

# KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN A LIBRARY AND AN ADULT LEARNING SETUP

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## Learning Objectives



It is expected that after going through Unit 4 you will be able to

- ❖ learn about the management of knowledge in a library and an adult education centre;
- ❖ create a knowledge base; and
- ❖ render information services to the villagers.

## 4.1 Introduction

In Unit 4, we have discussed about knowledge management (KM). KM can be applied almost in every area of activity. In Unit 4 we shall focus on application aspect of knowledge management and discuss how knowledge is managed in a library and an adult education centre (AEC). Libraries and adult education setups

are found both in urban areas as well as rural areas. They vary in scope, size, functions, and so on. Since in Course 02 our focus is on documentation, dissemination and networking at adult learning setup, we shall here only touch upon KM in libraries and discuss in greater details KM in adult learning setup.

## 4.2 Knowledge Management in a Library

A library is considered a storehouse of knowledge. Major part of the knowledge of a library is recorded in books, journals, newspapers, patents, standards, theses, reports, and other documents in the form of data and information. Most of these are procured from outside, some are generated locally which include among others annual report of the organization, trip reports, committee reports, budget proposal, case descriptions of successful projects, audited statement of income and expenditure, and locally compiled databases. For their management, there are well-established rules and procedures which are followed. At times some rules are framed locally by the library staff for the proper management. You will learn about these rules and procedures in detail in other units.

The other part of the knowledge of a library lies with the library staff

themselves. Knowledge of the library staff varies from person to person. One may be well-versed in classification, another in cataloguing, and someone may be in reference service. The librarian should have adequate knowledge about the expertise of his staff and utilize their expertise to the optimum level. In some libraries there are employees who are extraordinary in finding out documents with the slightest of hints. Utilizing this type of person properly will be a very good example of knowledge management. On the other hand if the head of an organization feels that anybody is capable of doing anything, and accordingly places a typist in the reference desk and a non-professional as head of the library, then this will be the worst case of knowledge management in a library.

## 4.3 Knowledge Management in an Adult Learning Setup

The resources of an adult education setup vary from place to place, and locality to locality. In a typical rural adult education centre there might be a handful of books, old and new issues of one or two magazines, a newspaper and some files. Some setups may be more resourceful. With a short-term training on document processing and management, an adult educator will be able to manage these documents efficiently. For knowledge management however, an adult educator will have to be active, enthusiastic, and needs to have an aptitude for gathering information. There are rural as well as urban adult education setups. Here we shall discuss knowledge management in

a rural setup.

Villagers require information mostly relating to agriculture and agro-industries, small scale industries, health and hygiene, housing, trade and commerce, education, religious events, communication, traveling and so on. There may be constant demand for this type of information in case correct information is provided to rural folk in time. The responsibility for the building up a knowledge base in an adult education centre lies solely on the adult educator. For accomplishing this job s/he has two options:

i) s/he can create a knowledge base of her own gathering information from

various sources; or

ii) s/he can create a corporate knowledge base.

In the first case, the adult educator will have to identify the various types of information pertaining to agriculture, health, etc the educatees or villagers need. Then s/he will have to find out either the information itself or the sources wherefrom the information can be obtained.

#### 4.3.1 Agriculture and Related Industries

About 65 to 70 per cent of India's population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. We may not find any village in India which is devoid of some sort of agricultural activity. Along with agriculture have developed animal husbandry, fisheries and forestry in some villages. Hence, the extent information requirement for these areas is really large. Hence, villages may need among others the following types of information for agriculture and related industries [Chatterjee and Rahman 2003]

- ❖ The place where From good quality seeds can be obtained
- ❖ The cattle market where from the cattle of better breed can be purchased
- ❖ The suppliers of various agricultural implements in nearby cities or towns
- ❖ The repair shops for agricultural implements
- ❖ The sellers of fertilizers, pesticides, etc in nearby markets
- ❖ The buyers of food grains and other agricultural products
- ❖ The availability of cold storage in nearby areas

- ❖ The facility for transporting agricultural products by rail, road, etc
- ❖ The availability of expertise for cultivation, pest control, harvesting, storing, etc of the new variety of a crop
- ❖ The possibilities of receiving training in vermin-culture and organic farming
- ❖ The kind of trees that can be planted in a village so that the trees can thrive well and in the course of years become a good source of fruits, timber, fuel wood, shade and so on
- ❖ Availability of seedlings for the purpose of plantation.
- ❖ Varieties of flowers that can be grown in a particular village.
- ❖ Market for purchasing and selling domestic animals, poultry, etc.
- ❖ Centers for artificial insemination.
- ❖ Dairies and markets where milk can be sold.
- ❖ Method of fish breeding
- ❖ Sources for the purchase of hatchlings etc
- ❖ Centers providing training in beekeeping, and so on

#### 4.3.2 Small-scale Industries

The types of small scale industries vary from village to village depending on the availability of raw materials and other facilities. In the villages of Murshidabad district in West Bengal there is a predominance of *bidi* industry. There are villages in Uttar Pradesh which specialize in bangle-making and basket weaving (see Figure 4.1). The above instances make it clear that our villages also specialize in product generation.

