

BUILDING HUMAN CAPACITIES TO PROMOTE POVERTY ERADICATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses about the conditions of poverty, the causes of poverty amongst the people in rural areas in India. What are the approaches and the measures that need to be formulated by the government to curb poverty? Poverty is mostly prevalent within the rural areas; mostly rural people are backward in terms of education, technology, employment opportunities and so forth. Hence the paper highlights all the areas that are required for the development of the poor and the underprivileged sections of the society. Science, culture, skills, education are the areas that are required for the development of the poverty stricken individuals.

Keywords: *Poverty, Education, Skills, Science, Culture, Employment, Empowerment and Development.*

INTRODUCTION

In India, in the rural sector mainly the condition of poverty prevails, individuals who reside within the rural areas are inflicted by the conditions of poverty and other kinds of difficulties. Education, skills development and technical training are central to agricultural and rural employment. They prepare young individuals to find jobs in the formal and informal sectors in rural areas and thus play an imperative role in poverty reduction. The more enhanced the training programs, the more refined will be the skills obtained by the rural people in terms of human capital; the higher the incomes and the returns and better the rural livelihoods (Hartl, 2009).

The rural youth encounters many impediments and obstacles in the path of poverty reduction and making a sustainable development. They are not served appropriately as compared to the urban dwellers in terms of education and training by the public and the private providers of education. Most of the individuals are illiterate and lack the reading and the writing capacities. Besides lack of education, there have been other areas which lead to poverty among the rural masses that will be highlighted in this paper. In rural areas, the deployment of teachers and other educational staff is a difficult process.

It is mandatory to formulate steps and procedures to inculcate the technical, vocational education, training and skills development among the individuals in rural areas. Emphasis is put on agriculture and related activities and the existing gender differences. Skills development and capacity building is a concept which focuses not only on agriculture and related activities but also about preparation and investment about off-farm working and improving skills for migration(Hartl, 2009).

CAUSES OF POVERTY

1. Agriculture is the main occupation of the rural masses and people are directly or indirectly dependent upon agriculture and landowners possess small or medium sized landholdings.
2. The upper caste people have large landholdings and lower castes have either marginal land or work as landless laborers.
3. Rural masses are largely spread, they continue to follow the traditional practices besides the norms and values and the earnings of the farmers are meager as compared to the hard work that they contribute.
4. Due to the economic and financial problems that the farmers undergo in the rural areas, they send their siblings and children to the urban areas to find new sources of livelihood. In cities, they are forced to remain in slums and work as daily wage earners due to lack of education and proper training.
5. The standard of living of the rural masses is very low and they get largely exploited by landlords, money lenders and intermediaries. In rural areas, there is minimal availability of specialized services such as banking, transportation, medical, market, education, communication, recreation and many other services which may lead to enhanced living conditions; this is also the main reason leading to inconveniences of the rural masses.
6. The rural masses undergo problems in their agricultural occupation due to lack of awareness, poor marketing facility, insufficient extension of services, and small or marginal land holdings. Individuals who reside in rural areas are unwilling to stay and work there and tend to migrate to urban areas in search of a better source of revenue.
7. The economic conditions of the individuals do not permit them to adopt high cost technologies or high inputs. The rural industries are also in underprivileged conditions; they are poor in their comparison in terms of quality and productivity, as a result they are closing down, in this way, individuals employed are losing their jobs and are facing problems.
8. There have been social causes leading to problems within the rural sector, which is education; due to lack of educational requirements people are unable to find employment opportunities for themselves. Still in some parts of the country there is a prevalence of caste system. The subordination of the low caste people by the high caste people has caused the poverty of the former. The caste system in some areas was so rigid that it did not allow the low caste people to render their participation in economic development.

