

## VALUE BASED LIFELONG LEARNING – A NEED OF THE HOUR

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### Abstract

The UNESCO initiated Faure Report (1972) proposed the adoption of Life Long Education as the master concept of educational policies for both developed & developing countries. A major cause for the growing significance of Lifelong Learning worldwide aims at the present features of the job market. However, Lifelong Learning keeping the basic tenets of learning intact should be far beyond the economic issues & consumerism. It encourages equal participation of the public in learning irrespective of their class, caste, gender & economic status which have significant value implications as well. However, a closer look suggests that the basic protocol of Lifelong Learning is missing in today's era of globalisation. In most of the developing countries it is viewed as a response to the economic crisis & the challenge of the knowledge economy neglecting the humanitarian values, democracy & citizenship. In gross, what we face today is – “value crisis”. The query whether integration of value education is necessary in lifelong learning initiated the researchers to conduct a case study on Jute mill workers of North 24 pargana district of W.B. The study reveals that value based lifestyle management programmes have considerably improved the working environment.

**Keywords:** Knowledge economy, Lifelong Learning, Value education, Socio-religious organizations.



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### Introduction

The concept ‘Lifelong Learning’ was introduced in Denmark as early as in 1971. ‘Lifelong Learning’ as the name indicates implies learning through all stages of life (from cradle to grave). It takes in account of acquiring, developing and updating all kinds of abilities, interests, knowledge, skill and competences from the pre-school years to post retirement and valuing all forms of learning and barring any restriction of time and place leading to the pathway of a knowledge-based society. Lifelong Learning is a self-motivated pursuit of knowledge, a mindset and a habit for people to acquire. It encourages equal participation of the public in learning irrespective of their class, caste, gender & socio-economic status. ‘Lifelong Learning’ is the “ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated” pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. Therefore, it not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development, but also self-sustainability, rather than competitiveness and employability.

“Lifelong Learning is the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which simulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understandings they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environments.” (Longworth, N and Davies, W. K, 1996)

The concept of Lifelong Learning that has been accepted worldwide is based on two models: a) Humanistic model, b) Human capital model. While UNESCO’s vision on Lifelong Learning is based on the former, OECD follows the later looking for the purpose of economic gain concerned with the job market.

UNESCO initiated Faure report (1972) which outlines their vision of permanent (lifelong) education as encompassing the whole life span, being inclusive of different social sectors, occurring across different formal, non-formal and informal settings, and addressing a broad range of social, cultural, and economic purposes and links lifelong education to building a learning society although economic aspects were a part of UNESCO’s remit as well. Delors report (1996) reaffirms Faure report interprets continuing education and Lifelong Learning as key concepts and finds it most relevant in the era of rapid globalization. The concept of learning throughout life is the key that gives access to the twenty-first century. The UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy (2008-2013) sets objectives for the Education Sector, “attaining quality education for all and Lifelong Learning”.

A major cause for the growing significance of Lifelong Learning is the development of knowledge economy which is characterised by the rapid changes in the development of the mode of economic production & the present features of the job market. It has become a key concept in thinking about education and training worldwide.

However, Lifelong Learning keeping the basic tenets of learning intact is far beyond the economic issues & consumerism. It encourages equal participation of the public in learning irrespective of their class, caste, gender & socio-economic status. All these have significant value implications such as social equity, humane values, equal opportunities for self-enrichment, citizenship participation in education & hence building a more democratic society. Unfortunately, our societies reveal a picture that is quite frustrating. In the changing scenario of the job market, the workers are under constant pressure to constantly upgrade their skills in order to maintain their employability often become the victims of stress, anxiety and depression making them more vulnerable in their work place. On the other hand, in an economic environment where one does not know where the economy is headed, whether one would have a job tomorrow, possibility of one’s involvement in affairs not desired by the

society, increases unless one is endowed with internal cohesion, external resilience and ability to operate beyond personal interest. On the other hand, rampant corruption, violence against women, anti-social activities, religious fanaticism, terrorist activities etc. are becoming very common. In short our society is facing value crisis – a crisis of moral, ethical and spiritual values. Unless this crisis in the society is met ‘Learning society’ will remain a dream.

### **Objectives of the study**

- To explore the situation of Lifelong Learning in India.
- To review the concept of value and value based education.
- To find out the necessities of integrating value education with Lifelong Learning.
- To find out whether value based Lifelong learning programmes should be introduced to the factory workers.

