



**JUSTIFYING THE NEED FOR COMPLEMENTARY EDUCATION –
IMPLICATIONS ON THE ELT PRACTITIONERS**

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Introduction

This paper attempts to discuss the important place Non-Formal education obtained in the realm of educational space. Even those educationists who advocated ‘the spread of education among the masses’ as the only means for empowering the nation’s citizens, also valued NFE as a complementary form of accomplishing the country’s educational objectives. In this paper, researcher confines the observations to the importance of NFE in relation to the disadvantaged communities i.e., the Migrants. The paper tries to understand what it means to introduce schooling for the neglected seasonal Migrant children in the age group of 6 to 14 years of age and examine how work site schools caters to meet the set goals. With this educational programme at the backdrop, the study intends to review the policy documents that echo the inclusion of the marginalized communities. With this understanding, the researcher interacts with officials involved in implementing the programme on the one hand and observes the practices at the Work Site Schools on the other hand. The aim of this study is to document the lapses in executing a new-way schooling of this kind and trigger thinking that enables us to propose suitable bridge schools for meeting the goals of RTE 2010. For meeting this purpose, this paper locates some of the prevalent views expressed in the domain of non-formal education and draws in from the existing policy guidelines. Besides, the researcher also ascertains these two strands with the help of inputs from NGOs and officials in the government (staff employed in SSA, Andhra Pradesh).

To authenticate the views documented in our literatures, the researcher interviewed a small sample of 6 subjects. This sample consisted of three representatives from NGOs and another three from the Rajiv Vidya Mission, Hyderabad. Researcher collates information on the current practices followed in the WSS, provisions made available by the state for managing these learning centres, need to strengthen institutions of this kind and the means to accomplish the set educational objectives. The data captured in the current paper is a miniscule of the non-





formal educational initiatives across (Work Site Schools run in the brick kilns located in Ranga Reddy district). However, this could help us to attain an understanding of how the larger picture is, in the contexts of non-formal education. This comprehension can lead us to contemplate on the more serious concerns that need to be addressed in the non-formal educational initiatives as a whole particularly those similar to the WSS model(s).

Supportive Literature:

This section centers around notable insights from the field of non-formal education. This is done by drawing our discussion along the arguments, ideas presented by some of the established names in the field. In addition to this, this paper also throws light on some of the key elements being discussed in the policy documents too. The idea behind this exercise is to establish an overarching connect between the theories, researches on the one hand and the supportive aspects that are reiterated in the policies on the other.

J.P.Naik (1977) perceives that the interest towards non-formal education is aroused mostly because of the disenchantment of people with formal education and the costs involved while delivering these needs both quantitatively and also qualitatively. A positive trend favouring this opinion is likely to grow in the near future. More emphasis on the skill enhancement and a simultaneous disinvestments in the 'humanities and social sciences' by our policy makers can lead us in these path. Also, it is believed that maximal flexibility and minimal rigidity are the guiding principles of any NFE initiative. As long as the larger educational objectives are not compromised, NFE is very much in alignment with what the conventional formal education advocates. Pillai S (P53, 1995) cites (Central Advisory Board on Education's report, 1974) recommendation to establish non- formal education institutions with a view to provide compensatory education. But, it is interesting to see how NFE is not just an alternative support system but a complementary one. Addressing the non-equals i.e., the heterogeneity within a given group of learners is the commonly noticed concern. One of the important objectives of the NFE initiatives is geared to strike the balance among the peers with unequal competencies. E.g., the home-based educational services offered for the persons with disabilities. Here, it is relevant to remind ourselves of C.S. Joshi, who in his book, articulates on how the morale and motivation levels among the push out or drop out students can be affected negatively. For instance, disability can be one of the reasons which hamper enrolment of persons with disabilities in conventional educational system. Similar tendency can be witnessed particularly when older students are expected to share same classroom space with the peers who are younger to them in age (P14, 15: C.S. Joshi, 2002). Although, quality schools are a crucial factor in children's learning and development, researchers' have long known that a multitude of family and other out-of-school





influences play even larger role (P213). This book echoes that “Good schools are essential but appear to be insufficient to ensure the effective education of the nations’ people’. Quoting Rothstein, (2004), author also draws us to researchers’ findings that schooling accounts for no more than one-thirds of variation in children’s academic achievement (P214, Ezekiel J. Dixon-Roman, 2012). On the other hand, in contrast to schooling, in which all children have a legal right to at least a minimum level of government funded education, complementary or supplementary education programming occupies a relatively grey policy space (P214). This is adequate to justify the immediate attention necessary for any work on non-formal education.

