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Today adult education is recognized as one of the most important factors in bringing about social and economic development. However, there are some problems which serve as impediments to adult education in the less developed arid regions. These problems include: (1) entrusting adult education to agents who may not have the necessary qualifications; (2) a shortage of suitable teaching materials prepared by competent authors and lack of suitable audio visual aids; (3) the need for regular professional supervision and on-the-job training; (4) lack of adequate funds for implementing adult education programs; and (5) the role of local traditions and customs as a reason for resistance from adults. The advantages and potentials of adult education in rural areas are: (1) increasing self-assurance of the individual; (2) improving the social development of adults, which in turn has positive effects on various relationships; (3) increasing and improving crop and livestock production which contributes to economic development; (4) introducing improved farming practices and better techniques to arid regions by extension services. Adult education is seen as one of the most economical ways of developing arid lands. (CM)

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PROBLEMS OF ADULT EDUCATION
IN THE LESS DEVELOPED ARID REGIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Though nowadays adult education is generally recognized as one of the most potent and principal factors in bringing about social and economic development, in many instances the problems associated with it have not been taken sufficiently seriously and the measures applied to overcome them have been inadequate. These common problems plus those that are characteristic of many arid lands combine to slow down the progress of adult education in these regions.

Sometimes adult education is looked upon as a magic that can do miracles in a very short time, a panacea for all social and economic illnesses. On the other hand in many instances its potentials for economic development, social advancement and democracy have not been appreciated, not adequately utilized.

This paper deals very briefly with:

1. Some problems that stand in the way of adult education in many arid lands; and
2. Potentials of adult education.

PROBLEMS OF ADULT EDUCATION IN THE LESS DEVELOPED ARID REGIONS

Adult Education Agents

Teaching and education may sometimes appear as an easy and handy profession to some persons who may not qualify to be teachers. In the less

developed arid lands adult education may sometimes be entrusted to persons who do not have the necessary qualifications for it, i.e. who have had very little training and education themselves. There are also others who may lack a sense of dedication and not be prepared to live and work under arid conditions. These factors plus the usual lack of adequate and effective recognition and rather low salaries do not frequently induce nor encourage many potentially good educators to choose teaching and education for profession, particularly in some very isolated and difficult arid regions.

To overcome these difficulties, the Governments concerned should treat the problem more seriously and, in addition to sound plans, allocate sufficient funds to take care of all essential requirements, including well staffed centres to provide education for prospective educators. There is no need to send hundreds of them to be trained in the capital cities in the country concerned or abroad, as many of them either may not return, or they may receive too much academic training to be practical. They should be very carefully selected, preferably trained in their own regions, and receive attractive salaries. Normally, the nearer an education centre is to a region, the better it can serve the region and the more practical will be the education that it offers.

A few well qualified and dedicated adult education agents are far better than thousands who are not. "How can you lead others if you can't walk yourself?"

These adult education agents, as far as possible, should be selected from among the people who belong to the region and who are prepared to live like them and with them.

Teaching Materials, Aids and Communication Media

Another factor which seriously hinders progress of adult education in these regions is shortage of suitable teaching materials prepared by competent authors. Many of the publications one comes across are shockingly poor as regards the substance, the way it is presented, choice of vocabulary, illustrations and printing. The materials are often of little interest to the adults. To take the case of the arid lands with which we are presently concerned, the teaching materials should, of course, deal with the pressing needs and problems related to the living conditions and the work with which the people earn their livelihood; they should also suggest, illustrate and demonstrate simple and practical solutions. Therefore, they should be prepared by authors who not only know the subject and the art of writing, but also have an intimate knowledge of local conditions--the information which is not always obtainable from books, but first hand information based on personal experience.

Often teaching materials and textbooks are used with no or very little audio visual aids. These aids are particularly essential when dealing with predominantly illiterate and conservative adults who take much more persuasion than young people to be convinced. Generally their power of concentration is not very good and often they may be worrying about their families and their work. Hence it is most essential not only to make the message very interesting but also to make the best use of all the available audio-visual aids. In most arid lands where distances are considerable, communities or tribes are isolated and the population is predominantly illiterate, a wider use of radio, as a means

of communication and teaching, has proved very encouraging.

