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EDUCATIONAL PROCESS AND EDUCATIONAL TOOLS FOR THE DISTANCE EDUCATION OR TRAINING OF RURAL WOMEN POPULATION OF ASIA

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this work is to investigate the educational process and the educational tools that are used for distance education and training of rural women population in Asia and to detect the factors that must be taken into consideration for their choice. For the achievement of this aim was held bibliographic research, so as to locate characteristic cases of application of distance methodology in the education of the particular team of population. This investigation showed that in order to achieve the aim of distance programs of education or training of women of countryside, we will take account during the planning and their application of the educational, social, technological and economic conditions that prevail in the living region of these women, so as to select the suitable educational tools and the suitable educational process. Moreover, from the retrospection of bibliography it became obvious that the role of distance education is crucial for the upgrade of the role of women of the Asiatic countryside, for their emancipation, the access in the knowledge, the fighting of unemployment and finally for the improvement of conditions of their life.

Keywords: **Asiatic rural women population, distance education and training, educational process and tools.**

INTRODUCTION

In a lot of developed and developing countries the economic growth is influenced considerably by the upgrade of rural economy. The education and training of population of countryside is an important factor that contributes to the increase of productivity and the improvement of quality of rural products and consequently to the increase of competitiveness in the rural sector. The viability of rural growth depends by far on the education of rural women population that participates at big percentage in the rural production.

The reason therefore that this demographic team was selected is on the one hand because it constitutes a big department of the total rural population and on the other hand because in a lot of cases it constitutes a disadvantageous team for the access in the knowledge and the employment, because of familial, social and religious restrictions.

The bibliographic review that was held therefore, had as a goal to investigate the process and the educational tools that are used for distance education and training of rural women population.

The main however objective of this research is not simply to record the techniques and the tools of education, but mainly to connect the choice of suitable educational process and educational tools with the social, economic and technological background of each region.

In order to investigate the cases that concerned the education of women of the Asiatic countryside, were used as sources scientific magazines of distance education, as "Distance Education" and search engines in the internet.

An important number of researches that were found, concerned mainly the developing countries as Bangladesh (Sultana and Kamal, 2002), Pakistan (Sheikh, 2005), Southern India (Balasubramanian, Thamizoli, Umar, Kanwar, 2010), where the social conditions and biases usually constitute barrier in the equivalent attendance of women and specifically the rural women in the education and their professional development.

Also, there were found interesting researches that concerned cases of education of women population in under populated regions where the education by distance constitutes ideal solution for the training of women of the countryside. Such regions are the islander rural regions, as the islands Fiji (Morrison, 2008), Jamaica, the Philippines (Lucas, 1999), the desert Kombi in Mongolia (Robinson, 1999) and regions of Australia (Warner, 1993).

In countries of European Union, where the equality between women and men constitutes fundamental right and value, there were found distance educational programs for lifelong training and education of the people that are generally occupied in the rural sector and not specifically for the rural women population.

This work will be focused in four indicative cases of application of distance methodology for the education and training of Asiatic rural women population, in order to connect the educational process and the educational tools that were selected with the social, educational, technological and economic background of educated women.

The reason that Asia was selected for this research, is the fact that on the one side in this continent the important rate of the population deals with the agriculture, the cattle-raising and the fishery, and on the other side that in enough Asiatic countries a big part of the female rural population does not have access in the knowledge because of social and religious restrictions.

THE CASE OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan is an Asiatic country where the 70% of the population lives in rural regions and the 27.5% of the population is illiterate and the most of them are women. The women of countryside of Pakistan are deprived of education and economic or professional occasions, because of the conservative and patriarchal mentality that prevails.

As Sheikh (2005) refers, the government of Pakistan in collaboration with the Open University Allama Iqbal (AIOU), which is the unique distance educational institution of the country, with the Ministry of Education, with institutions that deal with the rural growth and with not governmental organizations of Pakistan, they have tried to apply programs for the social and economic uplift of the female farmer, with the final objective to improve the quality of life of families and of the nation as total.

More specifically, the AIOU has undertaken the enormous work of education and training of rural population and particularly the women of countryside.

It offers from programs of literacy up to programs of postgraduate level for the cover of educational needs of the female rural population.

