

A PROPOSED SKETCH OF A DISTANCE EDUCATION MODEL FOR THE ENRICHMENT OF ADULT LITERACY IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Various efforts have been made to overcome the problem of illiteracy throughout the world, particularly in the developing countries. But, none of these had valuable results. Therefore, in most of the developing countries like Pakistan governments are concerned about handling the literacy problem effectively. The present research paper "A Proposed Feasible Sketch of a Distance Education Model for the Enrichment of Adult Literacy in Pakistan" was conducted in view of the poor literacy condition in Pakistan. The study revealed that there was no use of broadcast media or the motivational techniques to attract the illiterate people to the literacy centers. Above all there was no consistency in the literacy programmes due to political factors. The main objectives of the study included analyzing the past literacy programmes in Pakistan and creating a distance education literacy model for Pakistan. Some modern ways for imparting literacy should be used rather than following the conventional methods. For this purpose a distance education model for enhancing literacy is proposed to be used in Pakistan.

Keywords: Adult Literacy, distance education, Model, Enrichment.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is a basic human need. It has meaning only when it leads to participation in cultural and social activities. It is empowerment that means ability to make decisions and control affairs of one's own life, economically, socially and politically, it is the first step in a life-long learning process of man and women. Life without literacy is life without hope, security and freedom. It is the foundation of all skills and pre-requisite for economic development (Niaz, 1995, p.1). Moreover, according to Stromquist (2005, p. 12) in modern societies literacy skills are fundamental to decision-making, personal empowerment, active and passive participation in local and global social community.

The concept of distance education has evolved as an alternative to the formal system of education after an increasing realization that it is not perfectly coping with the educational needs and demands of the rapidly growing population. To cope with the increasing demand of education, there was a need of finding such a way that may help the people in fulfilling their educational thrust which was discovered in the form of distance education. According to Ansari (1992, pp. 25-26);

As it was conceived the formal system of education was not sufficient to meet the increasing demands for education, this led to the search of a via-media which could be alternatively used to expand and fulfill educational needs of all. Instead of bringing students to the seats of learning, it was proposed to take schools to the students and hence this concept of distance education came into existence.

In addition to the failure of formal system of education to fulfill educational needs of the people, there are many other causes for the emergence and growth of distance education. These are according to Perraton (1991, p. 1) as under:

- to cope with the rapidly increasing educational demands of masses.
- to provide mass education at very low costs.
- to enable people to acquire education at any stage of their life.
- to uplift the professional qualifications of people who work.

The emergence of distance education has provided an alternative that may prove useful in this regard. Hence, according to Wardani (2001, p. 1) “the department of education in each developing country is challenged to find out ways of eliminating illiteracy and increasing the quality of human resources. One way that needs to be explored is distance education that sounds promising”. It is believed that distance education can reach all illiterate people, even though they reside in very remote areas. Literacy programmes can be developed in the form of printed learning materials, or audio and videocassettes, at the national level or at the regional level.

IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY

Literacy is helpful in the development of human relations, the economy, the political and social structure of nations. Literacy is useful at the individual level in inculcating humanistic etiquettes and manners. The human benefits are related to factors such as the improved self-esteem, empowerment, creativity and critical reflection that can be produced by participation in adult literacy programmes and the practice of literacy. Human benefits are intrinsically valuable and may also be instrumental in realizing other benefits of literacy like improved health, increased political participation and so on (UNESCO, 2006, p. 137). Bown (1990, p.21) claims that with the acquisition of literacy, masses become more confident and courageous. The awareness produced among them because of the newly imparted knowledge help them to demonstrate decisive and confident behaviour. They become more active in their social and private activities. It can also empower learners to take individual as well as collective action in various contexts of their everyday life, such as household, workplace and community (Lind, 1996; Easton, 2005).

Literacy has a wide range of advantages and benefits for economic, social and political development of a country. The positive relationship between economic development and literacy levels and the impact of investment in education on economic growth are well established (Darlene, et al., 2001; Osberg, 2001; Orazem and Gunnarsson, 2003; Sosale, 2000). Likewise, the services of literacy regarding social life are much obvious in four major aspects namely health, gender equality, education, and reproductive behaviour. Above all literacy has implications for the safety of the communities (Maddox, 2005). Along with the traditional components of literacy, citizens may need higher order thinking and problem-solving skills, computer and other related skills, literacy skills necessary for workplace, and literacy skills appropriate for family life.