Another causes are the social customs, rural people spend a large amount of their earnings and savings on social customs such as marriage, birth, death feast and so forth, due to this they lose their savings and earnings and suffer from debt and poverty. Lastly it is growing indebtedness, in

the rural sector most of the rural people depend upon the borrowings from the landlords and money lenders even to meet their consumption requirements. The money lenders charge exorbitant rates of interest and acquire mortgaged lands in order to exploit the poor in case of non-payment of loans. Indebted poor farmers cannot free themselves from the control of the money lenders; in this way their poverty is further highlighted, as a consequence they continue to dwell in poverty for generations because of the debt-trap (Causes of poverty, 2012).

APPROACHES TO POVERTY REDUCTION

The broad categories that have been used to combat poverty are as follows: (King, 2007).

1. **Human capital development** – Initiating measures to develop the human resources, such as training, education, skills development result in human capital development and thus contribute in eradication of destitute conditions.
2. **Institutional Development** – It is essential to develop the institutions in rural as well as urban areas, because poverty stricken people are found in all the sectors; hence this emphasizes on enabling environment including social capital.
3. **Basic Requirements** – Making adequate provision of basic needs such as food security, health, shelter, social security, safety needs, public wealth transfers and social insurance, these are the requirements that are essential to prevent poverty.
4. **Social Participation** – The individuals who are undergoing the conditions of poverty should get themselves involved in social participation, such as having social networks, communication links, social inclusion; in this manner, people can get to know about the ideas and information to solve their problems.
5. **Empowerment** – Opportunities should be provided for the poverty stricken people to get themselves empowered in various areas such as disaster management, peacemaking, conflict resolution, dispute settlement, reducing inter-generational inequities and encouraging better livelihoods (King, 2007).

BUILDING SKILLS FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

Skills development in the case of poverty reduction is a comprehensive area and comprises of number of factors. It contributes to social and economic integration. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through impartial access to appropriate learning and life skills programs is one of the six goals outlined in the Dakar Framework for Action to achieve Education for All (EFA). Providing education in vocational skills plays an imperative role in equipping young people and adults with the skills required for work and social integration. It is true that governments often pay little attention to skills training for youth and adults.

Similarly, donors and international organizations often conceptualize EFA narrowly, over-emphasizing formal general education. As a result, progress towards a more comprehensive approach has been deliberate. In underdeveloped countries such as India, preparing young people for work often means improving their access to the informal sector. More attention is being paid to the informal sector within the framework of training and poverty-reduction policies. In many evolution economies too, the informal sector is growing. This movement can be viewed as a form of insolvency, although it represents an important dimension of the economy by providing employment and generating income for the poor and needy. Skills development, together with other social protection measures, can certainly constitute a powerful tool for poverty reduction. An increasing number of countries are designing innovative strategies in this direction (Newsletter, 2006).

Within the rural sector, there are three areas which are vital to develop for the welfare of the rural masses regarding the skill up gradation; rural self sufficiency in resource utilization, governance and leadership. Within the rural sector, most of the individuals are not able to read or write, hence, this lack of educational abilities results in poverty, they are unable to find employment opportunities, even if the individuals have some savings, they are unable to utilize them in the effective and productive ways, hence the ultimate outcome of these problems is poverty and destitute conditions. Education of the rural masses is essential so that they learn and acquire awareness about how to solve their daily problems. Mahatma Gandhi introduced the Nai Talim concept which is to attain basic education. The idea of rural institutes has been finding place in the recommendations of various education commissions starting from Dr. Radhakrishnan Commission of 1949. Succeeding this, a rural-based agricultural university was set up at Pant Nagar in Uttar Pradesh in 1960 and the second university in 1962 at Ludhiana.

When India was undergoing the problem of grain shortage, the entire attention of the agricultural universities was on research, development and extension of agriculture. In the process, rural development programs, a task originally meant for State Agriculture Universities (SAUs) were not looked upon (R.D, n.d.).

In view of the Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, main priority was given to rural development programs. It is in this context that the National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI) has started considering introduction of rural higher education programs, primarily based on the Nai Talim concept; these programs were in accordance with local needs and requirements of the people who have not been integrated in typical higher education, covering the elements of research, teaching, extension and networking. It is with the introduction of this type of a rural education program that the Panchayat raj system will get the needed strength for understanding and resolving local rural problems. The ultimate aim is the development of competent and conscientious human beings, fully capable to organize and finally lead a profession to new pinnacles of accomplishment in the service and goodwill of the society (R.D, n.d.).