Given different shades of what NFE means for us and why it is relevant, the following discussion furthers our understanding the same. Pillai R (2004) draws a connect between the grown need for NFE and the De-schooling Movement. Nobody can believe that education is possible without schools. Tradition has made us all to believe that schools are institutions of learning and teachers are traditional agents for imparting education. But during the last two or three decades there have been vigorous arguments against schools. The main argument being that schools function to the detriment of equality of life (Pillai R, 2004, P85). Let us move away from this argument, which might be a discomfoting experience for some of us. Starting from the Patel’s act of 1918 to the 1966 Kothari commission, there have been recommendations of universalising elementary/primary education. Given the need to facilitate hundred percent access to schooling, it becomes an imperative for the state to acknowledge NFE as a complementary mode for achieving the goal. 1991 census reports show that the enrolment of boys and girls in the state of Andhra Pradesh was 85.43% in the age group of 6-11 and 43.47% in the age groups of 11-14. But the dropout rate is phenomenal with 55-68% in 6-11 age group and 61.32% in 11-14 age group respectively (P21, Pillai R, 2004). These figures stand as a testimony of why NFE can complement the formal education. On the other hand, it is also important to understand why NFE is relevant even in today’s world of social, scientific and economic advancements. One of the advantages of NFE over formal schooling, worth mentioning, is its multiple point entry. For example, difference in the learners’ experiences need to be considered while deciding on the nature of training programmes designed for the learning community (Pillai R, 2004, P45, 46). This exercise would mean valuing experiences that all individuals carry with them to the learning space (classroom). To endorse the sustenance of the NFE, the Commonwealth Conference on Non- formal Education for Development held at New Delhi, during the late 1970s also felt the need to promote non-formal education complementary to the formal education in each country’s development. The interim report of the working group on Universalization of Elementary Education (1978) of the Government of India has recommended the promotion of both full-time and part-time educational initiatives without compromising on





the inculcation of the literacy, numeracy, social and civic responsibilities (P 13, Chitra). In order to understand the value addition of the non-formal educational initiatives, one must also comprehend the spirit of the revised National Policy of Education (NPE) of 1992 and Operation Black Board (OBB). It is also essential for us to derive from the launch of massive schemes like the Mass Programme for Functional Literacy (MPFL) whose objective is to ascertain the need for spreading non-formal education through collective responsibility shouldered by state and central governments, NGOs, local communities etc (Pillai R, 2004, P67 - 69). Conception of Work Site School also stems from the prevailing NFE genre of educational measures by our governments. For example, instilling basic language and arithmetic skills among those who could not access the conventional schools is the prime objective among the Work Site Schools like most of the NFE institutions.

Proposals in the study:

In the light of definitions arrived at, with the wider consultations at the national level and by the expert committees in the field of education, the 'socially disadvantaged' child is identified as the one who belongs to the SC, ST, the socially and educationally backward class or such other group having disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economic, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factor as may be specified by the appropriate notification by the government. The act also defines child belonging to the 'weaker section' as the one whose parent/guardian's annual income is lower than the minimum limit specified by the government. It is expected of all those associated with the act of teaching and learning to understand the spirit in which the provisions are made in the policies on education.

