Module-1 Concept of Non-Formal Education

1.0   LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this module, you will be able to:

- Define and describe the meaning, purpose, nature and scope of Non-formal Education.
- Identify the characteristics of Non-formal Education and distinguish between Non-formal and Formal Education.
- State aims and objectives of Non-formal Education.
- Explain the need for Non-formal Education in India.

"Dear Friends, You all must have heard about formal education system but have you heard about Non-formal, Informal and Distance Learning education?

If yes, then can you note certain points on each of them? You can check your answer after reading the following paragraphs.

1.1 MEANING AND PURPOSE OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

We are all familiar with formal education. Do you know that there are alternatives to this also? Different alternatives to formal education are informal education or incidental (Occurring as a resulting something else) education, Non-Formal Education, Distance education etc. Doubts do arise as to whether all these types of education are one and the same or they are different from each other. It is, therefore, necessary to know their precise meaning.

Education is a Lifelong process. Learning progresses along with the growth of an individual. The individual learns various things from parents and family members. After joining the school or even without schooling, an individual learns many things through peer groups, friends, television, films, radio etc. This learning takes place by observation and imitation (copy of something) in an informal way. Hence, it is called as **Informal or Incidental Education**.

Formal education is institutionalized, structured and graded. There is a chronology (Arrangement of events in order of occurrence) to learning starting from pre-primary or nursery classes right up to the university level. There is a specified syllabus to be covered in each class. There are set types of examinations, working hours and days.

Distance Education or **Distance Learning** is a mode of delivering education and instruction often on an individual basis to students who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom. Distance learning provides "access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both."

From the given meaning of Informal, Formal and Distance Education it was said that in a democracy, education should be made available to all citizens. It was also pointed out that the main purpose of education is to provide citizens with the wide opportunities to develop their personality to the maximum extent. In an over populated country like India, formal education cannot cater to the needs of all citizens. It is therefore necessary that an alternative system like Non-formal Education should fill the gap.

"**Non-formal Education** is the educational activity organized outside the formal system of education. It is simple and flexible and can be delivered at any place convenient to the learners. It is generally designed to meet the basic learning needs of disadvantaged groups and can be availed of at any age''. Children out-of- schools, working children and girls who cannot attend school for the whole day can join this programme.

Friends, hoping that the meaning and purpose of Non-formal Education is clear , let us now look at some definitions cited by some authors and organizations.

Definitions of Non-formal Education

Non-formal Education is imparted in a free atmosphere without rigidity of rules and regulations governing the formal schools and colleges.

Coombs (1973) "Non-formal Education means an organized systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular sub groups in the population.

UNESCO (1997:41) "Any organized and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the definition of formal education. Non-formal Education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life-skills, work skills, and general culture. Non-formal Education programmes do not necessarily follow the 'ladder' (A series of stages by which programme can be made) system, and may have different durations, and may or may not confer (Have discussions) certification of the learning achieved".

1.2   CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

- Non-formal Education is not only for children but for adult men and women.
- It is for rich as well as for poor as it adopts a democratic approach, wherein each and every citizen has a right to participate.
- It has no fixed curriculum, working days or working hours.
  (Example: In formal education there is a fixed curriculum, duration and evaluation system. Whereas, in NFE, there is no fixed format for admission, evaluation or even a fixed curriculum to follow)
- It is flexible and adopts itself to suit the needs and skills of learner's abilities.
  (Example: If the learner has interest agriculture, then the learner is provided Non-formal Education related to agriculture.)
- It is employment-oriented and work based.
  (Example: NFE gives education which prepare it's learners for skill based jobs. A maid servant gets training of a home governess through NFE then it will give her good job and salary)
- Movement from work to learning and learning to work is possible.
  (Example: A farmer wants to learn new skills and techniques of farming. By joining NFE classes both learning and work can take place simultaneously)
- It is not expensive and therefore everyone can afford it.