Technical Supervision and Professional Support

Those who are prepared to be engaged in adult education in small and isolated communities in the arid regions, even those education agents who have had sufficient training in their profession, are in need of regular professional supervision and on-the-job training. The factors which discourage teachers and adult education agents from going to work in the areas where living conditions are not very attractive, could also, and do often, discourage those who may work in a supervisory capacity. Consequently, the field agents, who generally have inadequate training, are frequently left to themselves, i.e. with little or no guidance and no professional on-the-job assistance. Many of the so-called supervisors, if and any time they go to visit a field agent, often behave like inspectors who have come to check on them rather than help them.

Hence the selection and training of the supervisors are vital to the success of the programme, as frequently the adult education agents assigned to isolated outposts have very little contact with the outside world and the nearest town. Therefore, not only they need supervision and on-the-job training, but also appreciate a periodic pat on the shoulder, encouragement and morale support.

Government Support

Implementation of adult education programmes requires the fullest possible government support in any developing country. This is particularly true in the arid regions where problems are much bigger in magnitude, facilities

are limited or lacking and living conditions difficult. Usually the programme does not receive a high enough priority in the national budget. This inadequate attention often causes and leads to many of the difficulties mentioned earlier. The programme should not only receive substantial support from the government but also enjoy the support of the entire nation wherever it is launched.

The developing countries, particularly in arid regions, should fully and truly realize that the most important factor in bringing about development is the people. This is a prerequisite which has been taken for granted and, therefore, sometimes not fully appreciated. All the adult population, whether young or old, man or woman, should join hands and take active part in developing their part of the arid lands. To do this effectively, they need education and training, and this in turn depends to a considerable extent on the official attention that is devoted to the programme. Therefore, there should be adequate funds to take care of the growing need for developing the people through education in the first place.

Resistance on the Part of the Adults

Some local traditions and customs may stand in the way of adult education in some places. The circumstances, including physical hardships, may influence many adults to accept their lot and be satisfied with their status and what they do and the way they do it.

Being also somewhat sceptic, they are less receptive than young people to new ideas. They are not prepared to accept, digest and assimilate everything

that the teacher says, particularly if it contradicts with what they have known, accepted and practiced all their lives. They, therefore, may doubt, resist and even refuse the education that is offered. This reminds me of a Home Economics Advisor who was assigned to one of the developing countries. One day she was complaining that in a certain village she was trying to teach the women how to prepare new dishes that would help them balance their diet, but the villagers would not accept them! This lady should, really, be the last person to complain on this account, for she herself would never touch yogurt, which is considered as an excellent dairy product to have with meals.

Here is another example to illustrate the point: Some years ago a terrible earthquake brought total devastation to some villages in a seismic region. The local Government, all philanthropic societies and thousands of individuals in the Country rushed to aid the stricken villages. Many international philanthropic organizations also volunteered to help. The aids included new houses which were built of stronger materials; they had a better style and were roomy, healthy and pleasant. Yet, the inhabitants of some villages would not move to these new houses; they preferred to live in the tents that were initially provided as first aid, until they built their own houses in the traditional style. In one of the villages, however, where some educational spade work had preceded, the villagers moved to the new houses; they accepted and like them.

Thus, most adults put up resistance to fresh ideas; they demand more proof, more persuasion and conviction. Some even may hate change.

There may be additional factors which help to bring about this attitude . Some adults, for instance, might have experienced that education and development do not necessarily and always lead to happiness and improvement of life. They are inclined to believe that the apple from "The Tree of Knowledge" may entail headaches, dissatisfaction, discontent and doubts of ideas, which in their opinion are fundamental to life. Consequently, many adults living under these circumstances develop an attitude of resignation and resistance and do not demonstrate much inclination to innovation and improvement.

POTENTIALS OF ADULT EDUCATION IN ARID LANDS

Those who have had little or no education earlier in life, can still receive it and thus be assisted to make a fuller use of opportunities that they may have and be better prepared to meet new situations and think of more effective ways and means of overcoming difficulties.

