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Poverty Alleviation through Education in Rural Areas – a Case Study

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ABSTRACT

At the threshold of the 21st Century, in India, people living in rural areas have greatly improved their living standards. However, it is observed that at present there are some millions of population still living in poverty. Higher rate of illiteracy and lack of knowledge on the advanced farming constitute the fundamental causes of poverty. The most important objective of education for poverty alleviation is to empower the poor not only with basic knowledge, skills, but also with commitment to higher growth on farming and inner drive to combat with the problems of poverty. Observing the population in Lokamathapuram, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh, it is found that the poverty of the population is basically due to illiteracy. Most of the population both men and women are depending on daily earnings. It is observed that out of 120 families residing in Lokamathapuram, 27 men (223 men) are having regular jobs. It is understood from the statistics that around 129 children receive education. It is also observed that all the women above 30 years of age are home makers and they don't have any formal education. Also it is understood that most of the men are daily wage workers and very few are doing cultivation.

KEY WORDS

Education, cultivation, poverty, skills, rural development

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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the key ingredients in poverty reduction particularly in rural areas. However, as the Millennium Development Goals show, the emphasis is often on basic education and literacy rather than lifelong or continuing education. Research has shown that literacy alone is not sufficient to empower people, though it can help the population partially. Amit Deb¹ explained that around 37.2% of Indian populations are in below poverty line. The ICT development can moderately improve the literacy rate, economic development and job creation. By achieving these, one can expect market rise and poverty alleviation. He suggested in his studies that ICT applications are to be developed not only in education but also in agricultural sector so that the growth rate in production of agro products will improve. He also suggested that ICT is to be taught to rural girls and women. To understand the impact of ICT and to get positive returns, it is advisable to provide education to the girls and women of rural population and they educate not only their families but also society as a whole. The effects last for generations in the form of enhanced earning capacity, increased access and opportunities in the labour market, reduced health risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth, and often greater control by women over their own lives. Many of these arguments would also apply to people with disabilities; they are rarely included in poverty reduction plans. Such plans need participatory educational approaches that aim to empower, integrate, change attitudes and increase opportunities for independence. Pervez and Usman² carried out a study on poverty alleviation by educating the rural population. They used panel data of 40 developing countries for the period 1999 to 2007, and estimates coefficients by applying the random effect generalized least squares (GLS) technique. Their study concluded that, income growth plays a moderately positive role in alleviating poverty, but that income distribution does not play a key role in poverty alleviation in the sample overall. Second, they concluded that education is the most significant contributor to poverty alleviation. Also, they stated that economic policy making in developing countries, without neglecting income growth and income distribution, should focus primarily on promoting education. At the same time, countries with comparatively higher per capita incomes should focus more on the distribution of income to achieve their objective of poverty eradication.

Kamala and Srinivas³ stated in their studies that concerted efforts should be initiated by the Government of India through different plans and measures to be taken to alleviate poverty in rural India, in order to bring prosperity in the lives of the people in rural areas. At present, technology dissemination is uneven and slow in the rural areas. Good efforts of organizations developing

technologies, devices and products for rural areas could not yield high success. Experiences of many countries suggest that technological development fuelled by demand has a higher dissemination rate. Nagendra Reddy⁴ suggested that the Government should adopt innovative methods and practices to conserve natural resources and reducing poverty. There is an interface between natural resources and poverty in India. Land, Water, Forest resources significantly are influencing poverty among rural poor landless households. Resource degradation appears to be a major cause for chronic poverty in India. The Government of India seriously looks into the policy intervention like forests protection and rights for local, especially tribal areas. Contemporary policy discourse on agriculture should focus on process of work force diversification for rural urban migration, promotion of high value crops in the primary sector, adopting integrated farming system.

Omoniyi⁵ described the role of education in the economic development of rural population. He also stated that a balanced education system promotes not only economic development, but productivity, and generates individual income per capita.

Lalitha Kumar⁶ explained the importance of education in India particularly in rural areas. The aim of providing education to eradicate the poverty and thereby increasing the income level of individual. No country can claim that if people are not educated, the section of the society remain in poverty.

Traditional community social systems need to be adapted to ensure social inclusion of women and other marginalised groups if these systems are to be a resource for inclusive, participatory community education and development. Similarly, NGOs are a potential resource for community-based empowerment if they respect principles of grassroots engagement. Adult education alone cannot eliminate poverty. It can contribute to skills development or empowerment, or both. Successful adult education requires grassroots, bottom-up development in a participatory, partnership-based approach that recognizes indigenous knowledge systems and involves the poorest countries in global debates on lifelong learning.

