UNIT 4 ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

Adult learning has an important place in extension education and development. The extension education programme largely deals with adult learners. They are the farmers in the agriculture sectors; adults and eligible couples in the health and family welfare sector; adults in the education sectors; NGOs dealing with the women and child development sectors, etc. In this unit, you will study the role and importance of adult learners, the principles of adult learning, and the role of adult trainers in extension and development. Extension and development programme are mostly of the adults, by the adults, and for the adults. Therefore, knowledge about adult learning and its principles would make adult trainers and learners effective agents of development.

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- define adult education, and explain the role and importance of adult learning
- explain the characteristics of adult learners, and the role of adult trainers in adult teaching-learning
- discuss the conditions and principles of adult learning
- analyze the guiding principles of adult behavioural change.

4.2 THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education plays an important role in extension education and development. As you are aware, India has a large adult population who are the bread earners of their family, and they play an important role in nation building. Therefore, educating these adults about the development is vital to ensure speedy and effective development.
What is Adult Education?

Adult education is a process where adults who are no longer in school, or do not attend school on a regular, or, full time basis, or school dropouts undertake sequential and organized educational activities on various subjects, such as health and family welfare, agriculture and animal husbandry, etc. This is intended to bringing about changes in knowledge, attitude, and skill for the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problems.

Adult education is considered an important form of education with the following five important roles:

- promote the working class of the future in building their technical competence and vocational skills
- create a climate of tolerance and mutual appreciation
- strengthen the possibility of a sustainable lifestyle
- help to rejoining a sense and indigenous cultural identity among communities of the region.
- promote education in a participatory way.

Adult education embraces all forms of educative experiences needed by men and women according to their varying interests and requirements at their differing levels of comprehension and ability, and in their changing roles and responsibilities throughout life.

- UNESCO

Adult education plays an indirect but significant role in the educational as well as economic development of a nation. Arthur Lewis noted that “the quickest way to increase productivity in less developed countries is to train the adults who already on the job.” It can be remarked that without adult education and adult literacy, it is not possible to have that range and speed of economic and social development that makes it worthwhile in terms of values and welfare. Because it is not possible to impart all types of education to various categories of learners, non-classroom education of adult learners has immense importance, particularly for a developing society, and a society with low levels of literacy and high illiteracy, and low development.

Adult Education in India

In India, adult education covers the 15-35 year age group. Although adult education in India was important before independence, the concept of adult education become effective only in 1978, when it become a part of the Revised Minimum Needs Programme launched by the Government of India. The Sixth Five Year Plan document recognized that the adult education programme will emphasize, not merely the acquisition of literacy and numeracy, but functional development and social awareness, too. Therefore, the programme includes, besides literacy, an appropriate mix, suited to the needs of the individuals, of themes such as general education, citizenship, training, health education and family planning, upgrading vocational skills, appreciation of the use of appropriate technology, physical education, and cultural activities.
The main thrust areas of adult education in India, according to Sixth Five Year Plan, are:

- to teach the poor directly.
- to impart it through coordination with other developmental departments
- to make it an essential facet of area planning.

### 4.3 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS

In the previous section, we discussed the meaning and important roles of adult education. Before undertaking any adult learning programme, it is important to acknowledge the characteristics of adult learners. Adult learners who are not in the mainstream of formal education have different characteristics. A few characteristics of adult learners are worth mentioning.

- Adult learners are voluntary learners.
- Their age group and level of knowledge, attitude, and abilities vary from one another.
- Adult learners have varied interest, prejudices, values, habits, and different levels of emotional maturity.
- Adult learners require more time to practice new skills.
- They have various responsibilities and, so, usually have less time to learn.
- They prefer to learn by participation.
- Adult learners have their own self-esteem and ego.
- Adults evaluate learning in terms of results, and its utility to their life situations.
- Adults have their own strategies and pattern of learning.
- Adults prefer the learning to be simple, understandable, and applicable.

Malcom Knowles has identified following characteristics of adult learners.

- Adults are autonomous and self-directed. Therefore, the adult trainers must actively involve adult participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators for them.
- Adults have accumulated a foundation of life experiences and knowledge that must be recognized.
- Adults are goal-oriented. Therefore, they appreciate an educational programme that is organized and has clearly defined elements.
- Adults are relevancy-oriented. They see a reason for learning something. Therefore, learning has to be applicable to their work and other responsibilities.
- Adults are practical and focus on the aspects of a lesson which is most useful to them and their work.
- Adults must be shown respect. The adult trainers must acknowledge the wealth of experiences that adult participants bring to the classroom.
After studying the characteristics of adult learning, now it is important to know the conditions in which adult learning has to take place. Some of the important conditions required for adult learning follow.