Literacy has an important relation with the culture. This relation is of two modes. Firstly, literacy influences the culture. It is helpful in bringing the cultural change and preservation of the present cultural values and norms ((Farah, 2005). Moreover, the transformation of culture, in one way or the other, is also dependent of literacy. Secondly, literacy itself is influenced by the prevailing cultural environment as planning of a literacy programmes is usually done according to the present culture along with the future needs and requirements. That is why the literacy materials, and the strategies of literacy imparting always correspond with the cultural aspects.

Literacy Efforts in Pakistan

Since the inception of Pakistan government, it has adopted number of measures for the improvement of literacy rate in the country. But these measures did not prove much helpful in improving the literacy rate in the country. According to Ghafoor and Khan (1994, p. 12) since independence there has been a thrust on quantitative expansion of primary education making it accessible to the specific age group (5-9), children by gender and geographic region. But despite hectic efforts, the number of illiterates continued to increase at a gradual speed eating up all the endeavours initiated by the government of the Pakistan. For example, the

number of illiterates increased from 20.25 million in 1951 to 48.8 million in 1998 (UNESCO 2002, p. i). Literacy and adult education have been recognized as essential elements of human resource development. Therefore, since independence, literacy and adult education have been an integral part of educational policies and national plans. The impact of these policies and plans can be assessed when they are converted into programmes/projects and are actually implemented on the ground (PMLC, 1997, p. 3).

Following are the various adult literacy drives and schemes launched in Pakistan since independence;

- Village Agricultural and Industrial Development Programme (1953)
- Literacy Programme under Basic Democracies (1964-69)
- People's Works Programme, 1973 (Sipah-E-Khidmat)
- Literacy Programmes through Local Councils in Punjab Province (1974-81)
- Pakistan Television's Adult Functional Literacy Project 1973.
- Experimental Pilot Project Integrating Education and Rural Development 1977
- Rural Education and Development Programme 1982-83
- Functional Education Project for Rural Areas (1982 to 1985)
- 100% Literate Islamabad Project (1983-84).
- The National Literacy Plan (1983-93).
- Television Literacy Centres 1983-84.
- President Ten Points for Literacy Promotion (1984-85)
- Iqra Pilot Project 1987-88
- Nai Roshni Schools Project (1987-89)
- Training of Unemployed Educated Youth Project (1990-91)
- Quranic Literacy Project (1991-95).
- Islamabad Literacy Project 1992-95.
- Eradication of Illiteracy Project (EIP) 1992-93
- Ten Year National Literacy Plan (1993-2003)
- Non-Formal Basic Education Community Schools Project (1995)
- Crash Literacy Programme (1998)
- ICT Adult Literacy Project (2001)
- Adult Literacy Centres (2001-06)

ROLE OF DISTANCE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN LITERACY ENHANCEMENT

The process of distance education is currently providing a structured learning environment in which the teacher and student(s) are separated by time and geographical place with some form of technology being used for the transmission of all teaching and learning. According to Kaur (1996, p. 1) "It may be considered a revolutionary development because it marked significant break from the centuries old formal teaching system and led to the development of an innovative multi-media teaching for learning system". As far as the relationship of literacy and distance education is concerned, Fleischman (1998, p. 81) states that very little is known about what works and what doesn't when using distance education with Adult Basic Education (ABE). This is probably due in part to the fact that literacy programmes have historically been the last to access new technology, primarily due to the lack of funding to the literacy field in general (Turner, 1998, p. 68). In the same way distance education can support the literacy in the following ways.

