

Spectrum of Lifelong Education

Rameshwari Pandya, ed., 2011, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, ISBN 13: 978-81-8069-744-9, hard cover, pages: xxvi+310, price: Rs.800

The book under review is an edited volume of 21 contributions. They deal with various aspects of adult education, viz. the concepts, and approaches to and processes in imparting adult education. Eight of them are based on empirical research in adult education and the others are of theoretical discussion. The 21 contributions of the volume are organised into five sections: lifelong education, role of media in adult education, adult and non formal education, women and non formal education, and extension education.

The section on lifelong education has five articles. They deal with the need of lifelong education for social development in the larger society as well as for improving the quality of life of individual human beings. The specific issues of lifelong education discussed in this section are development of new knowledge, reconstruction of new values, transformation of behavioural patterns of human beings, and capacity building of individuals for acquisition of personal, social and professional skills for enhancing the quality of life. The last contribution of this section is a theoretical article on the social constructivist approach to education, which views learning as a process wherein both students and teachers are engaged in the construction of knowledge through their interaction. As this article is an approach on education in general, it remains by itself unconnected with the theme discussed in the other articles of the section. The article in itself is interesting, although it has not been related to the theme of the role of lifelong education discussed in the section.

The second section on the role of media in adult education has four articles. The issues discussed in the papers of this section pertain more

to mass media in general than to adult/lifelong education or the linkage between media and adult education. The first article in this section deals with the role of media as a great catalyst in creating awareness among the people about government policies and programmes, and thereby bringing about social change. The next article, entitled “media as a partner in adult and non formal education,” does not really highlight the importance of media in imparting adult non formal education. The author of this article makes an interesting comment that “media is turning from mission to profession, from profession to sensation and from sensation to commission” (page 101), but has not explained its import in the context of adult education. The third article of this section deals with the need for transfer of technology from the research laboratory to the field for the benefit of the people. The place of this article within the section on the role of media on adult education is not clear. However, the point that knowledge and technology should be made available and relevant to the people is an objective of lifelong education. To that extent the article is relevant to the theme of the book as a whole.

The section on adult and non formal education has six articles. In the first article of this section its author highlights the dietary pattern and nutritional deficiencies among the rural people. Although the issue considered in the article is important in rural development, the author has not related it to the theme of lifelong or adult education. The author of the article and the editor of the book may have assumed that lifelong/adult/non formal education can sensitise the people about the ill effects of nutritional deficiency in rural areas. If so, the article could have been presented in the volume with that perspective. Another article of this section is on sustainable development, which is an important developmental issue. However, the article is not placed in the context of lifelong or adult or non formal education, the topic of the section as well as the book. The issues discussed in the other articles of the section include education for consumer awareness and for sustainable livelihoods in rural areas, and the role of universities in imparting adult education. They are more or less relevant to the theme of the book.

The fourth section of the book on women and non formal education contains three articles. The first contribution of this section is a well articulated

comprehensive article on the importance of women's education in nation building. The next article in the section deals with the participation of women teachers in development, which urges the need for investments in this direction as the fundamental input in a developing country. The third and last article of this section deals with elderly women and their health, but has hardly anything to do with education. Hence this article remains unrelated to the theme of the section or book.

The final section of the book on extension education has three articles. They deal with issues of capacity building of extension personnel, knowledge, attitude and practice of reproductive health, and life skill education. These are very much related to the theme of the book. It may be mentioned that the last article of this section deals with life skill education as an important aspect of lifelong education. The author of the article speaks of life skill education as 'reengineering of the human capital' and refers to the skill of living as refinement, which has three forms – refinement of outlook, refinement of behaviour and refinement of feeling. The article suits well as the concluding contribution of the book.

The book provides an overall picture of lifelong education and highlights its importance. The different articles in the book contain both theoretical as well as field related knowledge on lifelong education. The research based articles present the real situation with regard to the issues in lifelong education and also suggest measures to deal with them. The book also discusses the role of government and educational institutions including universities in imparting adult or lifelong education. The book on the whole leads to the realisation that lifelong education is the highway of development, of both the individual and the nation.

The reviewer is not sure if the title of "Spectrum of Lifelong Education" suits the contents of the book. The book deals largely with adult non formal education. One wonders if the editor of the book has treated lifelong education as adult education or chosen to deal with adult education as a component of lifelong education. Or, are the expressions of lifelong education, adult education and non formal education used interchangeably

in the book? It would have been helpful if this conceptual clarification were made in the book. As already indicated, the book could have been better organised both in terms of the sections and the articles within the sections. Better editorial attention also could have been paid to some of the contributions wherein the individual authors seem to have overlooked the matter of language in presentation.

Despite these comments from the point of view of the organisation of the book and presentation of individual contributions, the volume has succeeded in putting together several relevant materials for enhancing the reader's knowledge about lifelong education. Being a volume on various aspects of adult education, the book will be helpful to educators in imparting non formal education. The book would certainly be a resource material for students, teachers and field practitioners engaged in studying adult education or working with adult groups that need continuing education.

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