Right of children to free and compulsory education act (RTE 2009):

The act states that "Every local authority shall ensure admission of children of migrant families". Section 29, devotes itself to the need for the appropriate 'academic authority' to lay down the necessary procedures for curriculum and evaluation at the elementary education level. This exercise must be in conformity with the values enshrined in the constitution, all round development of pupils, building up child's knowledge, potentiality and talent, development of physical and mental abilities to the fullest extent, learning through activities, discovery and exploration in a child friendly and child-centered manner, making the child free of fear, trauma, and anxiety and helping the child to express the views freely. Responsibility of the teacher would include assessing the learning ability of each child and accordingly supplement additional instructions if any.





To ensure the implementation of the Right to free and compulsory education for the children between the age of 6 to 14 years, state governments can set up an exclusive committee, REPA. This serves as an equivalent of the State Council for Educational Research and Training wing to design and evaluate the procedures necessary for curriculum and trainings for teachers and pupil in the entire region.

The Act made a provision for the creation of School Management Committees, which besides the local authorities, has a say (identifying children who need Special training and organize such training with specially designed material as stated in section 29(1)) in taking a decision on the 'special trainings' in case of those children who need additional academic support. These children could be the ones who dropped out of their schooling for a number of reasons. These centres could be either residential or housed in the already available government schools depending on the need and the availability. Duration of such courses could span between 3 months to 2 years before they are integrated into the age appropriate classes. The act also offers a provision to hire additional resources to facilitate the academic needs of these children.

To cater to the localities that are sparsely populated, there is a provision in the act to establish a school even below the normally accepted radius of 1 Kilometer for the primary (classes 1 to 5) and 3 Kilometers walkable distance for a high school (classes 6 to 8). This relaxation must be seen in the same spirit as that of the provision made for establishing an additional school in the event of densely populated localities.

National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005):

The central idea that is advocated strongly in the document is valuing learner's psychological, intellectual, cultural, social and emotional differences. Children should be engaged in activities to understand the environment through illustrations from the physical, biological, social, and cultural spheres. The language used should be gender sensitive. Teaching methods should be in a participative and discussion-oriented mode.

The above claims from NCF echo the need for producing instructional materials that are sociable (facilitate individual-society interaction) and associable (instruction appropriate to the child's age, cognition). This means the beginner learners would find it compatible when the texts used for teaching learning purposes include themes that find place in their mental imagery.

National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE 2010):

NCFTE 2010 expresses its concern on the 'stifling of creativity' among the educational institutions (learners, teachers) by forcing everyone to follow a centralised curriculum pattern.





Continuing schools with such an approach can do more harm than good i.e., neither addressing nor respecting our nation's diversity is possible with this orientation. When this is the prevalent view among the experts about the current curriculum practices followed in a conventional setting, it also presents the case for 'Try out' of the material by the educational institutions run in a non-conventional mode.

A teacher functions within the broad framework of the school education system – its goals, curricula, materials, methods and expectations from the teacher. A teacher education curriculum framework needs to be in consonance with the curriculum framework for school education. A teacher needs to be prepared in relation to the needs and demands arising in the school context, to engage with questions of school knowledge, the learner and the learning process. The expectations of the school system from a teacher change from time to time, responding to the broader social, economic and political changes taking place in the society. (NCFTE 2010, 1.2, Page 2).

NCFTE (page 4) is in conformity with section 29-2 recommended in "Right to free and compulsory education". NCFTE (2010) The launch of the massive Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2002 and the financial commitment and education cess to augment the UEE mission have underscored the need to prepare the teachers adequately to address the growing demand for imparting quality education.

In taking the state's mission forward, several NGOs created plethora of opportunities for inculcating 'professional development' among the teachers in a conventional system. Researcher opines that replicating and extending the same model even in a non-conventional educational initiatives could yield positive results, which we might not witness otherwise.

Methodology and data analysis:

The arguments and findings in the paper are primarily based on the views elicited by the staff associated with the non-profit organizations that have advocated and practiced non-formal education. Besides this, the views of some of the officials in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan also were included in our paper. The interactions were centered around the following question types along with supplementary discussions wherever necessary.

Interview Schedule:

- 1) Unlike the conventional schools, what does it mean for the state to run Work Site Schools? What is the current status of these schools in Andhra Pradesh and Ranga Reddy Districts particularly?