Obviously, information requirements of villagers will depend on the work they are doing for their livelihood.



Figure 4.1: Basket Weaving

Let us take a village specialized in doll-making. The villagers would obviously need the following types of information related to doll-making.

- ❖ The place wherefrom they can get raw materials (clay, plastics, clothing, dyes, etc) needed for making dolls
- ❖ The channels available for marketing as well as export of dolls to various states as well as foreign countries
- ❖ Banks providing loans with low interest
- ❖ Facilities available for training in doll-making including charges for training, lodging and boarding

It goes without saying that depending on the industry prevalent in the village,

the adult educator will have to create her knowledge base.

### 4.3.3 Health and Hygiene

Through education, media, traveling, personal contacts, etc villagers are getting exposed to various modern facilities relating to health and hygiene. Hence, information they often require is of the following types [Chandra and Bhattacharyya 2003].

- ❖ Availability of renowned doctors for complicated diseases like cancer, tuberculosis, and heart ailments
- ❖ Location of hospitals, dispensaries, maternity centers, mental asylums, polio booths, family planning centers, pathological testing centers, etc
- ❖ Location of nearby reliable drugstores wherefrom genuine drugs and other medical supplies can be obtained
- ❖ Availability of treatment through alternative systems of medicine
- ❖ Possibilities of receiving professional training in childcare and childbirth
- ❖ Location of nearby training centers for setting up hygienic sanitary systems of low cost
- ❖ Reliable information on HIV-aids and other related diseases
- ❖ Availability of short term training courses in keeping environment clean and unpolluted
- ❖ Information on forming village clubs of young men and women to promote health and hygiene related issues

#### 4.3.4 Housing

The housing scenario in villages is fast changing. Fifty years ago where there were only thatched houses in my village, gradually they have all been replaced by brick-built houses. Today villagers need information about good quality building materials like bricks, stone chips and cement; sanitary wares; timbers; architects; artisans; and so on. Information on low-cost housing with local resources can be of great value to villagers. Local resources are often equally good if not better in comparison with those procured from outside the area at a great cost.

#### 4.3.5 Education

Gradually the curse of illiteracy, which dominated for centuries in our country, is finally fading out. Even the poorest of the poor is trying to send children to school. The percentage of literate people is steadily increasing. Even in rural areas schools are coming up, primary schools are being upgraded to middle schools, and middle schools to secondary and higher secondary schools. Students appearing in class XII examination nowadays need a variety of information as to their future pursuit and career. Some of which are listed below.

For admission in top ranking medical and engineering institutes in the country students take joint entrance examinations (JEEs), and for this they require very good preparation as the

competition is extraordinarily tough. In this case villagers need information about the centers that provide coaching through correspondence course, distance learning or any other mode. Those who are getting a chance for admission in engineering or medical colleges, they need money beyond the capacity of most villagers. Such students need information about bank loans. Those who fail to qualify in JEEs need information about various colleges, polytechnics, vocational education centers, and so on where they can take admission for pursuing their studies further.

Unemployed youth in rural areas need skill up-gradation in order to find sustainable employment. Another useful educational input can be information on training with placement opportunities.

#### 4.3.6 Employment

In villages students who have cleared secondary or higher secondary exams, or graduated, they are in constant search for an employment. Hence, information regarding employment is of vital importance for them. The central as well as state governments in our country have started many self-employment schemes. Employment seekers very much need to know about them.

Similarly for organizing religious, social, cultural events, etc information is required.

#### Activity 4.1

Enumerate the types of information a farmer in your area generally needs. Does your center provide the villagers information on any of the areas listed by you? Write a short note on the types of information available at your center.

Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

## 4.4 Creating a Knowledge Base

**F**or creating a knowledge base in a rural setup, first of all a profile of the village is to be created. If it is already there it should be used (Sarkhel and Majumdar 2003). In an Adult Learning Set-up (ALS) all the information villagers may require will not be available. If the villagers come to know that the adult educator is a knowledgeable person, they will come to him or her for information on various matters. Hence, the adult educator will have to prepare herself or himself to satisfy the villagers. For this purpose s/he will have to create a knowledge base. Now we shall discuss how a knowledge base can be created.

