

BASIC EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL TRANSITION

A Programme of Adult Education for Indian Communities

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INTRODUCTION:

It is universally acknowledged that functional literacy is a prerequisite to the success of any programme of social and economic development - a first and indispensable step in the development of the individual and his community. This basic premise is very often taken for granted in the effort to attain more obviously desirable goals. There are those who claim that even basic literacy is peripheral to economic development. Obviously such thinking stems from lack of understanding of the true meaning and purpose of literacy in the context of a developing community.

Granted some measure of progress can be made by enlisting the support of the literate few and the practical experience of the semi-literate. There are however definite and serious limitations as to the depth and lasting value of accomplishments. In this age of literacy, technical change and automation with its increasing demands on the skill, intelligence and education of ordinary people, a functional knowledge of communication skills - reading, oral language, thoughtful listening and intelligent participation - is essential. Participants must be able to read intelligently to grasp new ideas, to gain new insights to broaden their horizons enabling them to make rational decisions based on conviction. And so we hear of Coops that have failed, action groups that have folded, Community Development Programmes that have fallen by the wayside. Why? "The people were not interested." A closer examination of the facts might have revealed, "They were not ready. They lacked the depth of understanding necessary for effective, consistent participation." Yes, functional literacy is the sine qua non of all programmes designed to further the ultimate goal - a happy, prosperous, dynamic society.

The striking correlation between communities of low economic and social status and those of low educational level is more than a coincidence. Research has shown that programmes designed to raise community standards reach proportionately more people with at least high school education and that the functionally illiterate are the least effectively served. And so we find segments of society of which it might be said "They are poor because they are ignorant and ignorant because they are poor." Conversely it has also been proven that as the level of education increases the percentage of participants in Extension programmes rises sharply. Thus it would appear that formal Adult Education is necessary to break the vicious circle.

Obviously the foregoing has important implications for the development of any long-range social or economic programme for Indian communities. Outline of problems presented in support of the projected Community Development Programme of the recently designated Social Programmes Division substantiates the fact that the majority of our Indian people are of sub-standard socio-economic status indicating an urgent need for coordinated and integrated rehabilitative efforts. This need is further evidenced by recommendations of the Joint Committee of Senate and Commons, Regional Conference Reports and the varied emerging needs and demands of the Indian people.

Proposed programme of adult education for Indian communities is not an over-all plan for adult education rather is it an auxiliary service, a strategic plan of support designed to strengthen the educational under-structure of other community programmes. In scope it is restricted to that phase or facet of adult education which is of a purely educational nature - basic and functional literacy, pre-vocational upgrading and raising the general educational level of the adult Indian population.

Such a programme to be fully effective must be an integral part of the education system and of any over-all coordinated and integrated plan for social and economic development. It must be national in scope, have a clear-cut well-defined policy and plans for effective implementation at divisional and field levels providing opportunities for men and women to acquire, renew and increase useful knowledge and skills enabling them to actively and fruitfully participate in the social and economic life of the community.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

The over-all objective then is to mobilize the minds, hearts and wills of that large segment of our Indian population "bystanders on the national scene" and help them to gain the skills, insights and understandings necessary for their effective participation in federal and provincial sponsored programmes and services particularly in the areas of social and economic development.

Specific objectives briefly stated are:

1. To teach basic language and computational skills.
2. To prepare students for vocational training.
3. To raise the academic levels of the on-reserve adult population.
4. To promote the basic principles and practices of health, nutrition, sanitation, homemaking and child development.
5. To provide the Indian population with information relative to their cultural heritage.
6. To help the Indian people gain an awareness of those acculturative influences upon which their elevation to self-sufficiency depends.
7. To motivate the Indian population to an appreciation of the value system predominating in our society.
8. To strengthen the home as the primary agent of education so that it becomes truly supportive of what the school is trying to do, encouraging parents and teachers to better understand themselves as they relate to each other and to children.
9. To provide opportunities for parent education to lessen the ill-effects of imbalance in the family resulting from a reversal of roles whereby the educated children assume the functions of the parents.

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION:

The realization of objectives as outlined, however worthy, is a mammoth task. This will involve marshalling human resources effectively at both divisional and field levels. Adult education services required at the field level would include:

1. Seasonal Adult Education Schools - organized and operated on reserves for the specific purpose of meeting the needs of those adult men and women who have not had any formal education and those with limited grade schooling who through disuse of basic skills may be said to have relapsed into semi-illiteracy.