- Adults must be adequately motivated to change their behaviour and practices.
- Adults must be clearly taught and be aware about the deficiencies of their present behaviour and practices.
- Adults must be presented a clear picture of the behaviour and practices that they have to adopt.
- Enabling environment must be created for adults to practice the appropriate behaviour and practices.
- Adults must be getting reinforcement of the correct behaviour.
- Adult must be given adequate IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) material and be exposed to BCC (Behavioural Change Communication) activities.
- Adults learn best in adult ways.
- Adults are fastidious about change because of experience and age.
- Learning should emerge out of their experiences, be related to, and built on the experiences of the adults.
- Practical experiences and result demonstration are extremely important for adult learners.
- Adult learners do not get much learning from didactic lectures, rather, they get more from the use of audio visuals and discussions.
- Adults want to share more experiences and listen less, and, therefore, they like to learn in leisurely way.
- Adults do not want to shoulder the burden of learning.

According to Stephen Lieb (1991) there are four critical elements of learning that must be addressed to ensure that adult participants learn.

i) **Motivation**: the trainer must motivate the adult learners for learning. The adult trainers must establish a friendly and open atmosphere with the adult learners. An appropriate level of difficulty would better help the adult learners to understand the topic. The instructor must reward the learners.

ii) **Reinforcement**: reinforcement has an important role in adult learning. Positive reinforcement encourages the adult learner to take part in active learning.

iii) **Retention**: the instructor must see that the adults must retain information from the classroom in order to benefit from the learning. Retention would be helpful in the application of learning to real life situation.

iv) **Transference**: the transfer of learning is the ultimate goal of the teaching-learning. Positive transference, like positive reinforcement occurs when the participants uses the behaviour taught in the classroom.
Up till now you have read the meaning, role and importance of adult education, characteristics of adult learners, and conditions for adult learning. You could now able to answer the questions below in Check Your Progress 1.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the spaces given below for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) What do you mean by adult education, and why is it important in extension and development?

2) Write a few important characteristics of adult learners?

4.5 PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

After discussing the characteristics of adult learners and the conditions in which adult learning takes place, now it is useful to know about various principles of adult learning. Any trainer or educator who has to impart teaching and training to adults must be well versed about the principles of adult learning. Only by applying these principles, can he, or she, create interest among the adult learners. When these principles are well understood, they would help them to carry their work with effectiveness and satisfaction. Some of these principles are given below.

Andragogy and Adult Learning Guiding Principles

Adult education is based on the philosophy called ‘andragogy’ that is the art and science of helping adults learn. The guiding principles of adult learning aim at bringing (a) changes in what people know; (b) changes in what people can do; (c) changes in what people think and feel; (d) and, changes in what people actually do. In other words, it must emphasize change knowledge, attitude, and the skills of the learner.

- The training of adults should be based on their immediate needs. As the adult learners have varied experiences and knowledge, any repetition would not create interest among them. In other words, the teaching and training
The programme needs to be focused on filling the gaps between what they know, and what they ought to know.

- It must be self-directed, and the principle should be 'helping the people to help themselves'. The trainers' role, most of the time, is to be a facilitator, and the trainee to be the real actor.
- It should be participatory and not be a one sided' affair, where the trainers are being treated as orators and trainees as listeners.
- It should be practical and field based, and fewer classrooms based, and didactic lecture based. The main purpose is to be learning by doing.
- It must provide feedback. The trainer has to provide feedback to the trainees, if any clarification is required by them after the training. If answers to questions are not known, the reply, “I do not know, but I shall find out”, gains the respect of trainees. The question and answer method is the most useful for establishing effective interaction between the teachers and the taught.
- It should be democratic in nature. The trainer must assist all categories of trainees irrespective of following differences such as: higher and lower education; upper and lower caste; slow and fast learners; higher and lower income class; and Hindu, Muslim, Christian, etc. A trainer, who helps all gains the respect of all trainees.
- The trainer must be willing to learn from the trainees. (S)he should respect the sentiment of adult learners. (S)he must have enough patience to listen, respect the ideas, and humbly modify attitude towards change, where required. Moreover, (s)he must appreciate the ideas of the slow learners for whatever they are worth.
- It must create a comfortable environment and control the class with love, rather than with fear. It is in the environment of love, where the human qualities grow. An environment of fear, anger, and hatred is detrimental to human growth.
- It should take place in an atmosphere of rapport making and with harmony. There should be an active, but frank and fearless interaction between the teacher on one side, and the learners on the other, and it is the teacher who is responsible for creating this environment.
- Adults must be taught in a learning environment that focuses on the adult's personal goals, build on previous life experiences, and promotes positive self-esteem and self-worth. The adult trainer must create a climate that encourages and supports learning.

