



Adult Learners and Inclusive Education

Sneha Bishnoi¹ and Vishal Godara²

¹Department of Political Science, DAV College, Abohar, Punjab, India

²Department of Hindi, Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Abohar, Punjab, India

Corresponding Author: vishalgodara19798@gmail.com²

Abstract: Inclusive education for adult learners is a creation for lifelong learning and personal growth. They face several difficulties such as time restraints, digital divide and social stigma. For overcoming these challenges requires reforming initiative with the collaborative works of educators, institutions, governments and communities. By encouraging adaptability and accessibility, we can empower adult learners for exploring experiential learning opportunities for all.

Index Terms: Adult Learners, Inclusive Education, Digital Literacy, Flexible Learning, Skill Development etc.

I. Introduction

Adult learners are mature students who most probably restart their regular studies after a gap of years. They are full of life experiences and self-governed. They value autonomy and take responsibility for their own education outcomes. They are intrinsically motivated for acquiring good and quality education for achieving their desired goals.

In inclusive education, adult learners play a vital role to learn. Inclusive education fosters an equal and equitable learning environment to all the learners with their differing abilities, disabilities or backgrounds. Adult learners are one of these diverse learners of the inclusive education system; they can get an effective environment of studying only through inclusion in education because this inclusion enriches equity, accessibility and lifelong learning opportunities for them. This research paper explores characteristics, needs, principles, and global and national framework of adult learners.

Research questions

- What can the effective strategies be for implementing inclusive education for adult learners?
- What are the challenges faced in implementing inclusive education for adult learners?
- How can we solve these difficulties while implementing inclusive education for them?

II. Characteristics and Needs of Adult Learners

Learners have many diversities. In fact, diversity is not only vertical form, it lies in a horizontal aspect as well. Similarly, adult learners are diversity of learners as a vertical



aspect but at the same time they have horizontal differences as well such as differ in age, gender, socioeconomic status, cultural and linguistic diversity, physical disabilities, learning styles and many more.

Needs of Adult Learners

- Flexible learning styles in the regular classrooms.
- Digital literacy and tech-driven infrastructure.
- Psychological and emotional support from the feeling of “Too Old”.
- Encouragement to take as “normal” to the individual differences.
- Foster the feeling that “they matter”.

However, the personalized learning approaches can encompass the ‘world of inclusion’ among adult learners. Through this, they feel motivated extrinsically as well.

III. Principles and Frameworks of Adult Learners

In inclusive education, various principles, and global and national level frameworks are designed for upgrading the learning of adult learners. The principles of adult learners are that they get a lifelong education as a fundamental right with proper accessibility, equity, representation, participation and flexibility.

UNESCO’s (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) 6th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 6), to be published in 2026, focusing on adult learners’ studies as an affirmative change in society for empowerment and flexibility with digitalisation.

Additionally, India’s National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education (NCFAE) reforming the learning activities for the development of adult learners. National Literacy Mission (NLM) and Vocational Education like initiatives of India, are also promoting education of adults with the vision to empower and connect them to the world.

However, formal and informal learning systems such as universities, colleges, communities, vocational training centres, online institutions and self-directed learning platforms also plays a vital role in the life of adult students for experiential learning.

IV. Strategies for Implementing Inclusive Education for Adult Learners

For implementation of inclusive education for adults, a well-planned and efficacious strategy is necessary, such as-

- **Know Your Adult Learner:** Creating an environment to understand the needs and requirements of the adult learners, it can establish the inclusivity in the classroom.
- **Curriculum Design:** To be based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to ensure the curriculum is accessible and adaptable to all differ learners, especially to adult ones.



- **Educators As A Facilitators:** By providing a teacher training, educators are trained to not only for teaching but also for assisting as a facilitator to their students with addressing a diversified learning environment.
- **Inclusive And Innovative Classroom Practices:** Reforming “one-size-fit-all” approach, it can inculcate flexibility and cooperative teaching-learning practices as an innovative form. Uses of tech-driven tools, it grabs the attention of elder learners with adaptability and engagement.

Implementing these major strategies ensures that all the adult learners feel connected to the world of knowledge.

Challenges in implementing inclusive education for adult learners

- **Socio-cultural Barriers:** Some adult learners face resistance in their certain communities. It can be based on gender biasness or societal expectations.
- **Digital Divide:** Learners struggle with lack of digital literacy and internet connectivity. They feel digitally divided among their co-learners. This can reduce their learning capabilities.
- **Psychological and Externsic Motivation Challenges:** Adult learners are trying to overchallenge the societal stereotypes and stigmas but they can't do as effectively as can be done by extrinsic motivation. They face maintaining engagement, adaptability and persistence in modern learning system.

Future Prospects and Solutions of Inclusive Education

Now-a-days, the future trends are driven in AI-powered individualised learning platforms, virtual and augmented realities, and assistive technologies for inclusion of adult learners in education. Hybrid learning models, combination of online and offline studies, are best for self-paced based adult learning.

Continuous Skill Development: The upskilling programs for job markets and industry-academia integration evolve the lifelong learning and the progressive skill development among adult learners.

- **Scaffolding through Policies and Initiatives:** By recognising the “quality education” under SDG-4 (Sustainable Development Goal), it increased the attention, funding and enrollment of diverse learners in inclusive education.
- **Breakdown of Stereotypes:** By encouraging women, transgenders and marginalised communities, their awareness and participation can be enhanced to learn in inclusivity. Through the collaborative efforts of institutions, educators and governments, the stereotypes can easily be rolled back.

V. Conclusion

In a nutshell, it can be stated that inclusion of adult learners in education is not as easy as we thought, because these learners face multiple challenges such as educational gap,



time management with family, work and education, adaption to new learning models, social stigma and memory retention capability due to aging. To overcome these challenges, future prospects and solutions must focus on flexible teaching-learning methods, introduce digital education training programs and psychological support initiatives. After effectively responding to these reforms, the world can develop an environment that encompasses lifelong skill-based equitable education for all the adult learners.

References

1. Ota, C., DiCarlo, C.F., Burts, D.C., Laird, R. & Gioe, C. (2006, December). Training and the Needs of Adult Learners. *Journal of Extension*.
2. Pace, K. (2020 April 7). 10 Simple Principles of Adult Learning. WGU.
3. UNESCO (2024). Global report on adult learning and education (GRALE). GRALE 6 (2026). UNESCO.
4. Somani, G. (2024, August 20). NCFAE: Guide To The National Curriculum Framework For Adult Education. Master soft.
5. Kirschner, S.R. (2015, January). Inclusive Education.