Classes geared to the attainment of this objective will be held for an approximate three month period at a time most suited to the employment pattern of participants. A trained, full-time Adult Education Teacher, working in co-operation with Community Leaders, agency and school personnel, will be responsible for initiating, organizing, developing and implementing a well-rounded programme to include public speaking, discussion and recreation. Part-time teachers will be recruited and trained for specific teaching assignments as the need arises.

Based on the accepted premise that adults learn more rapidly when teaching is related to their experiences and closely aligned with their needs, interests and aspirations, content used in the teaching of reading, writing, oral language and computational skills will be geared to this end. Methods and techniques will be varied to provide opportunity for maximum student involvement and participation in all phases of program activity, thus creating a climate favourable to purposeful change. Guidance and informal counselling is particularly important at the outset and with reference to basic literacy students who very often do not know what they want until they have been exposed to a variety of learning experiences.

Finally and most important every phase of the programme should include elements of follow-up designed to help the participant relate his learning to his on-going life in the community, provide motivation for continuous learning and participation in other organized educational activities.

2. Upgrading Classes - an acceleration of pre-adult school programmes to provide pre-vocational training for selected young adults in preparation for admission to programmes operated under the joint sponsorship of Federal Dept. of Labour and Provincial Governments or to provide opportunity for further academic training for the few who wish to return to regular school classes. Students are simultaneously given social orientation, training and assistance in locating suitable employment.

This programme has been successfully operated since 1958. Indications are that it warrants continuance and expansion.

3. Adult Education Centres - organized on densely populated reserves, operated on a regular school-year basis, designed to raise the academic, social and cultural levels of the substantial number of young adults who are interested in but not selected for pre-vocational training in Branch operated up-grading classes or of any adult men and women desirous of raising their general standard of education.

Classes in keeping with needs will range from literacy through secondary school level and will be scheduled to meet the particular needs of the community. The principal, a qualified adult educator, will be responsible for initiating, organizing, developing and carrying out a well-rounded programme. Part-time teachers employed as the need arises will have academic responsibilities only.

A student council composed of elected representatives from each classroom will work with the principal in promoting social, cultural and other educational activities.

The following are some suggested activities:

- . Preparation of a monthly newsletter providing opportunity for students of all grades to participate thus utilizing special talents evinced in classroom.
- . Planning for debates, discussions, guest speakers on topics of general interest, cooperatives, conservation, agriculture, fisheries, etc.
- . Responsibility for recreation periods, socials, etc.
- . Participation in plans for yearly banquet or closing exercises as deemed advisable.

Sub-committees will be appointed by the council for specific short-term projects thus ensuring maximum participation of the greatest possible number of students.

Adequate plant facilities will be required. At the outset it may be possible to use regular school buildings. However, if this type of service proves to be worthwhile separate premises may be needed. It is recommended that a Pilot Project be carried out in a carefully selected Indian community.

With day school services increasingly meeting the needs of the people, this should be the last generation during which a programme of this nature will be necessary. The effective implementation of recommended services should eliminate the need for continuation on a large-scale basis. A reassessment after a five-year period should help determine whether the programme should be continued, expanded, a new format developed or whether in light of readiness of Indian people to participate, phased into provincial programmes.

Centralized Services - Divisional Level:

If the work in the field is to be fully supported some reorganization and introduction of a new type of service will be necessary at the Divisional Level. Major functions of the central office would include:

1. Over-all service-wide supervision and evaluation of programme operation.
2. Budgeting for programme needs in cooperation with Regional office, justification of expenditure in light of achievements.
3. Coordination in cooperation with related Branch Divisions and Sections to ensure maximum use of resources in establishing top priorities based on urgency of need, readiness, etc. This would be most effectively achieved through the establishment of a working committee designed to keep the lines of communication open.
4. Cooperative Leadership:
 - . Preservice and Inservice staff training, conferences and workshops
 - . Field visits to help initiate programmes and periodic supervision.

5. Maintenance of effective communications:

- . Proper and adequate reporting
- . Keeping of accurate and up-to-date records for use in programme evaluation and in planning further developments
- . Liaison at all levels.

6. Shared responsibility between Section Head and Regional School Superintendents:

- . Locating and determining kind of service
- . Consultation re programme and duration
- . Staff selection.

7. Establishment of clearly defined, flexible yet fixed, over-all policy for each area of programme activity to permit adaptation to local situations and provide for the use of initiative and judgement in planning and executing programme, and at the same time ensuring stability and step-by-step progress toward attainment of objectives. This will involve development of uniform standards of achievement.

8. Keeping abreast with developments in methods, materials and other pertinent information relative to programme development.

