

## Role of universities in life long learning for elderly people

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### **Need for lifelong education programmes for elderly:**

Lifelong education is a key to individual and social development in the 21st century. India has set before itself the goal of "Education for AH" by 2010. Education is envisaged as an instrument of social transformation and is expected to play an important role in social development. In this context, education should be viewed as a lifelong process. It begins in early childhood and continues throughout life Chakraborti (2004).

Lifelong education and learning has generated considerable interest amongst educationists across nations. The report to the International Commission on the Development of Education (1972) has recommended lifelong education as a master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries. In 1996, UNESCO report of International Commission on Education for 21st century reiterated that the concept of learning throughout life emerges as one of the keys to the 21st century.

Many institutions and development agencies are engaged in providing lifelong education to people of various age groups, say children, youth, adults and elder lies. The approaches adopted to impart the lifelong education by these institutions vary in nature. Also the target groups as well as programmes are different from organizations to organizations. Some impart lifelong education through formal approaches and some make efforts to reach out the communities in order

provide education to needed population. They are all analogous in their concerns to reach the unreached.

As lifelong education suggests learning opportunities throughout life, there is a great significance of lifelong learning for elderly in the present context. There are many responsible factors for this and they are as follows :

### **Increased life expectancy:**

Advancements in the medical science have resulted in the increased life expectancy of an average person, thus now more and more people live longer into old age. Thus, providing scope for people to avail post retirement, leisure time actively and fruitfully.

### **Changing family systems:**

Due to the revolutionary changes in the societies related to technology, social educational, the family composition in India are shifting from joint to nuclear system, where in only the parents and unmarried children stay together. This creates a strong need for the elderly population of the country to either live independently or stay at old homes. Family bonds are becoming weak, thus there is a great necessity to have improved quality of life. Lifelong education has a scope to impart learning opportunities to older people.

### **Economic changes:**

There are drastic economic changes as a result of

globalization process. Hence forth, the cost of living is increasing day by day. India is witnessing the consuming society in comparison to the conservative societies of the past. The interest rates of the banks are steeping heavily thus affecting the elderly population, the most who depend a large, on the bank balance after retirement. The repercussions of this are directly reflected upon the various facilities to be availed by the older generations like medical facilities. Thus, it once again justifies the need of a strong lifelong education system for elderly. Apart from this, there are many other problems like cultural changes in the societies, changing recreational patterns the family, migrations (temporary or permanent) of the family members, which the elderlies have to face today. The concept of lifelong learning for ageing proves to have promising solutions to such rising problems and provide pleasures in their life.

#### **Role of universities in providing life long education:**

Lifelong learning not only offers educations for life, but it is also designed to offer most significant period and site for every phase. This lifelong learning is possible through an effective programme of continued learning. There are presently many modes of providing continuous education like, distance education, adult and no formal education, extension education etcetera. But the need of the hour is to extensively utilize the university system for imparting the lifelong education. University system can serve the best platform to impart lifelong education. As this education provides wide access to information and empowerment of masses, thus making efforts for an achieving and aspiring society. Hence, universities can play a great role in continuous imparting the lifelong education to people from all sections of the society. For instance, the infrastructure and other physical amenities of universities are of great help. The financial grants provided to universities can also be of great help to run the lifelong education. The university educators can take up the responsibilities for educating lifelong education, through proper intensive orientation. The students community can act as an important nucleus for implementing this education. The university system can also be utilized for involving projects related to extension programmes for imparting lifelong education. Apart from this, university can play an effective role in imparting lifelong education in many ways, like.

In India many universities have adult and continuing centres/ departments. The objectives of such centres are to train people in preparing adult educators, conducting programmes/ workshops for various sections of the society. These centres can be used for covering the elderly populations of the country. For many years the focus of such centres has been on women, children, youth and their related issues. Now is the time when, adult educators in making, can be imparted training in catering to the elderly as target groups of their programmes. These centres can develop content, provide

special learning experiences to develop competencies in their graduates to take up programmes for ageing. According to (Joshi, 2004) The objectives of such programmes could be:

- Conception of philosophy of education for ageing.
- Understanding participatory ageing education.
- Development of ability to plan co-ordinate, supervise and evaluate the educational programmes for ageing.
- Organization and legal provision for ageing.

