

## THE ROLE OF EQUIVALENCY EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF KERALA

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### **Abstract**

Education is the root cause of progress and development. It helps man and society to think and act according to the needs. Education acts as an instrument for generating socio-economic growth and makes the people to become critical and active participants in the process of liberating themselves from ignorance, misery, degradation, injustices, exploitation, inequalities and economic and social evils since education is a powerful tool for social change. The Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority has been playing a decisive and remarkable role in non-formal education sector providing literacy, continuing and lifelong education to adult learners. The KSLMA is presently focusing its attention on the Equivalency. Equivalency programmes are organized with a view to provide an alternative education to adult learners that is equivalent to the existing formal system of education be it related to formal or vocational education. The KSLMA through its literacy and continuing education programmes plays a remarkable role in the overall development of the state. The Equivalency education makes a positive impact on the economic, social and cultural spheres of development of the state and nation.

Key words: Development, Education, Literacy, Non-formal, etc.

### **Introduction**

Education is a process which draws out the best in man with the aim of producing a well-balanced personality and brings about desirable changes in the learner in the way one thinks, feels and acts in accordance with one's concept of effective life. The most important aim of education since the beginning of human culture is that of character formation. Education acts as an instrument for generating socio-economic growth and makes the people to become critical and active participants in the process of liberating themselves from ignorance, misery, degradation, injustices, exploitation, inequalities and economic and social evils since education is a powerful tool for social change. Education is the root cause of progress and development. It helps man and society to think and act according to the needs. The responsibility of the parents, society, and/ or state is to see that all human beings in a modern society acquire or achieve a certain minimum level of education. This is generally called elementary education. Elementary education helps in effective participation in community life through instructions in basic facts and skills as literacy, agriculture, dwelling, health and hygiene, and citizenship and so on<sup>1</sup>.

### **Education**

Education is given to individuals during their childhood starting with their formal schooling to make them fit for society. In reality due to some reason or the other many individuals either get deprived of the opportunity to have access to formal school or after access

to it, they may fail to acquire the desired level of elementary education. In such a case it is more the state's responsibility to provide them with remedial opportunities/measures in their later years or adult life to promoting in them this elementary education as remedial education such education is called fundamental education<sup>2</sup>.

Education can be classified as:-

**Formal Education:-** Hartnett and Coombs et al define formal education as the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system' running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialized programmes and institutions for full-time professional education and training<sup>3</sup>. The formal education is given to students through institutions like schools and colleges.

**Non-Formal Education:-** Non-formal education is education without formalities or with relaxed formalities to avoid hindrances in making education more accessible to different kinds and types of learners.

**Informal Education:-** Informal education is a truly life long process whereby every individual acquires attitude, values, skills, and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influence and resources in his or her environment from family and neighbors from work and play from market places, the library, and the mass media<sup>4</sup>.

### **Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority (KSLMA)**

The Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority has been playing a decisive and remarkable role in non-formal education sector providing literacy, continuing and lifelong education to adult learners. The Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority is an autonomous institution under the General Education Department, Government of Kerala. It was set up in 1998 for the purpose of co-ordinating and activating the Literacy and continuing education programme in Kerala state. Kerala launched the continuing education programme on 26th October, 1998 propagating the slogan "Education for all and Education forever". After six years, it bagged the envious title of total literacy. Presently the KSLMA is fully funded by the Government of Kerala in order to implement literacy, continuing education and lifelong learning programmes designed and developed by the state. The District Literacy Missions are responsible for looking after the activities at the district level. The Continuing Education Centers functioning under the Local Self Government Institutions spread across the state are the service delivery units of the Kerala State Literacy Mission and the mission activities' launched by the National Literacy Mission, Ministry of HRD, Government of India<sup>5</sup>. The headquarters of the KSLMA is in Thiruvananthapuram.

According to the 12th Five Year Plan approved by the State Planning Board, Government of Kerala, the state is estimated to have 18 lakh illiterates and 12 lakh neo literates. They found that the main pockets of illiteracy are urban slums, coastal areas and tribal settlements which needs to receive special attention of the government. The initiatives taken by the National Literacy Mission under the Sakshar Bharat Scheme to reduce illiteracy should be extended to the tribal, fisher folks and other socially marginalized people of Kerala. Another group should be focused is the 25-30 lakhs of migrant population from the various north Indian states. There is an attempt to recast the definition of literacy beyond the capacity to read, write and calculate

to move towards imparting a set of carefully designed skills, information and knowledge to the needy.