- 2) In your opinion, other than the WSS, what can be other alternative schooling systems to enroll and integrate the Migrant children (from the families who migrate seasonally) into the regular educational system?
- 3) How would you like to see the stakeholders' (communities at large) role in strengthening WSS kind of non-formal educational initiatives?
- 4) What is your opinion about the sustainability of the Work Site Schools that are meant for the marginalised learner groups like the Migrants?
- 5) How important is the training of English language teachers employed in WSS and why?
- 6) What could be the most necessary training modules relevant for the English teachers employed in WSS?
- 7) What can the nature of teacher training(s) for WSS be (particularly the duration, kinds of partnerships for imparting/monitoring the usefulness of the training(s)?)
- 8) What proactive measures, according to you, will make the Work Site Schools sustainable?
- 9) What could the implications of training the 'untrained teachers' on the overall teaching-learning outcomes in the non-formal educational programs be?

Limitations, Scope & Implications:

This paper observes a limited sample in the domain of NFE. To be precise, the scope of this paper is confined to the trends reflected in the sub-group of the seasonal migration, particularly the Work Site School conditions. This paper restricts itself to offer a modest background to the larger and a more deep-rooted scene visible within the NFE sector. The views expressed and argued in favour of, in the present observation report, can only serve as the case for taking up more studies in the areas of the neglected NFE. A more comprehensive paper around the issues highlighted here can be presented by using research tools like the different sets of questionnaires for the stakeholders, more structured interviews and also the observation checklists for determining the existing conditions in these vulnerable schools.

If an observation of this kind in the real time context is valued and more studies are prompted, there could be a very positive implication on this sector as a whole. For instance, the nature of trainings designed and facilitated for the teachers involved in the schools meant for the seasonal migrant learner community, additional support systems that can break the barriers for the stakeholders and the direct beneficiaries, correlation between the teaching learning modules recommended and the challenges faced by the end users are a few among the many possibilities that can be researched upon.





Conclusion:

One of the reasons that stand as the lapses in implementing the non-formal educational initiatives is the inaccurate student list presented in the records or the inflated numbers shown against the enrolled pupil in these programs. Both act as a barrier for planning, conducting/administering the tasks set out for auctioning. More fundamentally and importantly, maintaining the data (statistics) has also become an impediment for the education departments involved in the projects of this kind (p11, Chitra). In addition, research in complimentary education also faces considerable methodological challenges in making casual inferences regarding the impact of the programmes and policies. It is believed that in many ways, these challenges stem from the voluntary nature of most of the complementary education programs (P216, para 2, L1). In the case of a Work Site School, the dissatisfying results of NFE programmes if any can be attributed to factors such as the spirit of voluntariness that prevails among the staff employed here or the absence of any legal binding for strengthening the non-formal educational systems in general. Example, teachers employed in the (WSS context) non-formal educational centres are called 'volunteers'. Author quotes from Comer's (1997) book "Waiting for a Miracle" and states that it will only be a miracle to expect traditional schools alone to solve all the existing problems (P246, L3).

This paper began with an introduction on the importance of NFE in today's educational scenario. With the help of a few ideas, excerpts from the available literatures, the researcher made an earnest attempt to pen relevant message for the future stakeholders in the field. Though, the views elicited are not significantly large, they do represent some of the most deserving concerns too. Researcher acknowledges that this paper offers a very limited view but marks genuinely researchable issues.

Most of the times, we consider to restrict our thinking to the formal structures of education. These schools, colleges, universities, skill centres and so on, undoubtedly facilitated our society to progress ahead and compete with rest of the world, for a very long time now. Having acknowledged this side of the coin, there seems to be an obligation on us all, to deliberate and consciously arrive at a few alternate strategies for the future roadmap. One of the compelling reasons for us to engage in a thinking of this kind is that our confinements to the same set of beliefs and practices in an independent nation could not assure a rewarding livelihood opportunity for one's qualifications. This means, somewhere, we also need to complement innovative strategies to bridge the prevailing gaps and also fulfil the desired objectives. This paper, the researcher opines, can offer the voice in that direction.





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