- Training of literacy personnel.
- Enhancement Adult learners' motivation.
- Provision of literacy at the doorsteps of illiterates.
- Provision of literacy in the cheap mode
- Public-private partnership for literacy purposes.
- Increased possibilities of the use modern technologies

In different countries of the world, distance education has proved itself as effective as the formal system to deliver mass literacy. Drawing upon the well known model of the British Open University, countries such as Pakistan, India and China have combined modern methods of teaching with emerging technologies in order to provide low-cost instruction for basic literacy and job training. Turkey has recently joined those nations involved in large scale distance learning. Only twelve years old, their distance education programme has enrolled almost one million students and is the 6th largest distance education programme in the world. The first programme to provide education out-of-school was the Indian Open School project in 1979, which after ten years became the National Open School (NOS). Pakistan established the Mass Education Programme in 1982 and Bangladesh initiated the Open School of Bangladesh in 1992, both were off-shoots of their national open universities (Edirisingha, 1999, p. 6).

In Indonesia, some aspects of distance education have been implemented for Kejar Paket A, a programme for those who cannot finish formal elementary school. Another experience related to the use of distance and open education is again from India. In 1988, the Salaam Balaak Trust (SBT), a non government organization (NGO), ran a centre for street children and working children between the age of three to 18, by applying non-formal and open learning method. In 1990 Vietnam launched literacy and a post-literacy programme (Wagner and Robert 2003, p. 11). In the same way the Gobi Women Project, started in the early 1990s, is a non-formal distance learning programme utilizing print and radio lessons to communicate and renew a number of survival and income-generating skills important to the nomadic women of the Gobi Desert. Many post-colonial African countries could not expand the conventional schools within their shrinking budgets, even within a generation or more (Perraton, 1982). They chose distance education as an alternative model, which was becoming popular in rich countries at that time. Study Centre model was the particular organisational structure that was established to provide education at a distance in three countries in Sub-Saharan Africa: Malawi, Zambia. Learners study at the study centres, under the supervision of facilitators, using the print materials specially prepared for them. Radio and other audio-visual media are also used to some extent (Edirisingha, 1999, p. 5). Working on the similar pattern in Kenya a non-governmental organization named African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) started a distance education literacy programme to provide training in the health related issues. Application of distance education for the promotion of literacy in the modern era is being made with the support of information and communication technologies (ICT). ICT in various forms has been used with some success to support the initial acquisition of literacy skills. For example in the UK, according to Pennells (2005, p. 3) ICT has been used to enhance literacy in primary schools under a government initiative. Another literacy programme which adopted the distance education mode was organized by the British Broadcasting Corporation. The first step in this field was taken in Pakistan in 1974 when Allama Iqbal Open University was established. Later on IGNO, Indira Gandhi National Open University in India also launched some adult literacy programmes. In the light of the above few examples, it is obvious that distance education can be successfully used for literacy purposes. Previously it was considered effective only to enhance the existing skills or the continuing education but, in the present era mixture of styles is making it possible to launch literacy campaign through distance education.

CONCEPT AND TYPES OF LITERACY MODELS

A model is not the real world but merely a human construct to help understanding real world systems better. In general all models have an information input, an information processor, and an output of expected results. As far as the concept of literacy model is concerned Greane (2005, p. 25) describes in International Reading Association that literacy model is the application of multiple strategies to assist content area teachers/facilitators in developing active and competent readers with in the respective discipline. There are number of ways of looking at models for literacy programmes. The most common types of literacy models are;

- Intensive model: Intensive model is a traditional style classroom delivery with an instructor. Teaching strategies may be customized but the mode of delivery is the classroom experience. This model allows easy measurement of pre- and post-testing.
- Immediate model: Immediate Model is the just-in time model. It features a traditional class format, but focuses on a specific, immediate need. The immediate model is not necessarily sequential in nature, and typically has a short life and planning cycle.
- Integrated model: In the integrated model work and learning are interconnected. Basic skills programmes analyze what is happening in the workplace and how the basic skills training can support achieving the desired outcomes.
- Intervention model: The intervention model is also known as “horizontal” model. The instructor can be at the workplace for one full day.

There is another way of description of literacy models. It deals with the functions of literacy and its components. In different periods of the history, nature and functions of literacy has been changing with the change in individuals’ needs and requirements. Moreover, the change in national or local preferences has also forced an amendment in the nature and functions of literacy. Therefore, models of literacy had been undergoing changes with the passage of time.

All the literacy models mentioned above had played an important role at their respective places but the need is to upgrade these models so that they can meet the needs and interest of the adult learners in the technologically dominated societies and can enable them to participate in social activities in a productive way.