The status of lifelong education of ageing people in India is not very satisfactory. There is hardly any systematic organized effort in this regards. Attempts can be made by targeting the educators by imparting training and education to them. For elderlies systematic curriculum can be planned for ageing people which may have the following objectives :

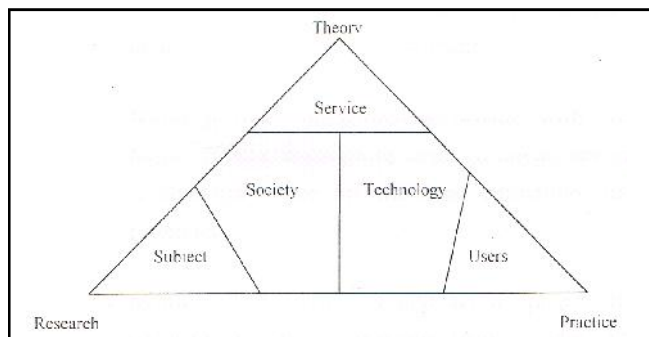
- To develop understanding regarding the characteristics and psychology of ageing people.
- To develop awareness regarding the major area of concerns of ageing people.
- To develop competencies in selecting and using various approaches for dealing various aspects of ageing people.
- To develop abilities in conducting researches related to the ageing population.
- To develop abilities in conceiving planning implementing and monitoring programmes for the ageing population.
- To undergo internship training programmes in the organization working for ageing population.

This way such educational programmes for educators can contribute a lot to meet the growing needs of ageing population.

Research is primarily the process of systematic scientific inquiry for new knowledge. Development to any new area is possible through research and scientific technology and its implementation in a right manner. Research in any discipline forms the foundation of technology through which all the developments takes place. It is believed that research is the key to sustainable development.

In India, where people have to voluntarily opt for and participate in the developmental programmes, the role of research and development becomes crucial and critical. In case of lifelong learning for elderly the need for research is all the more important because it can immediately show in concrete terms the benefits of education to the people.

The researches in lifelong education for elderly should focus on theory and practices. Practice oriented research aimed solving field problems, but it creates imbalance if the theory based researches are not conducted. Thus, there is a strong need for holistic approach to researches into consideration the paradigm shift in information work and the related social change. In this context, Mishra and Joshi (1998) have identified 5 parameters which should be taken into account the Theory-research-practice triangle leading to sustainable development



of information infrastructure

Thus, universities can seriously indulge in taking up researches on various aspects of education for ageing and contribute a great deal in this field.

The universities educational system should gear up to make maximum use of ICT adopting the following, directions in order to disseminate knowledge and information.

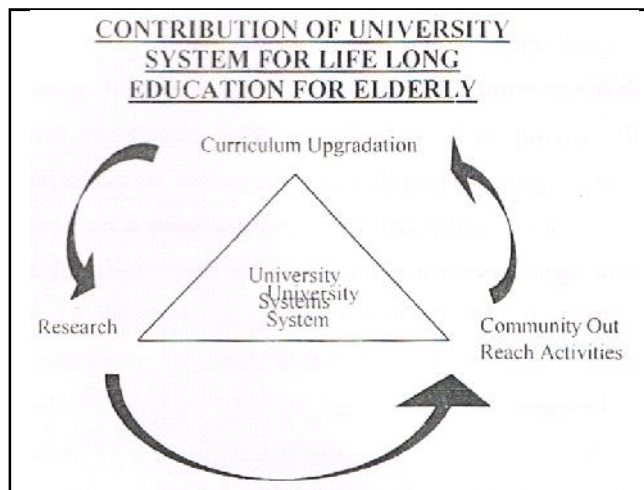
- Utilizing of various 101 like internet, emails, computers, etcetera for interactive communication should be encouraged.
- Development and use of locally managed media have great potential for effective learning.
- Blending new educational technique with traditional forms, rituals, festivals in order to encourage people to receive knowledge for lifelong education should be promoted.
- Multimedia approach should be adopted. It means utilizing all the communications media plus the interpersonal communication channels for designing integrated lifelong educational programmes.
- Creating network of satellite video transmission systems and computers to help constituting a lifelong learning system.