### **Methodology**

The present study adopted the following methodology:

1. Qualitative document analysis of various reports and policy programs.
2. A case study conducted on 50 Jute mill workers of North 24 Pgs district of West Bengal.

### **Lifelong Learning in India.**

India is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of near about 121 crores (Census Report, 2011). At present the literacy rate of India is 74.04% with a male literacy rate of 82.14% & female literacy rate of 65.46%(Census Report 2011). A comparison of Census Reports 2001 & 2011 shows a decadal difference in total literacy rates of 9.21%. Though indicating a moderate progress in literacy rates, illiteracy in India still remains a matter of concern so much so that it leads in terms of the gross number of illiterates in the world. Out of the world’s total illiterates, 37% lie in India. The United Nations ‘Education for All- Global Monitoring Report (2010) declared India as the country with the highest number of illiterate adults. Out of the most important factors that determine the progress of a country, literacy is one of them. Formal programs of education in a developing country like India have limited scope to eradicate illiteracy. Therefore is the need for alternative ways of educating the mass. The demographic data shows that more than 65% of Indian population is below the age of 35 (Census Report, 2011). For this reason, the focus of India’s Lifelong Learning program continues to be on adult basic literacy and continuing education for the younger age group.

The Lifelong Learning education has been discussed in several educational policy documents and discourses in India.

(i) The first major *Report on Adult Education* (1939) observed that:

*the function of Adult Education...cannot be confined to promotion and maintenance of literacy....Every encouragement must also be given to the adults fully literate so far as the 3R'S are concerned, who will feel the need to continue their education, whether their object is to improve their efficiency as workers or citizens or simply to increase their capacity for intellectual enjoyment and recreation... Suitably graded part time courses or classes should be held in the evening and taken up as a priority programme (Report of Adult Education Committee, 1939).*

(ii) The subsequent *Report of the Education Commission* (1964-66) observed that: *Education does not end with schooling but is a lifelong process. The adult need an understanding of the rapidly changing world and the growing complexities of society. Even those who had the most sophisticated education must continue to learn; the alternative is obsolescence...Thus viewed the function of Adult education in a democracy is to provide every adult citizen an opportunity for education of the type which he wishes and which he should have for his personal enrichment, professional advancement and effective participation in social and political life. (Report of Indian Education Commission, 1964).*

(iii) National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) - launched on 2 October, 1978. This was the first programme in India taken up at the macro level to eradicate illiteracy through project approach. It was a massive programme aimed at educating 100 million non-literate adults in the age-group of 15-35 years within a time frame of five years.

(iv) Rural Functional Literacy Program (RFLP) - In 1979, the programme of Functional Literacy for youth in the age group of 15-25 years was merged with the Farmers' Training and Functional Literacy Project to constitute 'Rural Functional Literacy Programme' (RFLP). The RFLP aimed at developing the abilities of learners in reading, writing and computing, raising their functionality or functional capability and creating awareness among them regarding their personal and social predicaments.

(v) The National Policy on Education in India-1986 (modified in 1992) - Observed that the critical development issue is the continuous up gradation of skills so as to produce manpower resources of the kind and the number required by the society.

(vi) National Literacy Mission (NLM) - launched on 5 May, 1988 as a Technology Mission to impart functional literacy to non-literates in the country in the age group of 15-35 years in a time bound manner through the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) approach.

(vii) However, two international conferences on Lifelong Learning in India initiated the formulation of The Mumbai and Hyderabad Statements on Lifelong Learning in 1998 and 2002 which publicized the concept of Lifelong Learning in India. The Hyderabad Statement formulated recommendations of Lifelong Learning for the purpose of human development including fighting poverty and emphasized the importance of promoting values and the practice of democracy, justice and tolerance. It stated that learning at all levels should aim to achieve the goals of equity, equality, human dignity and gender justice.

(viii) XIth Five Year Plan -With the formulation the Eleventh Five year Plan (2007-2012), the Government of India put forward the idea of expanding the scope of the Continuing Education Program by developing it as Lifelong Education and Awareness Program (LEAP). This may be partly influenced by the global discourse on Lifelong Learning and partly due to the socio-economic changes taking place within and outside the country.

(ix) Sakshar Bharat Abhiyan – launched in September 2009 to impart functional literacy and numeracy, enable the neo-literate adults to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalency to formal educational system, impart relevant skill development to improve earning capacity and living conditions, and promote a learning society by providing opportunities to neo-literate adults for continuing education.