Statement of the Problem

The study is designed to propose a sketch of a distance education model for the Improvement of Adult Literacy in Pakistan.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following were objectives of the study:

- To assess the need of literacy among Pakistani illiterates.
- To specify the role of distance education for the provision of literacy in Pakistan.
- To propose a sketch of a distance education model for the improvement of Adult Literacy in Pakistan.

Delimitations of the Study

In view of the limited time and resources at the disposal of researcher, the study was delimited to:

- Propose a sketch of a distance education model for the improvement of Adult Literacy in Pakistan under the administrative control of Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad.
- Adult male illiterates living in the rural areas of the Punjab province of Pakistan.
- Literacy instructors and Executive District Officers (EDOs) literacy working in Punjab province during 2004-2005.

Procedure of the Study

This study is descriptive in nature and to achieve data for the study, survey was made.

Population and Sample

- Personnel of Department of Distance and Non-formal Education, and Institute of Mass Education of Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad. Total number of these people was 13 and the whole were taken as sample.
- All the 29 Executive District Officers literacy working in different districts of Punjab province were taken as sample.

Development of Instrument

Separate questionnaires for EDOs literacy, personnel from Allama Iqbal Open University and literacy instructors were developed on five point rating scale.

Collection and Analysis of Data

For data collection, questionnaires were personally delivered or mailed to the E. D. Os literacy and personnel from Allama Iqbal Open University. To analyze data collected through the questionnaire of the personnel of AIOU, mean score of their responses was calculated. The following scale value was assigned to each of five responses (Noll, 1965, p.535).

Statements	Scale Values
Strongly Agree (SA)	5
Agree(A)	4
Uncertain (UN)	3
Disagree (D)	2
Strongly Disagree(SD)	1

To calculate the mean score following formula was used.
 Mean Score = $\frac{5(FSA) + 4(FA) + 3(FUNC) + 2(FDA) + 1(FSDA)}{5}$

Table 1
 Analyses of the Data Collected through Questionnaire for the Personnel of AIOU.

Item No.	Statement	Percentage (%) of Level				
		SA	A	UN	D	SD
1	Instructors of literacy programme have appropriate knowledge of adult's psychology.	00	18.1	00.0	54.6	27.3
2	Feedback is provided to learners in existing literacy programmes.	18.2	00.0	54.6	27.3	27.3
3	Present literacy materials are interesting for adult learners	09	09	00	18.2	63.7
4	Evaluation of literacy programmes is made.	00	00	00	72.7	27.3
5	Continuous feedback is necessary for the adult learners	72.7	27.3	00	00	00
6	IME can supervise nationwide literacy programme	36.4	54.6	09.8	00	00
7	Telephonic feedback is helpful for solving problems of illiterates	18.2	45.4	18.2	09.1	09.1

8	IME and NGOs can work collaboratively to run a literacy programme	18.2	00	00	54.6	27.3
9	Early experiences of adult learners are utilized to make them literate	54.6	36.4	00	00	00
10	It is possible to launch literacy programme through distance education mode	54.6	45.4	00	00	00
11	Television assisted teaching proves helpful to teach writing skills	54.6	27.3	18.2	00	00
12	The skill of reading can be taught through television programmes	54.6	27.3	00	18.2	00
13	Adult learners are in cooperation with their fellow learners	54.6	27.3	00	18.2	00
14	Literacy programmes through distance education reduce administrative problems	54.6	27.3	18.2	00	00
15	Distance education literacy programmes are economical	36.4	36.4	18.2	09.1	00
16	Literacy programmes through distance education can prove successful in Pakistani situation	36.4	54.6	09.1	00	00
17	Casual meetings between adult learners and instructors are necessary to solve literacy problems	36.4	45.4	00	18.2	00
18	Mass media motivates adult illiterates to join literacy programme	36.4	36.4	18.2	09.1	00
19	Radio helps in creating awareness about literacy programmes	27.3	45.4	27.3	00	00
20	Computer can be applied to teach literacy skills	36.4	27.3	18.2	18.2	00

Data shown in Table No. 1.1 reflects that AIOU personnel agreed with the Statements No.5 (72.7%), 6 (54.6%), 9 (54.6%), 10 (54.6%), 11 (54.6%), 12 (54.6%), 13 (54.6%), 14 (54.6%) 15 (54.6%) and 16 (54.6%). In the same way, these personnel showed their disagreement towards the Statements No. 1 (54.6%), 3 (63.7%), 4, (72.7%), and 8 (54.6%). However, majority of the personnel remained uncertain to the Statement No. 2 (54.6%).