Indicatively, it will be reported the way of organization of the program that offers the basic education in the female rural population of Pakistan and which is prepared by the AIOU. The program is presented in teams of 20 approximately women farmers, in their villages, using simply and low cost tools, as the cassettes of sound. One of the members of team is appointed as a leader, who directs the meetings and presents the material. The leader of the team collaborates and is supported by an assistant of coordinator that supervises 6 teams of trainees. Finally, the general monitoring of the program belongs to the Coordinator that collaborates with 5 assistants of coordinator and in the substance watches 30 teams with 600 overall women farmers.

Accordingly function also the remainder programs adapted in the needs of the trainees and the particular targets of programs (Sheikh, 2005).

THE CASE OF BANGLADESH

Proportional is also the case of Bangladesh that is an over-populated developing country (875 individuals per square kilometre), with high rate of illiteracy (49% in men and 71% in women). More from the three fourth of the population (80% approximately) live in rural regions and the half of the rural population are women, that because of the dependence from the men and the social and religious restrictions do not have access in the education and in the aid of their economic situation. It is becoming therefore imperative need for the women of countryside to acquire the knowledge and the suitable dexterities in order to participate in the rural enterprises.

The government of the country has undertaken initiatives in order to enforce the feminine education, as the free allowance of education in women that study in the secondary and third degree education. A big part, though, of the female rural population cannot participate in programs that are offered by the conventional institutions, because of the big rate of illiteracy and familial and social-cultural restrictions. The methodology of distance education is applied for the aid of education of women of countryside, with the use of suitable educational tools (Sultana and Kamal, 2004).

The female rural population in Bangladesh has no access in the modern technologies because of the lack of knowledge and approach in them. However, rural women have access in radio emissions. For this reason, in the planning of distance educational programs is taken into consideration the educational objective of the programs, the educative and social background of women of countryside and the access in the various educational tools. For example, for the educational programs of literacy is becoming use of printed material, cassettes of sound and video and means of mass briefing (radio and television emissions), in combination with face to face meetings. For the programs of training that aim in the growth of enterprising dexterities of the female rural population is becoming use of radio and television emissions, as printed material is not suitable because of the important rate of illiteracy.

Indicative example is the program for the aid of enterprising activity of women of countryside, which was organized with the collaboration of the state, non governmental organizations and Open University of Bangladesh. The work that began in September 1997 and was completed in September 2000 became in three phases.

In the program participated 5 instructors and 100 women trainees, separated in 5 teams. For each team was set a centre of reception, where the responsible instructor was informed with two-day seminar and received the educational material, that included the

educational handbook, tables of statements, posters, maps and suitable radio-television material. Afterwards the instructor organised the first meeting with the women farmers of his team, delivered the material, attended for their briefing and was the person in charge for the resolution of their wonders and for the control of their progress. The evaluation of particular program showed that the attitudes, the dexterities and the level of knowledge of the women farmers were strengthened (Sultana and Kamal, 2004).

THE CASE OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF INFANTA IN THE PHILIPPINES

Interesting is also the case of application of a model of distance education of women of countryside in the Philippines, with the support of the Constitution of Foods and Agriculture of United Nations. In this country a big part of rural women population faces the problem of poverty, illiteracy and time restrictions and is deprived of the general education and the access in knowledge. Since the Asiatic populations use the means of mass briefing in much bigger extent than other populations it is legitimate that they can use them also for the cover of their educational needs.

With the above model it is given the possibility to use the means of mass briefing, in order to support the access of rural women population in the educational occasions and sustain the rural growth and the improvement of living conditions. Specifically, the radio was used in order to accomplish the official education and achieve the training of a bigger number of women farmers with the lower possible cost. In order to promote therefore the sustainable growth in the agriculture it was applied in the municipality of Infanta in the Philippines an educational process for the rural women population, based in the model of radio emissions of BBC (Lucas, 1999).