(x) XIIth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) - Sakshar Bharat as flagship scheme for adult education would be revamped in the twelfth plan and aligned to the new paradigm of Lifelong Learning. Lifelong Learning and literacy under the revamped programme should be seamlessly integrated with formal education system for horizontal and vertical migration by establishing equivalency frameworks to facilitate credit transfer among formal, non-formal and informal education.

A review of the present status of Lifelong Learning in India reveals that Lifelong Learning is mainly targeted towards economic growth only. Humanitarian aspect which involves incorporation of values for the holistic development of a person is overlooked somehow.

### **Value education- its relevance in present scenario**

21<sup>st</sup> century is observing the era of a massive explosion in science and technology. Exponential developments in tele-communication and information technology have reduced the world into a global village. Consequently, there have been social changes like industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation. It is true that our society has benefited a lot from these social changes. These benefits are imperative in the field of education also with increased use of technology in teaching-learning and global sharing and exchange of information in the field of academia. This by and large has initiated human race to progress

and prosper. It has helped people to come out of age old superstitious practices and belief. But, this is only one side of a coin. Unfortunately, the other side presents a picture that is quite frightening and matter of great concern. Students, the future saviours of our society, are getting increasingly inclined towards violence, social evil and lack of respect towards world around them. The success of education is measured today with wealth and power acquired through education. Education has turned into a commodity. Knowledge acquired by the students has become superficial. Their only aim is to get good marks in the examinations and to use their marks sheets for getting good jobs. Also, there is a high degree of stress, especially in the younger generation, owing to fast paced modern day lifestyle. Incidents of crimes like sexual abuse, throwing acids on other's face, murder etc. are often in the news. Factors like religious fanaticism, stockpiling of nuclear weapons and terrorist activities are posing grave threats to global peace. All these are due to moral degradation, lack of character building within the young generation and lack of ethics or in a broader spectrum are erosion of values and it is here that inculcation of values among the students can play a very important role by shielding them from all such influences. Modern day education system has succeeded in providing employment to certain extent but it has failed to build a truly prospered complete human being with a 'humane' nature. Here comes the need of inculcation of values in every citizen of a country. Education ingrained with values can be a saviour.

Values are the guiding principles of life which are conducive to all round development. They give direction and firmness to life and bring joy, satisfaction and peace to life.

Education and values are inseparable. They are two sides of the same coin. Einstein remarked once: "try not to become a man of success but try to become a man of values."

In fact almost every education policy document has emphasized the role of education in fostering values. *Education Commission (1966)* recommended introduction of social, moral and spiritual values in the school curricula. *The National Policy of Education (1986)* also highlighted the need of education for values in removing intolerance, violence, superstition and upholding social, cultural and scientific principles to make India a secular, democratic and progressive nation taking pride in its cultural heritage.

*The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000)* brought to focus the erosion of ethical, social and spiritual values and suggested the integration of values in the curriculum.

*The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005* strongly advocates values like cooperation, respect for human rights, tolerance, justice, responsible citizenship, diversity, reverence towards democracy and peaceful conflict resolution. It also delineates education for

peace as a significant national and global issue. The position paper on *Education for Peace* has also addressed the issue of equipping students with the values, attitudes and skills required to live in harmony as responsible citizens with the goal of education for peace. Education for values will further equip students to make sensible choices on situations based on values of equality, integrity, democracy, freedom, and human rights. Education is inherently values oriented and must develop in learners caring, co-operation and respect for others. In addition to equipping them with life skills and attitudes, it must prepare them to lead a full life.

In fact Value education has already been introduced by CBSE. As far as the present situation, values are integrated with each subject in the curriculum. Each unit in a subject imparts certain set of values. But as per the present situation worldwide, there is a dire need to take initiative for inculcation of moral, ethical and spiritual values in every citizen and the initiative should be taken not only through formal education system but through non- formal and informal means also.

#### **Needs for integrating Value Education with Lifelong Learning.**

The role and importance of Lifelong Learning in India have increased in recent times due to several socio economic factors. In a technology driven knowledge based competitive economy; the landscape of learning is fast changing in India. Since most of India's workforce is in the unorganized sectors, they need regular upgrading of skills to compete in the globalize economy. Thus, Lifelong Learning has become a fundamental goal of recent educational policies often advocated as a way to achieve socio-economic development and a tool for promoting knowledge based society.