1.3   OBJECTIVES OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Chandra and Shah (1987) in their book mentioned about objectives of Non-Formal Education given by the Government **of India:** They are as follows

1) To motivate which are dropouts or such children who have not gone to primary school and enter them into the fold of Non-formal Education,
2) To develop in children various linguistic (Study of language) skills and enable them to listen, speak, read and write properly,
3) To promote expertise in children with regard to work experience and the occupations in which they are engaged in their community, so that their productivity can be enhanced to make self sufficient,
4) To make children understand and appreciate the scientific phenomena (a fact or situation observed to exit or happen) in everyday life,
5) To develop in children skills, habits, attitudes necessary for healthy living,
6) To make children understand and appreciate culture heritage, and tradition of the country,
7) To develop in children functional numeracy.

8) To develop in children a sense of citizenship, national integration, <mark>secularism (Religious thoughts)</mark>, socialism, etc.
9) To bring about awareness among NFE Learners with regard to current issues and problems of the country and develop competency in solving the same.

<mark>How does UNESCO define Non-Formal Education</mark>?

UNESCO (1987) has enunciated the following objectives of Non-formal Education Programmes.

1) To promote awareness through literacy education programmes and acceptance of learning as a means to individual and national development;
2) To establish national infrastructural needs and provide for manpower requirements;
3) To provide equal educational opportunities to all, and through them more equitable distribution of national income and employment avenues;
4) To mobilize existing and potential local resources in the community;
5) To facilitate transfer of appropriate technology to more need-based areas of activity;
6) To make social and community education programmes meet demands of rapidly industrializing societies;
7) To promote Non-formal programmes as direct links to productive skills and <mark>tangible (definite or real)</mark> gains.

<mark>Friends, let us now click on how the next section which deals with the difference Informal and Non-formal education</mark>

1.4   DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

	FORMAL EDUCATION		NON-FORMAL EDUCATION
1	Teaching and learning take place in schools and colleges.	1	Teaching and learning take place outside the four walls of classroom. (Teaching may happen under the tree, in a community hall, on farm or anywhere where learners prefer.)
2	Education has a goal and a syllabus. Trained teachers, school buildings and equipment are required. (Teaching takes place within schools, which have infrastructure, with trained and professional teachers, with common goals and objectives)	2	Learner's <mark>aptitude (Natural ability)</mark>is important. (Curriculum is prepared keeping in mind learners skills and interests)

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3	Teacher is respected and has authority over students. (Teachers are supposed to be strict and have authority over the students)	3	The teacher and the learner are both partners in learning. Teacher helps in creating learning experiences. (Learners and teachers share a friendly relationship. Both share equal level of partnership. Students share their needs and teachers help them to cope with it)
4	Curriculum is prepared keeping the school in centre. (The curriculum is prepared keeping school as the center. It has fixed a curriculum, examination and assignments)	4	Curriculum is prepared keeping the institutions and learners in centre. (The curriculum is flexible based on the learner's age, culture, language, needs and problems, as well as the institution)
5	Norms of learning are rigid(strict or inflexible).	5	Variety and liberalism (less strict) mark aspects of learning.
6	Attendance is compulsory.	6	Attendance of the learner depends on educator will.

1.5 NATURE OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

- NFE in its ideal form differs both from formal and informal education. It is flexible and open ended.
- NFE is universal for all sections of people.
- NFE is planned and systematically implemented.
- NFE is a long-standing and a continuous process.
- NFE is regarded as a complementary system to formal education.
- NFE is closely connected with improving people's quality of life and with social as well as national development. Since, NFE promotes literacy literacy has positive correlation with development.
  (E.g. Most of the farmers are unaware about the new technologies, so promotion of new technologies will enhance their knowledge which will lead to national development)