Table 2
 Analyses Of The Data Collected Through The Questionnaire For E. D. Os Literacy.

Item No.	Statement	Percentage (%) of Level				
		SA	A	UN	D	SD
1	Community surveys are conducted for need assessment before launching a literacy programme	66.7	20.8	00	8.3	4.2
2	The literacy centres are approachable for the adult illiterates	58.3	25.0	8.3	4.2	4.2
3	The instructors' attitude toward the adult illiterates is polite	58.3	16.7	4.2	8.3	12.5
4	Instructor is able to build up teamwork environment during the teaching and learning process	8.3	8.3	00	54.2	29.2
5	Instructors are capable of creating pleasant teaching learning environment at literacy centres	20.8	20.8	00	41.7	16.7
6	The progress of learners is regularly evaluated	20.8	12.5	00	58.3	8.3
7	Tape recorder is used during teaching	8.3	8.3	00	54.2	29.2
8	VCP/VCR is provided at literacy centre to teach adult learners	00	00	00	29.2	70.8
9	Supervisors facilitate the instructors at literacy centre	00	00	8.3	62.5	29.2
10	Literacy programmes are launched on regular basis.	00	00	00	16.7	83.3
11	Instructors highlight the importance of literacy in the society	20.8	8.3	00	45.8	25.0
12	Instructors are punctual	41.7	37.5	00	16.6	4.2
13	The instructors need training in how to deal with the illiterate persons	33.3	45.8	00	20.8	00
14	The administration provides learning material to the adult learners free of cost	33.3	50.0	00	16.7	00
15	Local community avoids literacy personnel	16.7	16.7	00	50.0	16.7
16	Instructors are appointed from local community	41.7	33.3	00	25.0	00
17	Instructor motivates the people to join literacy programmes	54.2	25.0	00	12.5	8.3
18	Broadcast media provide supplementary support to the literacy programme	4.2	4.2	00	62.5	29.2
19	Audio-visual material is available at literacy centres	8.3	8.3	00	16.7	66.7
20	The material developed for literacy is easy to understand	37.5	50.0	00	12.5	00
21	The material used for literacy is interesting	16.7	00	00	66.7	16.7
22	The supervising staff of literacy programmes is sufficient	87.5	12.5	00	00	00

It is reflected from the analysis of data for the questionnaire of AIOU personnel that despite the importance of feedback and availability of instructors at telephone the adult learners are not properly guided. Moreover AIOU personnel agreed that the distance education mode for the provision of literacy is best alternative for the developing countries as it reduces the administrative problems and saves funds. Similarly, it was agreed by the AIOU personnel that through the use of broadcast media, especially radio and television, literacy skills like reading and writing can be imparted. Therefore, through the use of broadcast media and casual meetings between adult learners and the literacy instructors, literacy programmes can be easily launched in Pakistan.

Analysis of data in Table No. 1.2 shows that E. D. Os literacy agreed with the Statements No.1 (66.7%), 2 (58.3%), 3 (58.3%), 17 (54.2%) and 22(87.5%). Similarly, these officers showed their disagreement towards the Statements No. 4 (54.2%), 6 (58.3%), 7, (54.2%), 8 (70.8%), 9 (62.5%), 10 (83.3%), 18 (62.5%) and 21 (66.7%). The analysis of the responses of E. D. Os literacy showed that the literacy programmes in Pakistan are poorly funded with inadequate facilities for the adult learners as well as the literacy instructors. There is no support material available at the literacy centres. The aspect of evaluation and feedback was almost missing in these programmes although it was agreed by the E. D. Os literacy that there is sufficient staff available for this purpose. Despite the local appointment of the instructors, they are unable to motivate the people to join literacy programmes.