9. Establishment of a Materials Service. Since this is a new type of service the following clarification is necessary.

Materials Service

The success of proposed Adult Education programme hinges on two important elements - staff training and the availability of necessary teaching materials, the need for which cannot be overemphasized, an adult teacher cannot work without materials. Materials designed for day schools are not suitable for use in basic and functional literacy classes. In the long run, a programme of this nature will fail in its objectives and dissipate great reserves of energy and goodwill if materials adequate in quantity, variety and geared to the practical needs and interests of adults are not available at the outset and continuously to meet the emerging needs of an expanding programme.

Preparation of materials to meet this need is a difficult time-consuming task requiring specialized services, hence the need for proposed Supporting Service to perform the following functions:

1. Preparation of materials for use in basic and functional literacy classes content geared to socio-economic milieu- health, agriculture, conservation, fisheries, sanitation, family life, etc.
2. Preparation of simple illustrative material outlining Branch policies and procedures as they apply to the individual Indian.
3. Adaptation of pertinent materials produced by federal and provincial government departments and other organizations for use in specific classes and to ensure continuity of learning.
4. To assist in extension of library services to Indian communities by preparation of recommended reading lists, etc.

5. Readability measurement of publications upon request of field staff to determine their suitability for use.

Materials prepared to meet specific needs will undoubtedly have some general application in meeting the programme needs of other organizations within the Indian community.

Programme Implementation - Community Level:

The primary function at the local level is the organization, development and implementation of a programme of adult education realistically designed to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of the Indian people as broadly outlined under ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION, nos. 1 and 3.

The adult education teacher then faces the fundamental problem of designing the learning experience that will meet the needs of those it is intended to serve and achieve the overall objectives within a prescribed frame of reference. This basic problem, crucial to the success of any adult education programme is no easy task.

The first step in this process is a community survey to determine the special educational needs of the community. The results of this survey will indicate the nature and extent of the educational programme to be conducted. In making this survey the Adult Education Teacher becomes aware not only of the educational problems of the community but also of the resources that are likely to be available and later called into play.

The working out of the programme will accordingly involve:

- a. Determination of needs,
- b. Identification of educational goals,
- c. Arrangement of learning tasks,
- d. Marshalling of human and other resources of the community,
- e. Evaluation.

Several approaches may be required in the implementation of the local programme and may include:

1. Enlisting the help of local people who with training could serve as part-time teachers.
2. Programme promotion and publicity on community level.
3. Maintaining a home visitation service.
4. Individual or small group teaching - a supplement to classroom teaching.
5. Individual counselling and guidance, etc.

Additional functions will include:

1. Maintenance of adequate communications with regional and divisional offices including keeping of accurate records and reporting as requested.
2. Establishment and maintenance of cooperative relationships with existing organizations and other government representatives.

STAFF REQUIREMENTS:

In determining minimum staff requirements necessary for programme implementation at divisional and field levels, consideration was given to the need for:

- . Maximum use of time, energy and money in providing necessary pre-service training for incoming staff.
- . Availability of trained adult education teachers to cope with emergency problems.
- . A nucleus staff in each region to provide exploratory service and establish a basis for further expansion.

The following proposed minimum requirements are recommended for 1965-66.

Divisional Level:

- . Section Head
- . Assistant Section Head
- . Researcher and Writer for Materials Service
- . Clerk-Steno, Grade IV.

Field Level:

- . Sixteen Adult Education Teachers - two for each region, Maritimes excepted.
- . One Adult Education Teacher - Principal for proposed Adult Education Centre to be organized as pilot project on carefully selected densely populated reserve.
- . The services of part-time teachers will be required to assist Adult Education Teachers as the need arises. Required number is difficult to estimate accurately because of voluntary enrollment. After this year it should be possible to approximate more closely.
- . Six teachers for up-grading classes - continuation of established programme.

Job Descriptions and Summary of Estimated Expenditure are included in attached APPENDIX.

STAFF SELECTION AND TRAINING:

Despite the gradual though limited expansion of university curricula to provide training in the field of adult education, procurement of suitable personnel continues to be a major problem for those who are charged with the responsibility of meeting increased demands for the provision of adult education services across Canada.

Instructors for adult academic classes are on the whole recruited from the rank of day school teachers and selected by and large on the basis of their knowledge of subject matter. This does not necessarily mean that they have either the

competence, skill or personality for the exacting responsibility of adult teaching which though it has much in common with pre-adult teaching has more differences than similarities.

Teachers employed on a part time basis - and they make up the majority of night class instructors - rarely have training or experience in adult education. They do the best they can as they learn by trial and error and very often with the best intentions do more harm than good. Furthermore, after a full day in the classroom they have neither the time nor the energy to cope with an additional teaching load, much less take full responsibility for the success of the overall programme.