The most accepted approach in conceptualizing Lifelong Learning is concerned with promoting skills and competences necessary for developing general capabilities and specific performance in work situations. Skills and competences developed through programs of Lifelong Learning are vital for workers performance in their tackling of precise job responsibilities. On this analysis a more highly educated and skilled workforce will contribute to a more advanced and competitive economy. However, there is much more to be understood from the concept of Lifelong Learning than merely its economic imperatives. As Smethurst remarks: *What does not come out of the statistics is that, in order to succeed in life, in the world, in history, you need not just academic skill but personality, independence of mind, and autonomy of spirit.*

An important aspect of Lifelong Learning often overlooked, is 'life-deep learning'. It is another word for value education. It refers to delving into insights of life and dealing with

emotional, spiritual and social quotients, in addition to intelligence quotient. Today's society needs to focus on this aspect for initiating true growth and prosperity.

Jacques Delors, in his 1996 report, Learning: the treasure within, provides an advanced conception of Lifelong Learning that has it resting on four pillars of education. 'Learning to know' and 'learning to do' are the ostensible concerns of the human-development. But there are also the pillars of 'learning to live together' and 'learning to be' which together provide ample room for values education on the Lifelong Learning agenda.

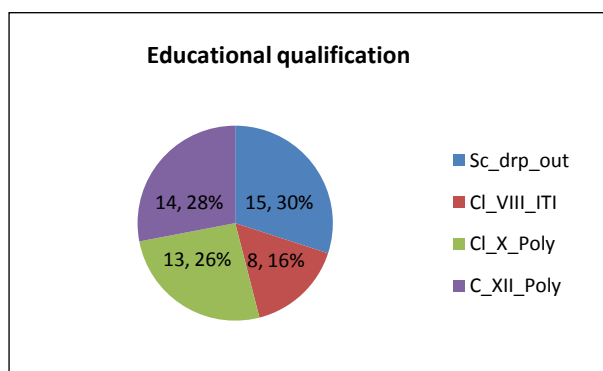
Values are not cosmetic requirements of present human race. These are essential for peaceful living and sustainable growth in the world. Therefore is the need of value based Lifelong Learning. Moreover, Self- motivated pursuit of knowledge helps in realization of values more effectively. In this case Lifelong Learning can prove effective. Also, personal enrichment benefits the family as well as the society. Thus, Lifelong Learning has little meaning without development, nurture and internalization of values and it can be aptly said that values can form the basis of Lifelong Learning.

### **Necessity of introducing value based lifelong learning programmes- a case study on Jute mill workers of North 24 Pgs district of West Bengal.**

A study was conducted on 50 private jute mill workers from Naihati and Kankinara area ( North 24 Pgs) of West Bengal. An in depth interview was conducted by the researchers to find out their educational qualifications, professional qualifications, job satisfaction, inclination and desire towards continuing further education and the impact of value based lifestyle management programmes conducted voluntarily by some socio-religious organisations on their working environment.

#### **Result and Analysis**

According to the study, regarding educational qualification, 30% of the workers were School dropouts, 16% of the workers passed ITI after completing 8<sup>th</sup> Standard & 26% of the workers passed Polytechnic after completing 12<sup>th</sup> standard & 28% Passed Polytechnic after completing 12<sup>th</sup> standard (fig.1).

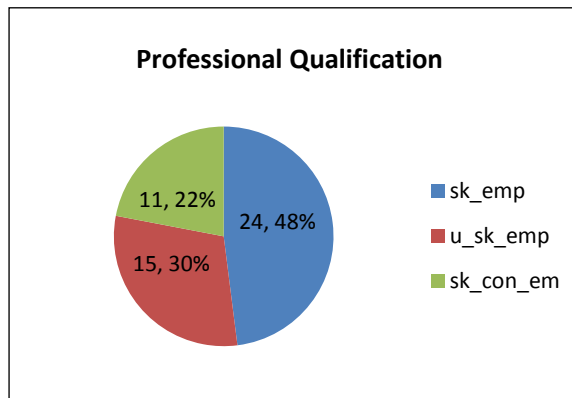


**Legends:** Sc\_drp\_out – School drop -out, Cl\_VIII\_ITI – Passed ITI after class VIII, Cl\_X\_Poly – Passed Polytechnic after class X, C\_XII\_Poly – Passed Polytechnic after class XII.

