

The Community Learning and Development

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ABSTRACT

Community learning and development is to develop the capacity of individuals and groups of all ages through their actions, the capacity of communities, to improve their quality of life. Community learning and development workers should see themselves as working with people, rather than for them. Empathy is crucial to understanding the issues faced by those they work with and it is important that they engage in a way that does not intimidate people or place the worker in a position of looking down on those they work with. A community learning and development approach is arguably a more effective way of learning as every individual has their own unique way to learn and community learning and development workers look for the best possible method that suits the individual. Community learning and development approaches are gradually being adopted in schools to some extent and many other agencies and using a community learning and development approach in their work. Professional community educators or community learning and development workers usually hold a professional degree in community education or community learning and development, depending on the course offered at the university from which they graduate. Community learning and development has the potential to encourage young people to become more interested in politics and helping them influence decisions that affect their lives.

Key words: Community, professional, politics, development, people, education, government.

1. INTRODUCTION

Community education is also known as Community-based education or Community learning & development refers to an organization's programs to promote learning and social development work with individuals and groups in their communities using a range of formal and informal methods. A common defining feature is that programmes and activities are developed in dialogue with communities and participants. The purpose of community learning and development is to develop the capacity of individuals and groups of all ages through their actions, the capacity of communities, to improve their quality of life. Community education encompasses all those occupations and approaches that are concerned with running education and development programmes within local communities, rather than within educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities. The latter is known as the formal education system, whereas community education is sometimes called informal education. It has long been critical of aspects of the formal education system for failing large sections of the population in all countries and had a particular concern for taking learning and development opportunities out to socio-economically disadvantaged individuals and poorer areas.

LITERACY IN INDIA

Literacy in India is a key for socio-economic progress, and the Indian literacy rate grew to 74.04 per cent in 2011 from 12 per cent at the end of British rule in 1947. Although this was a greater than six fold improvement, the level is well below the world average literacy rate of 84 per cent, and of all nations, India currently has the largest illiterate population. Despite government programmes, India's literacy rate increased only "sluggishly," and a 1990 study estimated that it would take until 2060 for India to achieve universal literacy at then-current rate of progress. The 2011 census, however, indicated a 2001-2011 decadal literacy growth of 9.2 per cent, which is the slower than the growth seen during the previous decade.

There is a wide gender disparity in the literacy rate in India: effective literacy rates (age 7 and above) in 2011 were 82.14 per cent for men and 65.46 per cent for women. The low female literacy rate has had a dramatically negative impact on family planning and population stabilization efforts in India. Studies have indicated that female literacy is a strong predictor of the use of contraception among married Indian couples, even when women do not otherwise have economic independence. The census provided a positive indication that growth in female literacy rates (11.8 per cent) was substantially faster than in male literacy rates (6.9 per cent) in the 2001–2011 decadal period, which means the gender gap appears to be narrowing.

ORIGIN OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

In the history of community education and community learning and development, the UK (United Kingdom) has played a significant role in hosting the two main international bodies representing community education and community development. These being the International Community Education Association, which was for many years based at the Community Education Development Centre based in Coventry UK. The International Association for Community Development, which still has its HQ (Head Quarters) in Scotland. In the 1990s there was some thought as to whether these two bodies might merge? The term community learning and development has not taken off widely in other countries. Although community learning and development approaches are recognized internationally. These methods and approaches have been acknowledged as significant for local social, economic, cultural, environmental and political development by such organisations as the UN (United Nations), WHO (World Health Organisations), OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), World Bank, Council of Europe and EU (European Union).

COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The term 'community learning and development' was adopted to acknowledge that all of these occupations worked primarily within local communities, and that this work encompassed not just providing less formal learning support but also a concern for the wider holistic development of those communities - socio economically, environmentally, culturally and politically. In effect this brought together for the first time two traditions. The former group of occupations - adult educators, youth workers and community education workers had tended to focus upon the provision of informal education support for individuals and groups within communities. They had always seen their work as being educational. The latter group - community workers, community development workers and development educators had tended to focus upon the socio-economic and

environmental development of those communities. Both sets of occupations recognized that they shared very similar values, knowledge base and skill sets and that what brought them together was a common commitment to supporting learning and social action.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION THROUGH INSTITUTIONS

There are a myriad of job titles and employers include public authorities and voluntary or NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations), funded by the state and by independent grant making bodies. Schools, colleges and universities may also support community learning and development through outreach work within communities. The community schools movement has been a strong proponent of this since the 1960. Some universities and colleges have run outreach adult education programmes within local communities for decades. Since the 1970 the prefix word 'community' has also been adopted by several other occupations from youth workers and health workers to planners and architects, who work with more disadvantaged groups and communities and have been influenced by community education and community development approaches.

2. NATIONAL PRIORITIES

Three national priorities have been developed for community learning and development they are:

ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH LEARNING FOR ADULTS

Raising standards of achievement in learning for adults through community-based lifelong learning opportunities incorporating the core skills of literacy, numeracy, communications, working with others, problem solving and information communications technology (ICT).

ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH LEARNING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Engaging with young people to facilitate their personal, social and educational development and enable them to gain a voice, influence and place in society.

ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Building community capacity and influence by enabling people to develop the confidence, understanding and skills required to influence decision making and service delivery.

3. WISCONSIN MODEL OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

A philosophical base for developing Community Education programs is provided through the five components of the Wisconsin Model of Community Education. The model provides a process framework for local school districts to implement or strengthen community education. A set of Community Education Principles was developed by Larry Horyna and Larry Decker for the National Coalition for Community Education in 1991, these include:

SELF-DETERMINATION

Local people are in the best position to identify community needs and wants. Parents, as children's first and most important teachers, have both a right and a responsibility to be involved in their children's education.

SELF-HELP

People are best served when their capacity to help themselves is encouraged and enhanced. When people assume ever-increasing responsibility for their own well being, they acquire independence rather than dependence.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The identification, development, and use of the leadership capacities of local citizens are prerequisites for ongoing self-help and community improvement efforts.

4. LOCALIZATION

Services, programs, events, and other community involvement opportunities that are brought closest to where people live have the greatest potential for a high level of public participation. Whenever possible, these activities should be decentralized to locations of easy public access.

INTEGRATED DELIVERY OF SERVICES

Organizations and agencies that operate for the public good can use their limited resources, meet their own goals, and better serve the public by establishing close working relationships with other organizations and agencies with related purposes.

MAXIMUM USE OF RESOURCES

The physical, financial, and human resources of every community should be interconnected and used to their fullest if the diverse needs and interests of the community are to be met.

INCLUSIVENESS

The segregation or isolation of people by age, income, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, or other factors inhibits the full development of the community. Community programs, activities, and services, should involve the broadest possible cross section of community residents.

RESPONSIVENESS

Public institutions have a responsibility to develop programs and services that respond to the continually changing needs and interests of their constituents.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Learning begins at birth and continues until death. Formal and informal learning opportunities should be available to residents of all ages in a wide variety of community settings.

5. ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONALS

The role of a community learning and development professional depends somewhat on the career path followed. For example, someone working with young people may have different priorities than someone working with adults; however, the outcomes are very similar in a sense that both will be aiming to promote a more socially just and equal society. Community learning and development is a vast field of work and the range of job categories is wide and may include the following: Youth Information Worker, Detached Youth Worker, Community Arts Worker, Community Capacity Worker, Local Authority Community Planning Officer, etc.

Community learning and development workers should see themselves as working with people, rather than for them. Empathy is crucial to understanding the issues faced by those they work with and it is important that they engage in a way that does not intimidate people or place the worker in a position of looking down on those they work with.

The role of a Community learning and development worker is largely different to the role of a formal educator such as a teacher. Community learning and development workers do not follow a curriculum, as they allow the people they work with to form their own way of learning and each individual is believed to have the ability to reach their full potential in life. A community learning and development approach is arguably a more effective way of learning as every individual has their own unique way to learn and community learning and development workers look for the best possible method that suits the individual. Community learning and development approaches are gradually being adopted in schools to some extent and many other agencies and using a community learning and development approach in their work.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATORS

Professional community educators or community learning and development workers usually hold a professional degree in community education or community learning and development, depending on the course offered at the university from which they graduate. The qualifications may be approved by the Standards Council for Community Learning and Development. This means that the course has been assessed by a group of peers - an Approval Panel. Many of those working in the field of community learning and development will be doing so voluntarily. These people are usually encouraged to complete a work-place based alternative to the full-time degree course. Others in paid positions may hold qualifications relevant to the field. These people will also be encouraged to study for a degree in community education.

Youth Participation in Community learning

In countries where democratic governments exist, people are encouraged to vote for someone to represent them. In today's society there is a dwindling interest in politics from our younger generation and this could have a negative effect on our democracy and political system in years to come. Community learning and development has the potential to encourage young people to become more interested in politics and helping them influence decisions that affect their lives.

In many parts of the world, youth parliament-style organisations have been set up to allow young people to debate issues that affect them and others in their community. Young people engage with these organisations voluntarily and are sometimes elected using a democratic system of voting. Young people are at the heart of these organisations and are usually involved in the management and development. The majority of these organisations are facilitated and staffed by workers trained in community learning and development; however, staff role is mainly to facilitate and be supportive but not intrusive. These organisations allow young people to gain a voice, influence decision makers who affect their lives and provide them with a sense of self-worth and a place in society.

6. CONCLUSION

Community educators have over many years developed a range of skills and approaches for working within local communities and in particular with disadvantaged people. These include less

formal educational methods, community organizing and group work skills. Since the nineteen sixties and seventies through the various anti poverty programmes in both developed and developing countries, practitioners have been influenced by structural analyses as to the causes of disadvantage and poverty i.e. inequalities in the distribution of wealth, income, land etc. and especially political power and the need to mobilize people power to affect social change.

Community learning and development workers do not follow a curriculum, as they allow the people they work with to form their own way of learning and each individual is believed to have the ability to reach their full potential in life. Community organization is responsible for setting professional training standards for education and development practitioners working within local communities was established.

Community development workers and development educators had tended to focus upon the socio-economic and environmental development of those communities. Both sets of occupations recognized that they shared very similar values, knowledge base and skill sets and that what brought them together was a common commitment to supporting learning and social action.

7. REFERENCE

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