Thus, appropriate communication strategies based on multimedia approach deliberately planned, organized and directed in a manner and form which are popularly relevant to the changing environment and the desired changes, will be essential for the success of all the lifelong programmes for ageing population.

Extension services through its many educational programmes and activities intend to bring about changes in what people do and their knowledge, understanding and skills. Universities should be prepared to take the role and responsibilities of planning and implementation the lifelong education programmes for ageing population through the strong community outreach activities. This can prove to be efficient in imparting lifelong knowledge and skills to them. –

Thus, universities with their three tier system can really contribute in the development of ageing population

Innovations and experiments in life long learning for elderly at Department of Extension and Communication, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The M.S.



University of Baroda:

**Introduction:**

The story of Department of Extension and Communication begins in 1954. One of the major components of study was rural extension, with an objective of preparing village women for participation in community development programme. It was conceptualized as a programme extending educational services to rural families for their upliftment through informal approaches. More than four of decades ago, the idea of lifelong learning was very new. In those days, the role of the department was restricted to formal education in the form of teaching and research and nonformal education supplementary education, continues education were not specified clearly in the objectives of the department.

**Vision :**

The educators of the department realized the need to form objectives to meet the national level needs of extension. The vision therefore was to; contribute towards building a learning society where various sections of the society, namely, rural, urban, semi-urban, can continuously approach the department for self-development.

**Mission :**

The department has strong focus to carry out the mission of responding to the extension needs of the society while sensitizing university students to the realities faced by the people in the community. The idea behind the extension is to extend the human resources of the university to people and to take back knowledge gained from the community to the university, for further conceptions and implementation of development programmes.

**Objectives:**

- To offer extension courses to the students to gain

insight into the needs of lifelong education for various target groups.

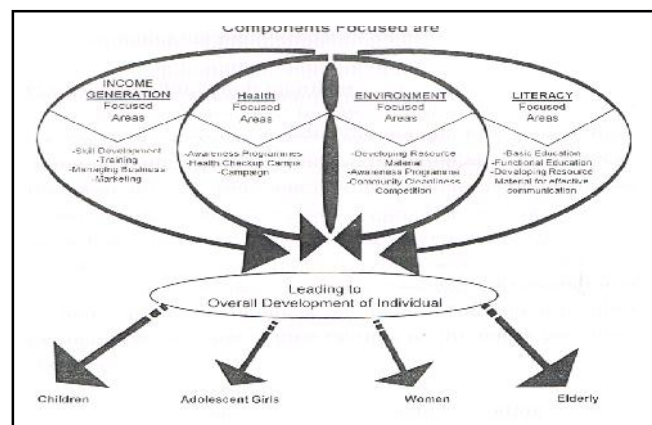
- To develop abilities in planning conducting and evaluating development programmes for community people.
- To development linkages with government and non-government organization for effective implementation of extension programmes.
- To strengthen community outreach programmes in order to reach out to
  - Women
  - Adolescent girls
  - Children
  - Elders
- To familiarize students with various target groups for extension through a theory and practical oriented courses.
- To strengthen the component of extension by conducting training for students offering courses and providing research orientation to the students.

To attain these objectives, the time proven core mission of the department

- To educate
- To train
- To undertake research and
- To provide service to the community are preserved, reinforced till today as well as further expanded whenever the need arises.

#### Focussed areas of study:

Department is engaged in imparting lifelong education to various sections of the community, covering women, adolescent girls, children and elders. The lifelong education is imparted in following areas:



As earlier mentioned that the universities there components, namely teaching, research and extension are strong platforms for producing knowledge, adopting knowledge to create an intelligent human power which will in turn build information based society. The department of Home Science Extension and Communication is also contributing

the three mentioned components.

#### Teaching and community out reach activities:

With the rapid changes in the society, the objectives of teaching and learning in the department views see changes from time to time. Department offers courses in extension as well as communication. The focus of these theory and practical courses is on developing understanding creating awareness regarding various concepts, developing psychomotor skills in using various extension activities approaches, using communication technologies. The rural and urban extension courses have been started focusing on the elderly population of the city.