### 4.4.1 Collection Building

For creating a knowledge base, collection of information assumes paramount importance. The information is to be collected from diverse sources as described below.

National Fertilizer Corporation; Seed Corporation; National Horticultural Board; state agricultural universities; state forest departments; companies dealing with fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, etc from time to time bring out leaflets, pamphlets, etc. These documents provide valuable up-to-date information and are generally available free. If an AEC writes to these organizations, the name of the AEC will be in their mailing lists, and whenever such publications are issued, one copy will be made available to the AEC. The central and state governments from time to time issue notifications relating to various schemes directed towards rural development. These notifications are also to be collected, preserved, and used whenever occasion arises.

National and local newspapers and magazines from time to time publish articles of rural interest. The adult educator is to scan them and maintain clippings of those items.

The files available in the centre also contain valuable information which should be preserved carefully.

Some reference books like an almanac, a time table, a PIN code directory, a relevant telephone directory, etc should be purchased to provide information on various religious matters, travels, post offices and so on. These are not costly and affordable by the AEC. If the AEC can subscribe to periodicals like *Employment News* it will be of very great help to employment seekers. If genuine efforts are made, some of these things may be available through gifts even. Agricultural Finance Commission publishes monthly Techno-economic Feasibility Report which contains valuable marketing information relating to agricultural and industrial commodities. National Horticultural Board also issues various bulletins on horticulture which also should be collected as a potential source of information.

### 4.4.2 Compilation of a Local Directory

As an adult educator goes on collecting information, s/he will gradually feel the need of systematic compilation in order to use the collection being gradually built up. One of the useful information sources to gradually compile is the directory of important **persons** like district magistrate (DM), block development officer (BDO), agricultural development officer (AGO), *krishi prayukti sahayak* (KPS), specialists and



knowledgeable persons of the area, head and members of gram *panchayat*, doctors, *amins* (land surveyors), technicians of agricultural machineries and dealers of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides functioning in the area; organizations like government offices, non-government organizations, banks, schools and colleges; hospitals, dispensaries, drugstores; local farms; nurseries; and shops selling agricultural equipment and machineries. This apart, the directory needs to include information about the local markets, the days the markets function, the

products that are sold and purchased, the renowned buyers, wholesalers, and so on. The directory should include name, address, telephone number etc.

Whenever somebody needs any information, the person may refer to the directory and retrieve the information. This is a painstaking job and requires patience, perseverance and devotion. Moreover, the information gathered requires constant updating. Of course, some information like crops grown in a village round the year may serve for many years.

#### Activity 4.2

Explain how you as an adult educator will create a knowledge base in your adult education centre.

Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

## 4.5 Information Service

The information services that AEC is generally expected to render pertains to **reference and referral services** (Ray 2003). When the information required by a person can be directly given to him or her, it is known as reference service. For example, a person needs information about a heart specialist. The adult educator searches the directory and finds that there is a heart specialist in the district town. On a piece of paper s/he writes the name and address of the specialist, and tells the person about the doctor's fees and visiting hours. This is reference service.

On the other hand, the adult educator may not have the information and in such case s/he may ask the person to consult the local doctor who may provide the information. This is referral service. If an AEC can collect some books and

magazines through gifts and purchase, then the lending service can be started. Books and bound volumes of magazines can be issued for one week and magazine issues when become old can also be issued.

A notice board can play a big role in information dissemination. Some information like prices of commodities in various markets, weather forecast and farming-related advice for the week, fortnight or the month, as well as relevant circulars issued by the government can be displayed on the notice board.

Considering the fact that a large section of our population is still illiterate, lectures by experts, seminars of topical interest, film shows relating to topics of local interest may also be organized.

## 4.6 Conclusion

Knowledge management in a library has been briefly touched as it is being discussed in detail in unit 16 and unit 17 of course 02. Knowledge management in an AEC which is of paramount importance for adult educators has been described in

greater detail. The creation of a knowledge base, collection building, compilation of a directory, and information service has been described laying sufficient emphasis.

## 4.7 Apply What You Have Learnt

Suppose that you need to carry out knowledge management in your ALS and create a knowledge base as well as provide information service to users of the ALS. Describe in 1500 words how

you will plan and implement these activities in your ALS in the context of already existing base and your plans for improvement in the base.