Fig.1



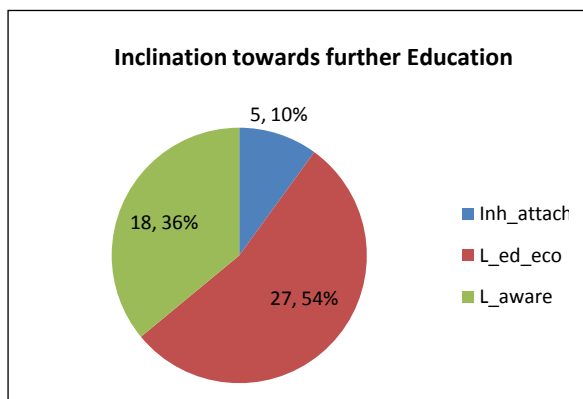
Regarding professional qualification, it was found that 48% of the workers were skilled in their respective trades, 30% were unskilled workers and 22% were skilled temporary and contract workers (fig.2).



**Legends:** *sk\_emp – Skilled employees, u\_sk\_emp: Unskilled employees, sk\_con\_em: Unskilled contractual employees.*

Fig.2

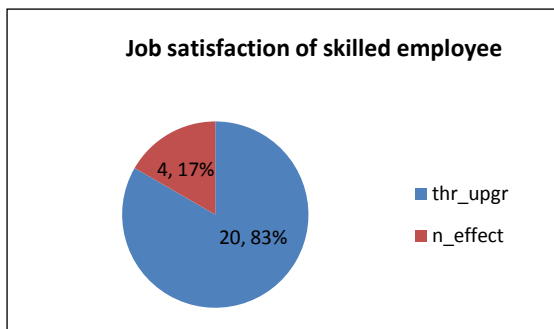
Workers’ inclination towards education revealed that 10% have accepted the job as their inherent attachment towards vocational trades, 54% left education due to poor socio-economic conditions and 36% left education due to lack of awareness & motivation in studies (fig.3)



**Legends:** *Inh\_attach – Inherent attachment towards vocational trade, L\_ed\_eco – Left education due to poor economic condition, L\_aware – Left education due to awareness & motivation*

Fig.3

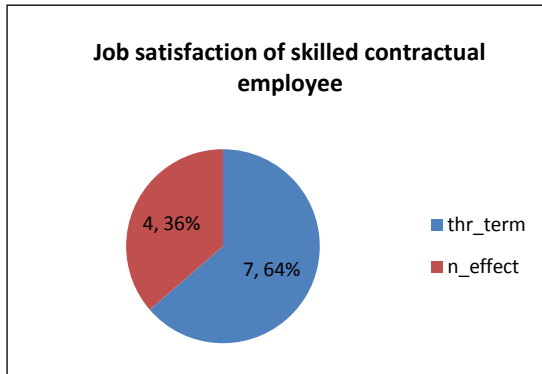
Issues related to job satisfaction unveiled that 83% of the skilled workers are under constant threat of upgrading their skills to cope with the new technologies in machineries to secure their jobs (fig.4).



**Legends:** *thr\_upgr – threat of upgradation, n\_effect – No effect*

Fig.4

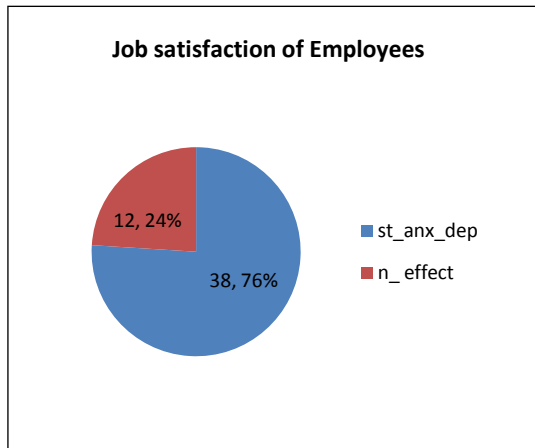
64% of the contract workers are under constant threats of forced labour including threats of termination (fig.5).



**Legends:** *thr\_term – threat of termination, n\_effect – No effect*

Fig.5

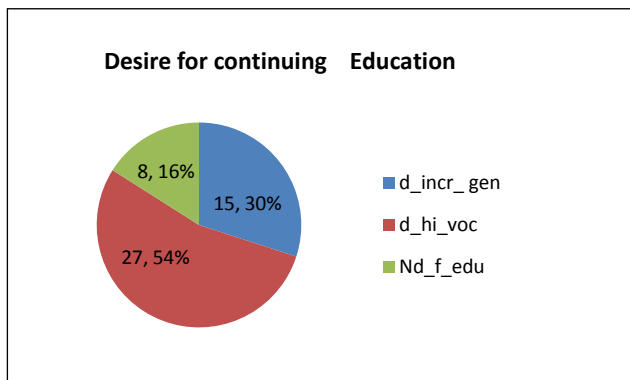
76% of the workers have reported about job related stress and anxiety (fig.6).



