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Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948). An Inquiry into Adult Education, Teacher Training, Vocational Education, and Women's Education

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Abstract

The aim of this research roundtable is to shed light on Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), one of the significant adult education figures in India and who should be honored not only for his contributions to the adult education field but also for his educational philosophy, which is considered the first blueprint of modern India's national education system (Sweta, 2017). It also examines Gandhi's reflections on teachers' training, vocational education, and women's education.

Keywords: Gandhi, adult education, teachers' training, vocational education, women's education

The educator side of Mahatma Gandhi seems eclipsed, as he is widely known as the "Father of the Nation" and for his immense contribution toward India's independence (Habib, 1995, p. 14). Gandhi's thoughts on adult education, which he called *education for all*, are inseparable from his thoughts on education as a whole (Sahu & Behera, 2022). In addition, Gandhi admitted that "professional development of teachers shall not be relaxed" (Joseph et al., 2022, p. 155). Vocational and community service education are also fundamental principles in Gandhi's education philosophy. Lastly, Gandhi was keen on women's education and other marginalized sections to improve their living conditions by fighting for their self-development.

Adult Education

Gandhi's educational principles are still applicable, relevant, and essential in the 21st century (Raj, 2023). All adult educators who wish to synthesize adult education theory and craft a standard model for every global citizen need to study his contributions. Mahatma Gandhi was totally against focusing merely on the 3Rs; he admitted that "literacy could not be the main objective of education" (Sahu & Behera, 2022, p. 4566). He introduced some outstanding concepts that included productive work being part of education, education in the mother tongue, learning that is beyond textbooks, nurturing multiple skills that the learners are interested in, local community participation in education, and the training of 3H - head, heart, and hand.

Teacher's Training

Gandhi believed that the right kind of teacher was necessary to promote the dignity of labor and that intellectual growth is conditional upon it. He also believed that one should pay for such training through one's labor (Bala, 2005). A teacher training program and the local community, which handled the financing of education, were part of this new system (Dehury, 2008).

Vocational and Community Education

Gandhi provided an education scheme for India that is mass-oriented, value-based, and job-centered (Bala, 2005). The ashram school he created introduced handicraft training with an emphasis on manual training. Gandhi also adopted the spinning wheel or charkha, which turns

cotton into thread to cover India's basic clothing needs and makes *khadi* (Indian cotton cloth) instead of purchasing British-made clothes (Devika et al., 2014). Guha (2018) acknowledged that spinning to Gandhi meant several things, such as national pride, proof of economic self-reliance, social reform, personal strength, and renewal of indigenous skills, which were affected under colonization.

Women's Education

Women played a vital role in the Khadi production and non-cooperation movement. The charkha, or the spinning wheel, enabled the self-containment of thousands of villages (Pandikattu, 2001). Mahatma believed women's education should be geared toward practical self-sufficiency and knowledge about arithmetic, literacy, and ethics (Brown & Parel, 2011).

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi's achievements and reflections are proof of his commitment to improving the lives of his fellow citizens. The North American education system will significantly benefit from studying Gandhi's life and philosophies, as this is not an optional course but a mandatory one. While he does not need to be given an adult educator title, he has been a leader who did not need a title to lead.

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