Education is considered a major factor in the successful implementation of all development plans and programmes particularly in the less developed areas where resources are limited. Potentials of adult education in arid lands are great; for our present purpose, however, it will suffice to mention briefly some of them under the following headings:

Potentials for the Individual

Adult education may help many to get over a possible feeling of inferiority which they may have from not having been educated. It gives them a sense of pride and an increased self assurance; they now feel quite equal to

those who have received education earlier. This, combined with experience and practical lessons that they have learned in life, plus the new knowledge and skill which they may gain through adult education, can enable them to make far better use of their time and native intelligence.

Potentials for Social Development

Adult education enables the recipients to appreciate more adequately the benefits derived from living in a society where every individual is expected to contribute to the general improvement and well-being in the community or region. They are now better prepared to co-operate with their neighbors, members of their community or tribe, government officers and others, not only because they may be bound by their tradition to cooperate, or told by their superiors, leaders, or government officials to do so, but also because now they really believe in it and are prepared to join with the others for common good and do their part more willingly. This attitude facilitates attempts to form cooperative societies and makes implementation of community projects relatively easy.

The educated adults grasp better the principles of cooperation and the benefits derived from it. They also get better acquainted with the fundamentals of democracy and self-government in local, national and even international sense. They realize more readily that they cannot improve their standard of living in isolation; that they must join hands and work together to achieve this objective. Consequently, they can now get better organized for operations

that may need joint action, such as land preparation, irrigation, pest and disease control etc. in arid regions. They may also become more sympathetic, understanding and cooperative towards government projects and programmes which may involve them. Not only are they better prepared to cooperate amongst themselves and with the officials, but they are also more inclined to cooperate with the neighboring communities and towns and with all their fellow-country-men. Even international cooperation may now make more sense to them and appear essential for man's well-being on earth.

These developments all help render the implementation of government plans and programmes easier and the operations much more efficient and more fruitful.

Above all, those adults who receive education can appreciate more the merits and benefits of self-help and realize that they themselves have a major role to play in the development of their community. Hence they may become less dependent on the government and much more useful citizens who can help themselves. This social development, in turn, enables governments to devote more attention to other pressing needs.

Potentials for Economic Development

Adult, whether working for themselves, as owner operators, or for others, benefit considerably from an informal, out-of-school, educational programme. It augments the value derived from the human factor in production. In the case of farmers living in arid regions, it helps them to improve production of the crops they grow and the livestock they raise and the management aspects

of the whole enterprise. It also helps them to understand and use figures and perhaps even keep books for their farm accounts. If they join their local cooperative society and are elected to the membership of its board, they can perform their duties more intelligently, conduct and direct the activities of their coop in a more businesslike manner.

Whenever they apply for a loan, they can understand the rules and regulations that govern it and the forms to be completed and above all they know what they are signing and their commitments. Furthermore, they are likely to know better where and how well to use the money that they have borrowed, so that it increases and improves their production and, therefore, their income.

They can now understand simple pamphlets and bulletins, regarding the various aspects of farming in arid lands, and read the newspapers that may contain information on prices of agricultural commodities, marketing conditions and other items of interest to them.

Consequently, knowledge and skill thus gained, information thus received and understood leads to wiser investment and better management; and all these, in turn and in time, contribute to the development of national economy.

Potentials for Technical Development

Adult education is considered by many as the best channel for introducing improved farming practices and better techniques to arid regions in the developing countries. The unfavorable physical conditions, combined with

misuse and mismanagement of limited resources, have given rise to poor lands and impoverished soils. To counteract these factors and to undo the damage, local people must be mobilized and young and old should be educated. We cannot wait until the old farmers die and the young ones grow and take their place and do this urgent job. There is a pressing need to stop further erosion and to make a more efficient use of the remaining soils and the very low annual precipitation. The experience of adult and practicing farmers should be complemented by technical education in modern methods of soil and water control and better farming practices. Undoubtedly adult farmers need some general education, but more than that they are in need of technical education. Extension Services should therefore be strengthened to cope with this demand.

A considerable portion of national income in many arid countries is still derived from agriculture. In some countries of the Near East that are rich in oil, the annual national income obtained from soil is far more than what they get from oil. This indicates what agricultural development would mean to these countries. The "underdeveloped" countries are called so mostly because of the poor agricultural practices that they still keep and the low standards of rural life which they have. A progressive agriculture would never lead to poverty, misery and under-development. On the contrary, it would bring about plenty, prosperity and welfare.