Accordingly it is not an overstatement to say that the success of proposed programme depends on the wise selection and realistic training of personnel at both divisional and field levels. To lose sight of these twin processes is to condone a tragic waste of human resources and a futile drain on the taxpayers' money.

Staff training is now recognized as a continuous process and an integral part of programme development. Such training should be carefully planned and designed to meet effectively the many varied and continuing needs of adult education teachers, full-time and part-time, faced with the demanding task of attaining overall programme objectives.

Pre-service Training - Full-time Adult Education Teachers

Professional adult educators function in a dual capacity - they are administrators responsible for making possible the best educational experience that can be devised to meet the practical needs of the people involved. They are teachers responsible for the design and management of specific instructional activities. A basic core of training in adult education is necessary to equip them to fill this dual role. Equally important is the need for an understanding of the Indian culture.

The kinds of training and experiences which trainees bring to the job will have an important bearing on the design and duration of pre-service training programmes. In the context of proposed programme one may anticipate preparation for pre-adult teaching. This general training in so far as it has incorporated sound principles of good pedagogy will have many carry-overs into the jobs for which they are being prepared. Pre-service training of between two and three months duration should include basic training in:

- . Foundations of Adult Education - social, historical and philosophical backgrounds.
- . Methods and Techniques of Adult Education.
- . Psychology of Adult Learning - implications for teaching of tool subjects.
- . Organization and Administration of Adult Education with emphasis on specific needs.
- . Sociology of the community as it relates to programme development.
- . Overview of Branch Activities - Divisions and Sections.
- . Our Native Canadians - applied anthropology (social and cultural).

- . The Role of Recreation in developing a well-rounded programme - training to meet projected needs.
- . Curriculum Workshop - to design the framework for basic and functional literacy classes and selection of appropriate materials, etc.

In the interest of economy and efficiency it is recommended that this training be given at an appropriate university where facilities are available, e.g. University of Saskatchewan already offers a summer course in Applied Anthropology with emphasis on the basic cultural pattern of the Indian and Metis.

Pre-service Training - Part-time Adult Education Teachers:

Part-time teachers employed to assist teachers of Seasonal Adult Education Schools and Adult Education Centres will be recruited largely from teachers already employed in Indian schools, hence, they will have had the benefit of induction training and experience in working with Indian people. Although their responsibilities will be limited to specific teaching assignments, additional training will be necessary to provide a core of basic information enabling them to adjust their attitudes and instructional style to the teaching of adults.

A short intensive concentrated orientation course of approximately three days duration should include an overview of the philosophy, methods and techniques of adult education with emphasis on the fundamental principles of adult education and their application to meet specific teaching needs.

This on-the-spot training will be the responsibility of the adult education teacher and may be given at a time most convenient to those concerned. However, it should be clearly understood that such training is a necessary prerequisite for employment to positions of part-time adult education teachers.

In-Service Training - a Continuous Process:

Continuous integrated training will be achieved through:

- . brief induction periods following pre-service training to help new teachers in their efforts to translate theory into action. This on-the-job training is most important particularly in the early stages of programme development;
- . Teachers' Conferences, workshops and short courses held periodically in keeping with needs, providing opportunities for teachers and training staff to learn, discuss, compare, evaluate and plan;
- . guided professional reading and most important, it is to be hoped, through satisfying, rewarding experiences.

CONCLUSION:

As stated at the outset proposed programme of adult education for Indian communities is not intended to be a panacea, but rather "an auxiliary service, a strategic plan of support designed to strengthen the educational under-structure of other community programmes."

Assuming the necessary administrative and supporting organization to be established - staff carefully selected and trained, materials adequate in quantity and quality provided, and programme successfully implemented - one could with reasonable confidence anticipate many desirable outcomes. The following are a few of the more salient:

- . Improved use of language not only in better habits of speaking and writing but clearer thinking, deeper understanding and broadened horizons.
- . An increased appreciation of the value of education on the part of parents should result in increased day school attendance both elementary and secondary with gradual increase in numbers going on to university and vocational training.
- . Increased insight into the interdependence of individuals and groups within the community.
- . Increased ability to see the larger social relationships outside the community structure and personal responsibilities entailed.
- . Increased capacity for purposeful action based on realities of existing situation.
- . Increased self-respect, sense of responsibility, pride in achievement, confidence and self assurance.
- . Higher all-round standards of living, etc.

THUS in our concern to do a quality job in a small area, we hope to make a substantial contribution to the advancement of the Indian people.

August 25th, 1964.