DISCUSSION

Education plays a central role in preparing individuals to enter the work force, as well as equipping the individuals with the skills to earn bread and butter for their daily living. Education and health endowments of the individuals are the necessary and important components of human capital which make them productive and raise their standard of living.

The educational attainment of household head is the critical determinant of household poverty in India. An increase in the educational level of the head of the household significantly reduces the chances of the household being poor. From the statistics collected from

Lokamathapuram, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh, only 19 men are educated out of 233 men in the village. Table 1 shows the details of the population and their occupation. Also, it is understood from the statistics that out of 163 children 129 are going to schools and colleges for their education. There is a vast improvement in the education of the people of Lokamathapuram. Moreover, an increase in the schooling of household heads not only has a positive impact on their productivity and earnings but also enhanced the productivity of other members of the household perhaps through persuading them to be educated and/or skill-oriented. But due to illiteracy of the people of Lokamathapuram, many are working as daily wage workers (97) and a few are doing business. Also, it is observed that around 116 unemployed youth were found in Lokamathapuram and they need to be trained for skill development and provide entrepreneurship opportunities.

Not only poverty is concentrated in households with illiterate/less educated heads but also it is much harmful for the female-headed households as compared to the male-headed ones. Female segment of our society is comparatively much deprived as compared to male one. It is found that out of 222 women, no single individual woman is educated. Due to this reason, those female-headed poor households severely lack the basic requirements of life. Their housing, health, drinking water, sanitation facilities and garbage collection system all are in deplorable condition. All these things affect the productivity of poor persons and they cannot come out of their vicious poverty circles. The provision of education can break this circle through giving rise in earnings and fulfilling basic needs. Educational levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) are valuable in increasing the per capita expenditure of the household. Primary education is the initial threshold of human capital but secondary and higher education, and investment in science and technology will give rise to acceleration and sustenance in economic growth and development. Till 1980, the poor population who live in villages had no access to education and they traveled a minimum of 5 to 6 kilometers to reach nearest school.

Table 1 Data for poverty alleviation in rural areas

Total Population	No of educated men	No of educated women	No of children	No of children educated	No of job holders	unemployed	small business	Daily wage workers & private sector workers
448	19	0	163	129	27	116	69	97

STEPS TO BE TAKEN

Adult education may take three distinct forms: formal, non-formal or informal. Formal education is usually learning that leads to certification. It can be part-time or full-time, but it is

always institutionally based. Non-formal education refers to the range of targeted learning opportunities that are offered outside the educational institutions but are nevertheless organised to achieve particular learning outcomes. Non-formal education can include work based skills training, community education workshops or any specific learning programmes. Informal education is often connected to projects in which education is not the main priority, but which result in increased knowledge, skills and understanding. Such programmes may also provide opportunities for non-formal education, but more often they involve self-directed learning or engagement with others on an informal basis.

Involve NGOs, civil society and the private sector; Implement and be accountable for the recommended 6% of education budgets for adult education; Recognize the curriculum that is inherent in community development work (e.g., credit, health, traditional birth attendance); Influence current conditions and policy frameworks for fast-track initiatives, Millennium Development Goals, etc., so that the profile of adult education is raised; Pursue basic adult education beyond primary-level education; Address the contradictions in globalisation-related policies; and empower the poor and disadvantaged to have a voice in decision-making that affects their lives. Recognize the variety of poverty definitions; Adopt community-based development and gender-sensitive approaches; Collect more baseline dissegregated data;

After observing the statistical data related to education of the population in Lokamathapuram, job potential, cultivation, and the following steps can be implemented to improve the living standards and to increase economy of the people.

1. Develop in terms of culture, society, economy, technology and improving the health standards of the people
2. Develop living standards of people by educating them and making them literates
3. Youth, children and women are to be educated as it is observed that no women in the village is educated
4. Empower human resource of Lokamathapuram by providing necessary skills for getting a suitable job
5. Improve the infrastructure and living conditions of the village
6. Access to clean and drinking water facility
7. Educate population on rural entrepreneurship
8. Develop agriculture, animal husbandry and other agricultural related areas
9. Restore uncultivated lands and provide irrigation facilities
10. Motivate farmers to use advanced agricultural techniques and use of natural fertilizers.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the earlier studies, it is observed that villages (rural areas) lag behind cities by decades. The development of villages aims at improving rural people's livelihoods in an equitable and sustainable manner. The primary focus should be on education, health and living standards of the people. Adult education is one of the important steps to be taken immediately in Lokamathapuram as it is observed that many people have no primary education. Rural development schemes should be implemented and rural papule are to be trained in latest agricultural technologies, entrepreneurship in order to eradicate poverty. Skill enhancement, economic independent, leadership qualities are to be given to people of Lokamathapuram.

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