To be effective, however, agriculture must be developed. But, what does agricultural development depend upon and how is it brought about? We find part of the answer in agricultural research, whereby new ways and means are

discovered and which, in turn, lead to agricultural development and rural prosperity. But how could the results obtained from research and the information collected from experiment stations be utilized to bring about the desired development in arid lands? Of what practical use could this knowledge be to the farmer so long as it does not reach him? Books nicely arranged in the shelves of a library are not of any use, unless they are read and applied, in the same way that water stored in reservoirs does not help the crops unless it is channelled to the fields. Therefore, the results of research must get to the farmers, if it is to help the development of these lands. There must be a way and that way has got to be educational and take the new knowledge on production and marketing, in a simple, practical and in an informal way to the farms and to the farmers' homes. This is where extension service comes in. Through the different extension methods and various channels of communications and, above all, through practical demonstrations, improved practices and modern techniques could be taught to the farmers in the arid regions of the developing countries.

There are several ways of helping these farmers: one of them is to render them direct services and do the job for them; e.g., if their vines need pruning, to go and do it for them; if their vineyard needs dusting, to go and dust it for them; if their orchards or vegetable gardens need spraying, to perform these services for them and so on. In this way we help the farmers but in doing so we are also helping them to become dependent on us, and we are not really teaching nor educating them. Furthermore, we need thousands of

Ministry employees to perform these services for the farmers; we are, therefore, creating a bigger demand for government budget and not helping the public.

Experience has shown that this approach is not the right one--there is very little educational value in it. It is costly and doesn't speed up agricultural development to a desirable degree, nor does it encourage very much the development of a progressive rural community.

What is then the other alternative? What is a better way of helping the farmers? We believe it is this informal, out-of-school, adult education which is now called extension by some people. But, it could be called any thing as long as it does the job properly.

Through a well organized Extension Service, a well trained staff and a realistic programme, especially designed for arid lands, the farmers in these areas could be acquainted with and in time adopt, improved techniques of soil preparation, moisture utilization, better crops and livestock production and farm management.

In addition to contracting them individually and to holding meetings, a series of short training courses, based on local needs and arranged in order of priority and urgency, should be organized and conducted for the benefit of local farmers. These series of short courses may include such topics as:

1. Dangers of Soil Erosion and Some Relatively Simple Ways to Stop It.
2. Better Methods of Land Preparation Under Arid Conditions.
3. Row Cultivation.
4. Better Utilization of Rain Water and Soil Moisture.

5. Some Simple Methods of Improving Dry-Farming Practices
6. Merits of Recommended Seeds
7. Benefits Derived from Chemical Fertilizers and Simple Ways of Application.
8. Recommended Crop Rotation.
9. Simple Agricultural Machinery and Equipment.
10. Ways of Doing Simple Repairs on the Farm.
11. Some Simpler Ways of Pest Control and Preventive Measures.
13. Advantages of Balanced Feeding.
14. Recommended Methods of Grazing.
15. Winter Feeding of Livestock.
16. Livestock Sanitation
17. Livestock Management.
18. Simple Ways of Storing and Preserving Food
19. Essentials of Balanced Food.
20. Improved Home Management
21. Home Sanitation.
22. Simple Bookkeeping
23. Introduction to Cooperatives and Marketing and so on.

Each of these courses need not be longer than a day or two; they should be highly practical and combined with demonstrations and visits to observe better practices. Every effort should be made to use as many visual aids as possible.

Through these short training courses, periodic visits and a good radio programme, modern farming practices can find their way to an arid region, help to improve the quality and quantity of agricultural products, increase farmers income and contribute to their general well-being.

Extension, being education, naturally takes time; it is slow; but it is rewarding. The improvements summarily referred to above are possible and can be brought about through continuous adult education programmes.

Conclusion

In inviting attention to some of the problems encountered in planning and implementing adult education in arid lands, I may have gone into some detail at the beginning of this paper, but unless these problems are fully recognized and met, adequate provisions will not be made for overcoming them, and, consequently, potentials of adult education will not be fully utilized.

No matter how rich a country may be; the people, local people, must be educated to do the job, i.e. to play a major role in the improvement of their lands, development of their community and their country. This adult education approach, this philosophy of self-help is very rewarding to the individuals concerned and one of the most economical ways of developing arid lands.