The main responsibility of the KSLMA is to implement the continuing education programme in the entire state of Kerala. Kerala attained total literacy on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1991. Post literacy programmes commenced in Kerala in 1992. The continuing education programme started on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1998. The continuing education scheme is postulated on the principles of,

1. Treating basic literacy, post literacy and continuing education as one sustained, coherent learning process.
2. Establishing a responsive and alternative structure for the lifelong learning.
3. Responding to the needs of all sections of society.
4. Learning not to be seen as a function of alphabets, but as all modes of human capacity building.
5. Addressing the socio economic situations of the community to provide infrastructure for larger development initiatives.

The continuing education scheme is, therefore, multi-faceted and enjoys supreme flexibility to allow grass roots community participation and managerial initiative<sup>6</sup>.

#### **Beneficiaries:-**

The beneficiaries of the KSLMA are:

1. Illiterates
2. Neo-Literates
3. Drop outs from schools
4. Everybody who is interested in lifelong learning

#### **Educational Centres of the KSLMA**

The Establishment of continuing education centres (CECs), Nodal continuing education (NCECs) and Model Nodal continuing education centres is the principal mode of implementing literacy and continuing education programmes. The centers follow an area specific community based approach. The scheme envisages one CEC for each village serve a population of about 1500–2000 people. About 10 centres form a cluster with one acting as the nodal CEC and there are two MNCECs in the district level under district panchayath. There are 4000 education centres which are functioning under the three tier panchayath raj institutions. Out of which 3500 are CECs and 500 are NCECs. There are three CECs for each gramapanchayath, five for each municipality, ten for each corporation. There are two NCEs for each block panchayath and municipality and three for each corporation. Two Model Nodal continuing education centres are functioning under the supervision and leadership of district panchayath in all 14 districts.

#### **Preraks**

Preraks are responsible for functioning continuing education centers. Preraks are entrusted with the day-to-day affairs of education centers. The minimum educational qualification required for a person to become a Prerak is SSLC in the case of Continuing Education Centres and graduation in the case of Model Nodal Continuing Education Centres and Nodal Continuing Education Centres. The local body concerned is responsible to select the Preraks as per a selection procedure prepared by the KSLMA. They are responsible for the

day-to-day activities of the centers. There may be an Assistant Prerak to assist the Prerak. The educational qualification of assistant Prerak is the same as that of Preraks.

### **Programmes of the KSLMA**

#### **I Core Programmes:-**

1. Literacy Programme
2. Continuing Education Programme

#### **1. Literacy Programme**

Literacy is fundamental human right it includes communication, contact, and the expectation that interaction is possible all individuals and it is potential to lead to empowerment (UNESCO, 2008). It also shapes our perceptions and simple process of acquiring basic cognitive skills and it is contribute to socio-economic development. Literacy plays an essential role in improving the lives of individuals a by enabling economic security and good health (Denise Lievesley and Albert Motivans 2002)<sup>7</sup>. Literacy programme of the Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority intends to provide basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills to its learners.

One of the objectives of the Continuing Education Programme is to make non-literates, literates and upgrade the level of literacy and numeracy of neo- literates/ semi-literates. Literacy classes are conducted for illiterates exclusively. The beneficiaries of the literacy classes are those neo-literates who wish to retain and enhance their literacy stack. All those non-literates who have not attained the National Literacy Mission norm are also the beneficiaries. Literacy classes are organized by Assistant Preraks.

#### **2. Continuing Education Programme**

Continuing education programme includes those learning opportunities that are taken up after full-time schooling has ended or those learning opportunities that are taken up after the completion of initial education. Continuing education comes under the category of non-formal education.

Literates and neo-literates have to get facilities to maintain and develop their knowledge. Continuing education programme intends to provide an opportunity for further studies to literates, neo-literates and drop outs from schools etc. The core programme of continuing education is equivalency programme. At present IV, VII, X, plus one and plus two equivalency examinations are conducted by the KSLMA under equivalency programme. An equivalency board is functioning at the state level for the administration and supervision of equivalency programme. In short, continuing education programme provides an opportunity to the literates, neo-literates, school drop outs and those people who are interested in continuing or lifelong education etc. to continue their studies and to obtain certificate that are on par with the certificate of formal system of education.