**Legends:** *st\_anx\_dep – Stress, anxiety and depression, n\_effect – No effect*

Fig.6

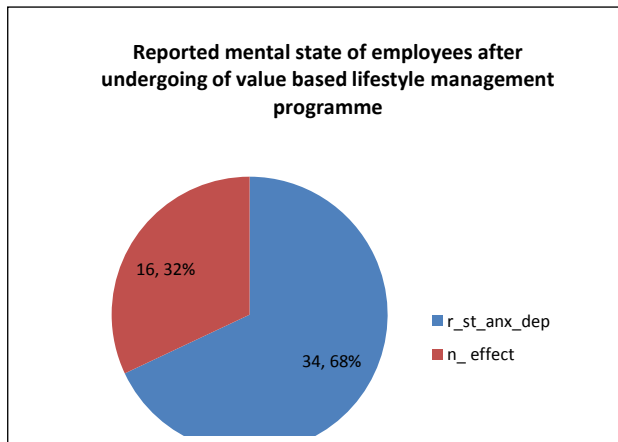
Regarding desire for continuing education if given opportunity, 30% of the workers want to increase their general qualification, 54% want to have higher vocational education and in total 84% of the workers (majority) want to continue education which they were deprived of or could not continue due to financial constraints for the up-gradation of their lifestyle (fig.7).



**Legends:** *d\_incr\_gen – desire to increase general qualification, d\_hi\_voc – desire for higher vocational education, Nd\_f\_edu – No desire for higher education.*

Fig.7

It has also been informed that after undergoing value based lifestyle management programs like stress management sessions, yoga, meditation offered by different Non-profit Socio-religious



**Legends:** *r\_st\_anx\_dep* – reduction in job related stress, anxiety and depression, *n\_effect* – No effect.

Fig.8

organisations and which are organised by the factory management, there has been considerable relief from stress, depression, anxiety and that employees are feeling fresh energy for work. 68% of workers have reported relief from job related stress, depression and anxiety. Whereas management has reported that there has been considerable improvement in work culture (fig.8).

### Findings

The findings of the study indicates that –

- Majority of the factory workers were school dropouts.
- A considerable no. of workers though were professionally qualified as per their job requirement (48%).
- Job satisfaction of majority of employees (76%) was quite low.
- Regarding inclination towards continuing further education, a good no. (54%) expressed their interest.
- Practicing value based lifestyle programs like meditation and Yoga showed fruitful results on the factory workers in reducing their problems related to job stress and restoring work culture.

Thus the study unveils that there is a dire need of extending lifelong learning opportunities infused with value based programs to the factory workers.

### Conclusion

A major cause for the growing significance of Lifelong Learning is the development of knowledge economy which is characterised by the rapid changes in the development of the

mode of economic production & the present features of the job market. Though not all societies are alike, the policy of Lifelong Learning has been adopted as a means to develop skills and competences among the adults for meeting the demand and supply of chain of job market and to bring in economic prosperity of the society and the nation as a whole. Developing country like India is also being seen to move towards this goal. But economic prosperity, though vital, cannot alone decide the true development of a nation. There is something more to be achieved through Lifelong Learning. Real development of a society depends on the all-round development of its members. Rampant corruption, violence against women, anti-social activities, religious fanaticism, terrorist activities etc. are becoming very common. In short our society is facing value crisis. On the other hand, in an economic environment where one does not know where the economy is headed, whether one would have a job or not tomorrow, one needs internal cohesion, external resilience and ability to operate beyond personal interests. Added with this, prevailing uncertainty in the job market keeps the workers under constant pressure to constantly upgrade their skills in order to maintain their employability and often become the victims of stress, anxiety and depression. It is seen that Value based lifestyle programs like meditation and Yoga may come to their rescue. It is well known fact that any kind of learning without values is futile. Therefore is the need of value education or value based education. Value Education is not an add on programme or activity rather it is to be seen as an investment in structuring the foundation for Lifelong Learning, promoting human excellence, social cohesion, resulting in a truly prospered society. Therefore, Lifelong Learning based on (integrated with) value education will help to expand the capabilities and choices in life enabling individuals and societies to cope with the new challenges of the 21st century.

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