1.6 SCOPE OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

When we discuss the scope of non-formal education, the question which arises is whether non-formal education is an alternative to formal education. The Government of India has already answered this question by saying that N.F.E. is only a complementary system to formal education. NFE is **need based, flexible, functional and cost effective**. Although the Central and State Governments are major agencies to implement the programmes of NFE the role played by voluntary agencies cannot be ignored. The common impression, however, is that NFE is a programme meant for **poor and weaker sections of the society and dropouts**. It is true that in some cases the NFE helps its clients to join once again the formal education system. But, some argue that it cannot be accepted as a complementary system to formal to formal education. However, today NFE is today accepted as complementary to formal education in many advanced countries. Government of India has adopted NFE as a typical approach to meet the present Indian conditions. Its views are:

➢ NFE is flexible and so it would prevent the rate of dropouts.
➢ Being not expensive it would meet the needs of rural areas and even lightly populated areas.
➢ Being linked with general development, it helps its students to learn various skills besides numeracy and literacy.

1.7 NON-FORMAL EDUCATION CLIENTELE

There are certain target groups which do not fit into the formal education system due to different circumstances like poverty, disability, illiteracy etc. Therefore, they become the clientele of Non-Formal Education. Clienteles are as follows:

1. Unemployed Youth:

Unemployment is a major problem in many countries, especially India. The rate of unemployment is almost same in both rural and urban areas. Urban areas have more number of educated unemployed, than in the rural areas. Laborers and agriculturists are unemployed for almost 6 months a year. India has 240 universities managing over 5000 colleges of various courses thus bringing out millions of graduates every year. Almost 50 to 60% of the graduates are still searching for jobs after their graduation, due to lack of employability opportunities, poor communication skills, less subject knowledge and entrepreneurship quality. (Wisdom News, 2012) Therefore, helped such students could be by Non-formal Education to improve their employability skills.

2. Out of School Children:

The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act 2002 makes education a Fundamental Right for children in the age group of 6-14 years stating that "the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine". It is argued that in developing countries with inadequate educational infrastructure, poverty, inequality, social norms, credit-land-labor market imperfections, high fertility and unpredictable employment scenario, children drop out of schools at an early age. Certain schools are too far, timings of formal schools are rigid, and all these factors interplay to persuade children to leave school. There has been an impressive reduction in the number of out-of-school children in the past few years. In 2001, there were 58.021 million out-of-school children. This number reduced to 13.42 million in 2005. The problems regarding education of these out-of-school children vary across the nation due to different causes, factors and diverse obstacles to overcome. Non-formal Education can thus help to overcome their problems.

3. Disabled:

A recent study by the World Bank (2007), for example, noted that children with disability are five times more likely to be out of school than children belonging to scheduled castes or scheduled tribes (SC or ST). Based on NSS data, the World Bank (2007: 64) report categorically states that, "it is very clear that both educational attainment of all PWD and current attendance of CWD are very poor and far below national averages". Data suggests that people with disabilities have much lower educational attainment rates, with 52 percent illiteracy against 35 percent average for the general population. Non-formal Education caters to them according to their priorities and needs.

4. Women and Girls:

In many developing and underdeveloped countries, education of women and girls poses a serious problem. At the primary level more drop-outs are girls because of superstition (A belief in supernatural influences) and the belief that girls need no education as boys, a discriminatory attitude. Both factors all go to add to the seriousness of the problem. In India it is believed that the place of a woman is at home and even if they work outside in fields, in factories or in offices, their work is lowly paid. Though the attitude is changing of late, it has not eradicated the problem of literacy, which is greater among girls and women when compared to boys and men. So this is another area which falls within the scope of N.F.E. Only Non-Formal Education system can meet these challenges.

5. Dalits:

The Dalit population constitutes India's most vulnerable group, estimated at 138 million people. Dalits are also referred to sometimes as Scheduled Castes (SCs) after a schedule drawn up by the Government of India, which places them at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy of the caste system. Dalits experience an exceptionally high dependence on manual wage labor for their source of income due to restriction in access to fixed capital assets, low level of skills due to restrictive access to education and high unemployment, underemployment and low wage rates due to discrimination in the labor market. Therefore, they are clientele of Non-formal Education.