The agriculture and the fishery constitute the main employment in the municipality of Infanta, where an important percentage of the rural population is under the limit of poverty. The program of distance education that functioned for the first time in the Infanta in 1996, aimed at the sensitization of rural population in issues relevant with the biological agriculture. Combining the municipal radio program with the education in the schools, it had the possibility of educating a big number of women farmers. More specifically, this program needed two years instead of seven that would be necessary for the conventional education of the same number of women farmers, with the same number of instructors. The objectives of this particular program were to facilitate the education of farmers in the practices of sustainable agriculture, to strengthen their attendance in the management of natural resources and finally to prepare instructors for the training and in other rural regions.

The planning of program was based on the transmission of knowledge via the radio emissions. These emissions included news, information on running subjects, discussions and exchange of ideas between the persons that were in the studio, while the listeners of the team could participate with calls or letters. After the end of the emission the listeners of the team continued discussing, placing reflections, trying to find solutions and program the subject of the next week. The chairman of the team submitted the proposals to the persons in charge of the radio program for treatment.

The distance educational program of the municipality of Infanta included apart from the radio program and the publication of a magazine, with news and relevant information (Lucas, 1999).

The educational program of the municipality of Infanta contributed in the aid of attendance of women farmers in the configuration of rural policy. Last, but not least, it contributed in the improvement of yield of agricultural products.

This example showed that the radio except for recreational and informative means can be also used as means of education and training for the achievement of concrete pedagogic objectives and for the improvement of knowledge and dexterities of rural women population.

The three previous cases that were reported and concern the distance education or training of Asiatic women farmers, present important resemblances mainly in the educational means and tools, which are simple and low cost. The next case that will be developed differs in the choice of educational means and is the case of distance training of women farmers of southern India.

THE CASE OF SOUTHERN INDIA

The particular interest of this case is found in the use of mobile telephones as a tool of learning, so as to train the women of countryside in order to found small enterprises of stock-farming of sheep and goats. This training will allow them to found viable rural enterprises and moreover to pay off the credits that have been granted to them.

It is useful to be pointed out that India is considered today a state with important and rapid economic and technological growth. With population above one billion, overwhelms continuously efforts for growth and the education is considered as an important means for the achievement of this objective. Characteristic sample of this effort is the impressive increase of the rate of literacy from the 16.5% in 1948 to the 64.84% in 2001. In the total however percentage of literate citizens, the percentage of literate women is the half from that of men. This is due to the weakness of access of rural women in the school, the existence of many languages and dialects, the high rate of births and the religious perceptions, that in many cases do not allow the education of women (Mukerji and Tripathi, 2005). The state of India appears to overwhelm appreciable efforts so as to increase the percentage of literate women.

In this particular educational effort of training of women farmers in Southern India, take part the non governmental organization *Vidiyal*, the company *VIDIVELLI* and an organization that has developed the frame for the lifelong education of farmers with the methodology of distance education and the use of new technologies. More specifically, this organization considers that if the education of farmers of a particular region is going to be facilitated with the use of new technologies, afterwards the effort will be strengthened also in other regions from new instructors that will result from the initial distance education.

Moreover, it considers that with this way is achieved the education not only by the instructor to the trainees, but also the transport of knowledge between the women farmers of the community.

It deserves to develop in detail the educational program that was applied in the case of women farmers in Southern India. The intention of the program was on the one hand the training of women in the sector of stock-farming of sheep and goats and on the other hand their training in the enterprising activity and in the process of "little lending" that was needed for the growth of their small rural enterprises.

The "little lending" system was first established for the confrontation of poverty, with accent in the lending of women, from *Muhammad Yunus* (Norris, 2011), professor of Finances in the University of Bangladesh, with studies in the USA. The successful economic experiment of Yunus was expanded in more of 50 countries and gave him the

Nobel of Peace in 2006. According to Yunus, the improvement of living conditions of the family is more an affair of women and for this constituted priority in his undertaking.

