the education of their siblings.
6. Findings revealed that most of the learners who dropped out had not enough will power to come out of the state of inertia at their own and volunteer instructors were also not adequately trained to change their mind set. Moreover the reasons given by the beneficiaries for dropping out were classified into two wider categories as (a) Personal and domestic reasons – state of inertia, job and family responsibilities, poor health, averse attitude of elders (b) Due to the functioning of Adult Education Centre's (AEC's) – non-utility of learning provided under AEC's, functioning of centre was casual and unattractive, irregularity of the instructor, unsuitability of location and timings.
7. This study has found that one of the pertinent obstructions that hinder Scheduled Caste women's participation in Adult Education Programme is the state of inertia. Scheduled Caste women believe that accident of birth has determined their state of life and it can't be changed. Literacy learning is not going to wash the stigma attached to their caste.
8. Probable strategies for retention of Scheduled Caste women in literacy classes. The crux of the present study was to search for strategies. A resume of this research work shows that multi pronged strategies have to be adopted for sustainability of Scheduled Caste Women in adult education programme. These are as under:

1. **Learner related strategies**

- Scheduled Caste women should be helped to come out of the state of inertia through media.
- Women and their family elders should be sensitized and mobilized accordingly through success stories or through traditional media.
- Provision of facilities for up keep of their toddlers, remedial education for their school going children will sustain their interest in the literacy class.
- Organizing free health check up, eye check up or regular visit of female doctors' at the literacy centre will increase the participation rate.

Literacy learning is the last option among pursuits of leisure time for SC

- Women. Therefore the organizers shall have to start in a reverse manner. The adult literacy centre should be a good recreation and work centre.
- Formation of self-help groups or cooperative society will give them self-confidence and open the vistas for income generating activities.

2. **Centre related strategies**

- A specific place be constructed or made available in Basti Vikas Kendras, community halls, school building etc.
- These centres may be open from morning till evening and run on shift basis, so that Scheduled Caste women can join the centre according to their time suitability.
- Volunteer instructors should be given some fixed honorarium to sustain their interest in the programme. These instructors should have essential qualification of high school and necessary training of at least one-year duration.
- Guidance and counselling services for Scheduled Caste women through school teachers, community leaders, counselors etc. and
- Creative and recreative activities along with literacy and other developmental programmes will sustain Scheduled Caste women in literacy classes

3. **Material related strategies**

- Supply of quality teaching learning material and revision of earlier norms.
- The content of the teaching/learning materials must be totally in tune with the preferences, felt needs interests of Scheduled Caste women learners.

- Introduction of teaching learning material printed with good illustrations relevant to the Scheduled Caste and their local environment.
- Designing literacy primers in such a way as it reflects the variety of occupational skills relevant to their occupation can facilitate easy learning and retention.
- Messages for Scheduled Caste women or specific clientele should be included in the teaching learning material.
- Provision of improved teaching aids can facilitate the process of learning and arouse the interest of the learners in the programme.

4. Programme related strategies

- Compact and structured management system at all levels i.e., basic literacy, post literacy and continuing education for the successful implementation of the programme.
- Adequate weightage to all the components of Adult Education programme i.e. literacy, functionality and awareness.
- Field level functionaries such as supervisors and instructors must be properly trained to handle these areas.
- Proper adequate literature should be developed to disseminate the messages of awareness and for capacity building of the instructors.
- Monitoring of the programme needs to be tightened.
- Introduction of vocational courses for developing sustainable skills. Skills may not be alien to them, instead these should be related to their occupation or life style.
- Regular talk of the professionals from specialized field such as health, nutrition, counsellors, social welfare board, civil supplies department, financial institutions providing loans, legal matters, Mahila commission etc.
- Scheduled Caste women learners should be put on the mailing list and some monthly magazine or newsletter may be sent by mail at their doorstep.

In addition to these, following four strategies had been found relevant through this study for sustained participation of Scheduled Caste women in adult education programme. These are given as conclusions of the study.

- I Making the organisation of AECs effective and attractive.
- II Providing relevant, productive and innovative inputs in the AECs

III Convincing family elders about literacy and other activities at AECs.

IV Adjusting timings and venue of the AECs to suit beneficiaries.