CONCLUSIONS

- There exists need for literacy among Pakistani illiterates and due importance is given to literacy by them.
- Moreover, local people cooperate with the literacy personnel and community welcomes the literacy programmes.
- Community surveys are not conducted for need assessment before launching a literacy programme in Pakistan and no proper arrangements are made for the mobilization of community.
- New coming governments do not continue on the on-going literacy programme of the previous governments.
- Despite insufficient funding from the government for literacy programmes, free of cost learning material and financial assistance is provided to the adult learners.
- Literacy materials for the literacy programmes in Pakistan are not locally prepared.
- Literacy instructors are appointed on merit from the local community. Therefore, they highlight the importance of literacy in the society. Occasionally volunteers are deputed to teach adult illiterates
- Literacy instructors are not trained to teach adult illiterates and because of the absence of training they;
 - face difficulties in handling adult learners
 - do not motivate adult illiterates to join literacy class
 - never relate the literacy work to the everyday life of adult learners
 - are not familiar with the needs of adult learners
 - do not show polite attitude towards the adult illiterates
 - are not punctual
- There are no proper facilities at literacy centre as there is lack of furniture and unavailability of A. V. Aids, like tape recorder, VCP/VCR teaching machines and Flip chart / Flash cards. In the same way literacy centres are not established at an easy access of learners.
- There is no use of broadcast media to support literacy programmes.
- Literacy programmes through distance education can prove successful in Pakistani situation as;
 - basic infrastructure to launch such programme is available
 - literacy programmes through distance education reduce administrative problems
 - literacy programmes through distance education are economical, and
 - casual meetings between adult learners and instructors can solve their literacy problems

- Any distance education literacy programme can be made successful by the effectiveness of media support, telephonic feedback, usefulness of print material, face to face interaction and through the guidance and counselling of adult learners instructors and supervisors
- IME and IET can mutually cooperate for the need analysis, planning, development of print materials and provision of media support to the adult learners, moreover; Regional Directorates can help IME during the phases of training and Evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Literacy should be seen as a continuous process that requires sustained learning and application. There are no magic lines to cross from illiteracy into literacy. All policies and programmes should be defined to encourage sustained participation and celebrate progressive achievement rather than focusing on one-off provision with a single end point.
- Governments have to lead responsibility in meeting the right to adult literacy and in providing leadership, policy frameworks, an enabling environment and resources. They should:
 - ensure cooperation across all relevant ministries and linkages to all relevant development programmes,
 - work in systematic collaboration with experienced civil society organizations,
 - ensure linkages between all the relevant agencies, especially at the local level, and ensure relevance to the issues in learners' lives by promoting the decentralization of budgets and of decision-making over curriculum, methods and materials.
- The Ministry of Education along with the EFA Wing should co-operate the agencies and institutions who desire to contribute in the literacy enhancement efforts.
- Such NGOs should be encouraged who wish to work under the umbrella of an established institution and supports the literacy efforts at the grass root level.
- Governments should take responsibility to stimulate the market for production and distribution of a wide variety of materials suitable for new readers, for example working with publishers / newspaper producers. They should balance this with funding for local production of materials, especially by learners, facilitators and trainers.
- For effective literacy instruction, trained literacy instructors are needed who are expert in adult psychology and the teaching of adults.
- It is needed to make the literacy programme consistent and regular. Even the change of governments should not affect the literacy programmes.
- There is need to increase funding for the literacy programmes.
- There is need to involve the local community in the literacy programme to make it acceptable by all sections of society.

- The developed material is then delivered to the concerned people.
- Media support is provided after delivering the material. For the media support Institute of Educational technology is responsible to develop- the Radio, Television and Video programmes along different types of non-broadcast media including A. V. Aids like Flip Charts and Literacy Cards. All the developed materials are available through Internet to the adult learners as well as the instructors and other officials.
- This media support is provided both to the adult learners and the literacy instructors.
- Adult learners have casual visits to the literacy center for face to face meeting with the literacy instructor.
- Literacy instructors have a two-way contact with both the adult learners and the supervisor who on the other hand is also responsible for supervising the literacy center.
- Training is provided to the personnel involved in the process of literacy impartation.
- Evaluation of the adult learners and media support is conducted.
- On the bases of evaluation, improvement is made and finally feedback is provided to the IME.

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