In the particular case of Southern India, the organizers of the program considered that the education of women in the process of proposals for lending and in the further handling and settlement of loans would encourage the banking system to grant them the essential "little lending". The 300 women that were selected in order to participate in the program were educated initially in order to develop the operational proposal, to learn the process of credit and to get in contact with the bank. Each one of the women farmers asked to receive credit in order to buy nine goats, a male animal and a mobile telephone. The aim of the mobile telephone was to strengthen the chances of lifelong education also for the women that were illiterate or half- illiterate. The bank agreed with their proposal and approved the credits that were granted in the names of the participating women. Afterwards the non governmental organization Vidiyal came in agreement with one of the bigger suppliers of mobile telephony in southern India, the company IKSL-Airtel Group, in order to sent sound messages in these 300 women via their mobile telephones. Specifically, there were created 500 approximately sound messages, of 60 seconds each one, relevant with issues as the management of credits, information on the stock-farming of goats, the management of their health etc and were sent via the mobile telephones in the women of the program with the frequency of 3 until 5 messages per day. The content of the messages was shaped by the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences *TANUVAS*, taking into account the local culture and the local dialects. Moreover, the members were educated in the use of digital photograph, so as to create useful material that after evaluation would be channelled via the mobile telephones in all women (Sheikh, 2005).

The women of the program accomplished meetings once a week and shared their experiences. In this way it has been achieved encouragement, interaction between the members and participative learning through collective experience. During the meetings there have been organized also projections of videos with relative subjects and moreover the trainee women had the possibility to watch via the local satellite channels relative television emissions that were set up by the responsible persons of the program.

Particularly important is the pointing out that most women farmers were also supported by their families so as to achieve the objectives of learning. The members of the family by hearing the content of messages with the woman farmer shared the information and sometimes helped her in the comprehension. This process profited also the family to learn new things and extend knowledge in the stock-farming of goats.

The women farmers had with them their mobile telephones at the time of their work in the house or in the spaces of stock-farming of animals and this accommodated their territorial independence. Moreover, for the women that did not watch the school class and had the fear of teaching or of the schoolteacher, the training via the mobile telephones or via the meetings and lectures was more accessible. The literate women, but also the half - literate, with the help of their husband and their children marked the more important information and made discussions afterwards during their meetings. In this way it was strengthened the process of learning through the exchange of opinions and information and became action the transport of knowledge between the women of the team.
This case of training of rural women population in Southern India shows that in the cases where the technological level of country allows it, it is possible to select for the distance education more modern educational tools. Moreover, it shows that with the use of new technologies the interaction between the participants was strengthened and the feedback and the collective effort were achieved.

CONCLUSION

From the indicative cases of education and training of rural women population of Asia that were reported, the effort of states to strengthen the education of this team of their population becomes obvious. The distance methodology is an important tool for the achievement of this goal. With this methodology is achieved the reduction of illiteracy, the training on issues of rural growth and business dexterity, the access in knowledge, the reduction of unemployment and the upgrade of role of women. With the disposal of resources for the education of women of countryside the states achieve the vivification of rural regions, the aid of rural economy, the increase of business dexterity and the growth of country and the rise of their biotic and economic level.

In the planning of distance programs that are addressed to the women of countryside, it is essential to determine precise and feasible objectives, to take into consideration the proper educational needs and based on these needs to select the educational process and the educational tools.

In countries of Asia where the access of women in the technology is difficult and the economic conditions are limited, the educational process and the tools that are selected are simple and low cost, as radio emissions, printed material, cassettes, video etc. In the example of Pakistan dominate the cassettes of sound and the meetings of women farmers, while in the cases of programs of Bangladesh and Municipality of Infanta dominate the means of mass briefing and particularly the radio emissions in combination with cassettes of sound, the use of printed material and parallel support from face to face meetings.

When the technological growth of an Asiatic country allows the use of new technologies in the education and mainly when an important percentage of women of countryside have easy access in the technology, it is possible to select more modern educational tools, as the use of computers, the internet and the mobile telephones. Indicative is the example of Southern India where the educational programs of training of women farmers were supported by the growth of telecommunications and technologies and the mobile telephones were used as educational tools.

In the cases that were developed, the effort of women of rural population was supported on the one hand by the instructor and on the other hand by the remainder members of the team. Characteristic is also the example of support of women farmers of Southern India from the remainder members of the family and the community.

The designers of distance programs that were presented in this work, so as to encourage the teams and deter the women farmers to abandon their effort of education, they include in the planning face to face meetings of members of the team. In this meetings become discussions, resolution of queries and exchange of opinions. Remarkable finally, is the fact that in the four indicative cases the learning of women farmers was also strengthened through the interaction, the common effort and the collective experience.

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