Johan Goodlad has given six principles of adult learning. According to him adults prefer learning situations which:
- are practical and problem centred
- promote their positive self-esteem
- integrate new ideas with the existing knowledge
- show respect for the individual learner
- capitalize on their experience
- allow choice and self-direction.
4.6 THE CHARACTERISTICS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADULT TRAINERS

Like the adult learners, the adult trainers also need to adhere to certain principles in order to effectively impart education to the adults. The role of the adult trainer is quite different from the teachers teaching in formal educational institutions. Bhandari (1961) has mentioned that a good adult teacher/trainer is one who

- has a thorough knowledge of subject matter
- has patience and goes out of his way to help people
- has no favouritism, and is fair and considerate
- admits his mistakes, does not get angry when asked to explain a point, and can explain difficult subjects in a simple manner
- does not control the class by fear but has a pleasant and sweet manner of presentation
- has a sense of humour, cheerful and encourages learners
- is adoptable, sincere, takes interest in learners and friendly

M.A. Gode (1987) mentions the following responsibilities for adult trainers

- to make learners educated, initiate a process of awareness amongst them, introduce development activities in the community and help the learners to acquire certain functional skills for tackling their problem
- to convince and motivate illiterate adults to come to the centre
- to enlist the learners and enter their names in the register
- to select accommodation at the centre
- to decide the timings of the centre, in consultation with the learner
- to see that all material and equipment, like books, charts, blackboards, chalks, mats, etc., are procured and kept ready at the centre quite in advance.
- to plan and organize different types of activities at the centre with the help of the supervisor and the teacher in charge, as well as with the people from the community
- to arrange the teaching/learning material which the trainer is going to use in the centre
- to maintain the attendance register of the learner at the centre
- to maintain the diary and the visitor’s book
- to attend meetings organized by the supervisors
- to fill up monthly report regularly
- to help in conducting evaluation of the programme.

The principles to be applied by adult trainers for teaching adults can be summed up in following saying:

"Go in search of your people, love them, learn from them, plan with them, serve them, begin with what they know, carry on from what they know and build on what they have".
Legans (1961) delineated a few guidelines for adult trainers.

- Respect for individuals who are to be helped.
- Sympathy for people’s problems as they see them.
- Willingness to work at the people’s pace without exerting pressure for the acceptance of decisions made arbitrary.
- Ability in relating new knowledge and ideas to people’s interests and needs.
- Actively engaging people in the learning process.
- Providing opportunities for the practical application of what has been learned.

Hall (1950) lists the following fifteen responsibilities of an adult trainer.

- Initiator
- Orientor
- Facilitator
- Encourager
- Harmoniser
- Fact-seeker
- Fact-giver
- Compromiser
- Expeditor
- Spokesman
- Role model
- Recorder
- Evaluator
- Analyzer

**Check Your Progress 2**

**Note:**

a) Use the spaces given below for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Name five important principles of adult learning.

2) What precautions does the adult trainer have to take while imparting training to adults?

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**4.7 THE ANDRAGOGY OF ADULT LEARNING**

This section focuses on the andragogy of adult learning. Malcolm Knowles is considered the founding father of the theory of adult learning, and the andragogy of adult learning. He contrasted the concept of andragogy, meaning the art and sciences of helping adults learn, with pedagogy, or, the art and science of helping children learn. Knowles labelled andragogy as an emerging educational
technology which facilitates the development and implementation of learning activities for adults, and based it on six andragogical assumptions that are different from those of the pedagogical model.

i) *The need to know:* adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.

ii) *The learners' self-concept:* adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives. As a person matures, his, or her, self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.

iii) *The role of learners' experiences:* as a person matures, he, or she, accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning. Adults come into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience, compared with youth.

iv) *Readiness to learn:* As a person matures, his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles. Adults become ready to learn those things that they need to know, and be able to do, in order to cope effectively with their real life situations.

v) *Orientation to learning:* as a person matures, his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and, accordingly, his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject centred orientation (at least in school) to life-centred (or task-centred, or problem-centred) orientation.