The courses like Community Health and Recreation is one such courses, where the master students are placed in old homes, or with old peoples clubs, where in the students have to plan programmes catering to the needs of the elderly people. Under this courses, the students visit their target prtic week interact with them, which is a strongly felt need of the aged people. Further, they plan health related activities like, health check - ups, talks by doctors, Yoga camps. Students also plan recreational activities for them like playing games with old people, arranging games in the parks, organizing film shows for them. A part from this, certain activities are planned and conducted on the demand of the elder people. Few such activities are, arranging and celebrations of festivals in old homes, train them the operations of computers, orienting them to bank operations etcetera.

To conduct such activities various methods and approaches like role plays, dramas, puppet plays, folk theatre are used. These methods were appreciated by the old people. Another courses is of "Adult and Non formal Education", which we at the department offer to the undergraduate as well as post graduate students.

It was realized that life long education for ageing people should be catered under the non-formal education programme, which can lead to the enhancement of life for elderly people. Thus, the focus of the course was to give the planning and conducting programmes for elderly people of various sections of the society. Under this, a programme on "Enhancement of life" was worked out. An integrated approach is adopted to encompass all the aspects related to ageing people's like health, recreation, management of daily chores. Finances like knowledge about various investments, insurance schemes for elderly, credit estate planning, managing stresses of life etcetera. Further, not only guiding and counsling the old people, is the approach of these courses, but arranging talks by the elderly people also planned. As elderly people have rich stock of experiences, I aperfir areas of work or interest, inviting them to share their experiences on running a business, cooperative or an entrepreneurship and so on, is one such approach used in this course. Interviewing elderly persons who have planned their retired lives well maintainin the

balance of social and psychological aspects of life and showing such example on other elderly people of different communities, is approach which is adopted in this course. Like this, under many courses offered graduate and post-graduate and diploma levels the elderly population is focused.

**Research :**

The teaching and learning process get further strengthened if it is integrated with research. Research keeps the process of inquiry vibrant and alive. It is therefore essential to support research activities with this objective in mind, the department is involved in conducting researches in various areas like, health, literacy, environment laws and policies related to various target groups. Thus, many research emphasizing, portrayal of women in media, women and human rights, laws, women and environment, women and education were conducted. Today, the focal point is more on issues and challenges of life long learning. Many M. Sc. level researches and Ph. D. studies are focusing on the ageing population of the country. Interdisciplinary searches targeting the third age population are being conducted in the department. To mention a few media in the elderly, problems of ageing population of Baroda city, perceptions of elderly people regarding changing roles of society, case studies of non-government organization working for elderly, are the recently undergoing research titles.

Research projects funded by UGC, Ford Foundations are also conducted in the department focusing the ageing population. Department has recently planned a big research project under the DRS scheme of University Grants Commission which also focuses on life long learning for all.

The Faculty of Home Science has women studies research centre which has rich collection of research studies, scientific literature and data on various aspects related to women. It also holds research journals in different disciplines and subjects in print and electronic forms. These facilities help the department students and staff to have access to research resources throughout India and abroad. This helps to widen the research activities and improve quality of research in the department.

Thus, these are the various efforts made by the department in teaching, research and outreach activities to take up life long learning for all, specially targeting the ageing population.

**Conclusion :**

The concept of life long education is relatively new in India yet it has generated considerable interest amongst educationists. Many Institutions and development agencies are involved in providing life long education to people of various age groups like children, youth, women and elderlies. There is a great significance of life long learning in the lives of ageing people due to the rapidly changing needs to the society. In this context, university system can really contribute in imparting the life long education.

Contributions from higher education system can be through teaching, research and outreach activities. This paper highlighted the efforts made by Department of Home Science, Extension and Communication in imparting knowledge regarding life long learning for elderly to the students through teaching, research and extension. Thus, such educational interventions in the life of aged can ensure the quality of their life and can facilitate the maintenance of personal growth and development even during the ageing period. The universities and colleges need to be used as focal points of activities to spread and sustain skills and expertized through the torch of life long learning.

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