1.8 NEED FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

The rigid formal education system does not reach sections of a society and all categories of men and women. Only the privileged groups, by and large, avail themselves of educational facilities through schools, college, universities and technological institutions. The fixed point of entry and exit of formal education makes it more difficult for students from the weaker sections of the society to re-enter it. Because of certain causes the formal system became less suitable for the deprived sections of the society. Much more emphasis will have to be placed on the non-formal ways of education particularly for those who are excluded from the benefit of formal schooling. The importance of Non-Formal Education has also been recognized by the Government of India and it now forms an essential part of the revised educational planning. The formal education system, because of its rigidity excludes the poor from the advantages. The NFE, which is flexible and relevant to the lives of illiterates and the poor, needs to be encouraged in our country on account of the following:

- **To Universalize Elementary Education:**

Providing universal access to elementary education is the foremost objective under Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan (SSA). Unnerved areas are provided with primary and elementary schools under DPEP (District Primary Education Programme) and SSA to achieve this objective. Still, there remain remote habitation and scattered within country which are not accessible to the facility of elementary schooling. As per the Seventh All India School Education Survey (2006 NCERT), 86.97% habitations are served by primary schools. 53% of these habitations have primary schools located within the respective habitations and 34% have the same within 1 Km radius.

- **To Cope with Limited Resources:**

Increasing population on the one hand and limited resources on the other hand posed problems for the educational planners of the country. Particularly, it is not possible to set up a primary school in every remote (Backward/Far away in space or home) village or habitation which is very expensive. Hence, non-formal mode of education with part-time teacher and reduced duration of schooling can solve the problem to some extent.

- **To Serve the Scattered and Scarcely Populated Areas:**

To provide primary education through formal system in the scattered hilly or forest regions and sparsely (thinly scattered) populated areas is very uneconomical. Non-formal education with comparatively less amount of expenditure can easily serve these areas.

- **To Meet the Inadequacies of Formal Education:**

Formal education is found inadequate to satisfy the individual as well as societal needs for education. It is not adequate to meet the changing needs of the individual and emerging vocations and other life activities that time is gone when formal education was considered a one-for-ever and one-for-whole-life enterprise. Education is a life-long process and Non-formal education can easily meet the growing requirement of the citizens.

- **To Enable the Pupils to Learn While they Earn:**

Many of the children are economically deprived and cost of the living as well as learning is rising very fast. Hence, a large number of them are engaged in some job or occupation they like to learn while they earn. Non-formal education can help such children to receive elementary education initially and secondary or higher education subsequently.

- **To Meet the Needs of Late-Bloomers:**

Some children are not interested in the learning process and leave schools before completing the course whether primary or secondary. But in late years they are motivated and have desire to learn. They cannot be admitted to formal schools due to their age or psychological alienation (Lose the support or sympathy of), but they can have their education through non-formal modes.

- **To Provide Education to Economically Deprived Classes of the Society:**

Education in general and elementary education in particular is needed for socially and economically deprived classes of the society to improve their vocational competence and quality of life. But the straight formal system of education fails to achieve this objective. Hence, flexible and functional non-formal education can very well serve these neglected sectors of the society.

1.9 LETS SUM UP

- Non-Formal Education (NFE) is regarded by many as complementary to the formal system of education.
- Non-Formal Education is imparted in a free atmosphere without rigidity of rules and regulations governing the formal school and colleges.
- Non-Formal Education is comprehensive in its coverage and draws every man, women and child into its fold. It's closely connected with improving people's quality of life and with social as well as national development.
- The various kinds of clientele deriving the benefits of Non-Formal Education would clearly indicate its scope which is children outside school, the unemployed youth, Dalits, people with disabilities and women and girls.
- The rigid formal education does not reach all sections of the society. Therefore, there is a need for Non-Formal Education to utilize elementary education, to make the constraints of resources, to meet the inadequacy of formal education etc.