vi) *Motivation to learn:* while adults are responsive to some external motivators (better jobs, higher income, or salaries, and the like), the most potent motivators are internal pressures (the desire for increased job satisfaction, self esteem, quality of life, among others).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Andragogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner</td>
<td>• The learner is dependent on the teacher for learning</td>
<td>• The learner is self motivated and self directed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of learners experience</td>
<td>• The learner has little experience. It has to be built on, more than used as resource • The experience of the instructor is most influential</td>
<td>• The learners have a tremendous amount of life experience • Adults are a rich resource for one another • Experience becomes the source of self identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to learning</td>
<td>• Learning is a process of acquiring prescribed subject matter • Content units are sequenced according to the logic of the subject matter</td>
<td>• Learning must have relevance to real-life tasks • Learning is organized around life/work situations rather than subject matter units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation for learning</td>
<td>• Primarily motivated by external rewards and punishment, competition for grades, and the consequences of failure</td>
<td>• Motivation by internal incentives: recognition, better quality of life, self confidence self actualization</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The need to know, in order to perform more effectively in some aspect of one's life is important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand for learning</td>
<td>• Learner must balance life responsibilities with the demands of learning</td>
<td>• Learner can devote more time to the demands of learning because responsibilities are minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanence of learning</td>
<td>• Learning is self-initiated and tends to last a long time</td>
<td>• Learning is compulsory and tends to disappear shortly after instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>• Tense, low trust</td>
<td>Relaxed, trusting</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Formal, cold, aloof</td>
<td>Mutually respectful</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Authority-oriented</td>
<td>Informal, warm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Competitive, judgmental</td>
<td>Collaborative, supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis of needs</td>
<td>• Primarily by teaching system and teacher</td>
<td>Mutual assessment by learner and facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning of curriculum</td>
<td>• Primarily by teaching system and teacher</td>
<td>Mutually by learners and facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of learning</td>
<td>• Objectives are set by teaching system</td>
<td>Objectives are set by mutual negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Objectives are predetermined and inflexible</td>
<td>Objectives are flexible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Designing learning plans</td>
<td>• Teachers’ content plans</td>
<td>Learning contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fixed course syllabus</td>
<td>Learning projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Logical sequence</td>
<td>Sequenced by readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning activities</td>
<td>• Passive teaching methods like transmitted techniques, assigned readings, etc., are used</td>
<td>Active training methods are used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace of learning</td>
<td>• Teachers’ control timing and pace of learning</td>
<td>Learners influence timing and pace of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>• By teacher</td>
<td>By learner-collected evidence validated by peers, facilitators, experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Norm-referenced (on a curve) with grades</td>
<td>Criterion-referenced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this section we discussed the andragogy of adult learning, and now you should be able to answer the questions given in Check Your Progress 3, given below.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the spaces given below for your answers.
    b) Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Distinguish between the andragogy and the pedagogy of learning?

2) Explain three androogical principles?

4.8 LET US SUM UP

This unit dealt with the meaning, scope, and importance of adult learning and its principles. Besides these basic components of adult learning, the unit also covered the guiding principles of adult behaviour change which can draw the attention, develop interest, create desire, create understanding, ensure action, maintain satisfaction, and continue action. These adult learning principles have immense importance in extension education and development programmes.

4.9 REFERENCES AND SELECTED READINGS


Check Your Progress 1

1) Adult education is designed for adults, usually in the age group, 15-35 years (in India). It is adults who are largely involved in the extension and development programmes, and, therefore, adult education and its principles are critical for the effective implementation of these activities and programmes.

2) A few important characteristics of adult learners are: they are voluntary learners; they prefer to learn by participation, and; they require more time to practice skills.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Five important principles of adult learning are: the training of adults should be based on their immediate needs; it must be self-directed and the principle should be 'helping the people to help themselves'; It should be participatory and not be a one sided affair, where the trainers' are being treated as orators and trainees as listener; it should be more practical and field based, and less classroom based or didactic lecture based, and ; it must provide feedback.

2) While imparting training to the adults, the adult trainers have to take precautions, viz., have thorough knowledge of the subject matter; patience; willingness to help people; have no favourites; fairness and consideration; admit mistakes; do not get angry when asked to explain a point, and ; explains difficult subject in a simple manner.

Check Your Progress 3

1) The concept of andragogy is the art and sciences of helping adults learn, while that of pedagogy, the art and science of helping children learn.

2) The three andragogical principles are: (i) the need to know (ii) the learners’ self-concept, and (iii) the role of the learners’ experience.