Learning within the higher institutions is based upon hypothesis, concepts and theories evolved by western scholars including rural sociologists; their application towards our rural development has been to a limited extent. Every rural area is different within the country and the solution of rural problems. In the context of rural development, indigenization of concepts and theories are essential for understanding the problems of Panchayat raj institutions, state governments and stakeholders. For this purpose, it is vital to obtain information and knowledge about social science research relating to the rural areas, if this process is carried out effectively then rural transformation, fulfillment of requirements and solution to impediments and dilemmas can be brought about rapidly (R.D, n.d.).

REALIZING EDUCATION FOR ALL

Individuals who undergo poverty, normally for these individuals, education remain a distant promise; this is especially true for poor households and children living in rural areas. Schemes have been developed in India that free and compulsory education would be provided to children up to 14 years of age. Every individual has the right to education; Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is the name of the scheme that has been initiated. Problems and inequalities that arise linked to wealth, gender; ethnicity, language, location and disability are the main barriers to reduction of poverty as well as the country's progress. The system of education within the rural areas is not well developed; they have poor school facilities, low quality instruction, high teacher-pupil ratios and lack of qualified teachers. Due to lack of basic amenities within the schools, the enrollment rate is also low and there has also not been an increase within the adult literacy rates even by 50%. Least developed countries will have to recruit 1.9 million teachers to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015 (UNESCO, 2011).

Post-primary education systems in least developed countries are also not very strong. In many countries, the quality of tertiary education has declined, impacting negatively on innovation and research capacities, and constraining economic and social development. Secondary education, which provides the key to skills development, is often reserved for minority groups, while higher education appears almost magnificent. Successful investment in human resources depends also on technical and vocational education and training. The acquisition of employability skills through technical and vocational education and training can assist in contributing to educational development, labor market inclusion and economic growth. Promoting education for all is a means to reaching all other Millennium Development Goals, including the health and maternal mortality goals. There should be an increase in international support and funding for quality education in the least developed countries, respectful of country-specific needs, and focusing on girl's and women's education. This applies to all areas such as primary education, technical and vocational training, secondary and tertiary education, and also research institutions. These are imperative for advancing productivity, opening opportunities for jobs and credit, promoting social cohesion and inclusion, and developing the potential of every child, young person and even an adult (UNESCO, 2011).

PROMOTING SCIENCE AND CULTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Underdeveloped countries are building their capacities in science, technology and innovation. This is crucial for developing effective solutions to help the poor benefit from improved access and management of natural resources, such as safe drinking water, cleanliness, energy technologies, agriculture and rural development. Science and technology are critical for least developed countries to reduce poverty in a rapid and sustainable manner and to connect to innovation for development (UNESCO, 2011).

Culture should not be viewed as an extravagance for underdeveloped countries. Their rich cultural heritage is an asset for growth and social cohesion. India is a rich country in cultural heritage with diverse nationalities, ethnicities, religions, norms and values. Countries should strengthen the contribution of their cultural industries and the cultural sector to economic development. Worldwide, culture industries generate USD 1.3 trillion in jobs and income annually, and account for 7% of global gross domestic product. People at times make use of their cultural heritages to earn a living, especially tribal people, produce revenues from visits, sales of local crafts, music and cultural products.

Enhancing access to information, knowledge, awareness, and communication technologies is imperative also to bridge the knowledge divide and also helping the underdeveloped countries in mitigating and adapting to climate change. These are some of the ways in making use of culture and science to eradicate the poverty conditions (UNESCO, 2011).

PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT FOR WOMEN AS A STRATEGY FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

In India, in the past decades and even at present women are being treated inferior as compared to men. In the rural areas, women are married young; they are discouraged from getting employed and attaining education and are meant to look after only the household chores. Employment and empowerment of women has been viewed as a crucial strategy for poverty reduction. There have been several measures to initiate this which have been stated as follows: (Krogh, 2009).