The continuing education scheme is multi-faceted and enjoys supreme flexibility to allow grass roots community participation and managerial initiative. Establishment of Continuing Education Centres (CEC's) and Nodal Continuing Education Centres (NCEC's) are the principal modes of implementing continuing education programmes. Full time facilitators named as Preraks run the centres. Assistant Preraks have also been entrusted to each centre. The continuing education centres and nodal continuing education centres are set upon

the basis of an area-specific and community-based approach in consultation with the user community and its programme is designed to meet their demands.

Continuing education programmes may be formal, non-formal or informal. Continuing education can be made available taking into consideration the abilities, circumstances, tastes and preference of the learners. Government agencies, Universities and Non-government organizations are capable of conducting continuing education with or without charging fees. Both long term and short term courses are possible. Condensed courses, vocation classes, liberalized schemes, in- service faculty improvement programmes, postal tuitions, correspondence courses etc. are the facilities for those who want to continue their studies. Hence it is a field of education giving importance to the non-formality.

### **Equivalency Programme**

The KSLMA is presently focusing its attention on the Equivalency. As the name indicates the objective of the programme is to provide an alternate education programme that is equivalent to the existing formal system of education. This programme is aimed at the neo-literates who aspire to continue their education, which would enable them to stand on a par with others who have successfully completed their course of study in the formal system of education.

Equivalency programmes are organised with view to provide an alternative education to adult learners that is equivalent to the existing formal system of education, be it related to formal or vocational education. This programme is targeted towards those neo- literates who aspire to continue their education and acquire certificates that would place them on par with others who have successfully completed their studies from the formal system of education<sup>8</sup>. At present, the Kerala State Literacy Mission is conducting the following equivalency programmes:

1. Class XI Equivalency.
2. Class X Equivalency.
3. V11th standard Equivalency Course.
4. 1Vth Standard Equivalency.

### **Reasons for joining in the equivalency programme**

The main reasons for joining in the equivalency programme include Employment expectation, Professional Advancement, Income Advancement, Higher study, Personal development, Skill development, Social status, Self-esteem, Cognitive interest, Escapism, Stimulation, Facilitate change, Extrinsic interest, Social relationship, Social commitment<sup>9</sup> etc.

### **Equivalency Programme and Development**

The human resources of a nation ultimately determine the character and pace of its economic and social development. Education, whether it is formal, informal or non- formal, through change in knowledge, behaviour and practices, brings development. Education is fundamental to development and growth as it is a change agent. The human mind makes possible all development achievements, from health advances and agricultural innovations to efficient public administration and private sector growth with the help of education. For countries to reap these benefits fully, they need to unleash the potential of the human mind. And there is no better tool for doing so than education. Equivalency education can have many benefits ranging from better health and personal well-being to greater social inclusion. It can

also support the function of democratic systems and provide greater opportunities for finding new or better employment. Equivalency education can have a positive impact on the economy. For individuals, education promotes employment, earnings, health, and poverty reduction. For societies, it provides long-term economic growth, spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social cohesion. Development refers to growth or positive change. Every entity like an individual or the entire society aspires to grow and develop. It is very crucial to acquire knowledge and skills to support development. Thus, education is a significant factor that complements and drives development at every level.

### **Conclusion**

Education is the root cause of progress and development. It helps man and society to think and act according to the needs. Education acts as an instrument for generating socio-economic growth and makes the people to become critical and active participants in the process of liberating themselves from ignorance, misery, degradation, injustices, exploitation, inequalities and economic and social evils since education is a powerful tool for social change. The Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority has been playing a decisive and remarkable role in non-formal education sector providing literacy, continuing and lifelong education to adult learners. The KSLMA is presently focusing its attention on the Equivalency. Equivalency programmes are organized with view to provide an alternative education to adult learners that is equivalent to the existing formal system of education, be it related to formal or vocational education. The Kerala State Literacy Mission conducts Literacy Programme, and Continuing Education Programmes like, Equivalency Programme, Income Generating Programmes, Quality of Life Improvement Programmes, Individual Interest Promotion Programmes and Future Oriented Programmes so as to promote social, economic and cultural development. Education, whether it is formal, informal or non-formal, through change in knowledge, behaviour and practices, brings development. The KSLMA through its literacy and continuing education programmes plays a remarkable role in the overall development of the state. The Equivalency education makes a positive impact on the economic, social and cultural spheres of development of the state and nation.

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