1. It is essential to communicate with the governments about women's economic empowerment in a prominent manner in high level policy dialogues.
2. Getting engaged with and support government authorities, employers' organizations and trade unions to promote gender sensitive labor market reforms, and reduce the costs of doing business to smooth the progress of women.
3. Supporting organizations and incurring opportunities to promote women entrepreneurs in formal and informal economic sectors and other areas; steps should be implemented to overcome the barriers that may arise related to gender, culture, religion and caste.

4. There should be development of programs and opportunities to access to finance for women, especially microfinance, which refers to small savings, credit and insurance services for economically weaker sections of the society (Krogh, 2009).

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

The individuals who are dwelling in the conditions of poverty, who are not able to earn proper livelihood for themselves and their families, in order to get rid of these conditions, it is vital for them to inculcate technical and vocational skills amongst themselves. To implement these it is required on the part of the government to accelerate efforts to improve the digital infrastructure, to introduce and leverage the power of digital applications, develop new technologies, models, innovative strategies that are needed to survive and grow. When they will be armed with enhanced knowledge, the individuals who are longing for poverty relief living and sustainable development will be able to find jobs, will be able to plan their days in advance and spend time and resources more productively.

There should be initiation of training and skill development programs for the individuals so that they are able to accomplish their desired goals and objectives. Technical training would enable them to secure office jobs, learning computer skills will make their lifestyle manageable and make them less dependable, individuals would be able to develop artisan and clerical skills; and utilizing these skills in an effective manner will enable them to curb poverty.

EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS AND TALENTS

India's rapidly changing demography is shaping the citizen's socioeconomic future; when the citizens of the country especially the economically disadvantaged sections of the society pursue focused skill development, better and larger set of opportunities open up for them in order to secure dignified employment. National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) in 2013 showed that skilled youth who are employed in distant towns are in great need of help with day-to-day matters such as locating the nearest and the least expensive grocery store, opening a bank account and remitting money to their families. They also need more training and career progression plans.

Besides development of skills and talents, it is also essential to provide the youth with training and knowledge about day-to-day matters; if an individual is skilled at making handicrafts, paintings, candles but he lacks computer skills, he cannot operate a bank account then he is not considered to be completely skilled. He has talent but lacks skills; therefore, skills and talents should go hand-in-hand. The youth of the country possesses the potential and is hard working, the only thing that they require are the opportunities to enhance their skills and abilities so that they can contribute towards the socio-economic progression of their nation.

Open and flexible innovation infrastructure should be created so that the innovators are able to share their ideas even with the poverty stricken and economically disadvantaged sections of the society.

DISCUSSION

India is on a compelling journey to becoming a high-performance nation. The country is making efforts to lower the rates of poverty, supporting an increasingly thriving economic base, and developing the capabilities it needs to become a global center of innovation. To sustain such an effort will require an approach that is pragmatic. Human capacities that the country needs to focus upon in order to promote poverty eradication and sustainable development are to develop potentialities and competencies among the youth of the country and especially those who are facing poverty, empowering people to develop their skills, tapping innovation potential and fostering collaboration.

Schools, educational and vocational training centers, skills building centers, institutions that provide technical training for the poverty stricken people should be built in rural areas so that people have access to them easily at a distance nearby their residents and they should be either free or at a minimum affordable cost. Libraries and reading centers have also been established in rural areas so that people can inculcate reading skills amongst themselves. Science, technology, culture, innovation strategies have been areas which have enabled the individuals to develop and make a living for themselves. Education, skills and capacities development not only enables the individual to become academically qualified, but he also acquires knowledge and information about how to perform day-to-day living activities such as carrying out banking transactions, purchasing groceries, communicating with etiquettes and becoming more refined and nurtured. Finally, it can be stated that human capabilities are enhanced mainly to eradicate conditions of dearth and scarcity and making a sustainable development.

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