



“An Analysis of Literacy and Continuing Education Programme”

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ABSTRACT:

Continuing Education plays a crucial role in the socio- economic development of any country. In India, a diverse and multi-cultural nation, adult education has been recognized as a means to empower individuals, bridge literacy gaps, and foster lifelong learning. This research paper provides the overview of the different literacy and continuing education programmes initiated by the Indian Government with their challenges, policies, and potential of continuing programmes in India.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is the ability to read and write. The inability to do so is called illiteracy or analphabetism. Visual literacy also includes the ability to understand visual forms of communication such as body language, pictures, maps, and video. Evolving definitions of literacy often include all the symbol systems relevant to a particular community. Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need, demand and education.

The primary sense of literacy still represents the lifelong, intellectual process of gaining meaning from a critical interpretation of the written or printed text. The key to all literacy is reading development, a progression of skills which begins with the ability to understand spoken words and decode written words, and culminates in the deep understanding of text. Reading development involves a range of complex language underpinnings including awareness of speech sounds (phonology), spelling patterns (orthography), word meaning (semantics), grammar (syntax) and patterns of word formation (morphology), all of which provide a necessary platform for reading fluency and comprehension. Once these skills are acquired, the reader can attain full language literacy, which includes the abilities to approach printed material with critical analysis, inference and synthesis; to write with accuracy and coherence; and to use information and insights from text as the basis for informed decisions and creative thought.



The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines literacy as the "ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society"

According to National Literacy Mission (1988) (NLM) termed as functional literacy, which implies, achieving self- reliance in literacy and numeracy (3R's Reading, writing and arithmetic).

- ☐ Becoming aware of causes of their deprivation and moving towards amelioration of their condition through organization and participation in the process of development.
- ☐ Acquiring skills to improve economic status and general well-being.
- ☐ Imbibing the values of national integration conservation of environment, and women's equality.

A large majority of the population in India is living in rural areas and major part of it is mainly engaged in agricultural activity and small-scale industries. Even after more than fifty years of independence, India has the largest population of illiterate adults in the world-287 million, which is 37% of the Global total. A major part of this illiterate population comprises of adults in the age group 15-35 who play a very vital role in a country's economy. Because of being illiterate these adult workers are unable to play their rolls effectively in National development Literacy, therefore, is essential. It is only through education that one can became a good citizen of a democratic state. Education is to prepare the individual for the different roles he has to perform in life. So, education is the instrument of social change and development. Moreover, in case of adults the need to have an access to education is strongly being felt and recognized in present times.

LITERACY PROGRAMMES LAUNCHED BY INDIAN GOVERNMENT:

1. SARV SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is an effort to universalize elementary education by community ownership of the school system. The main aim is to provide useful and relevant elementary education by all the children in the age group of 6-14 years by 2010 and to bridge all the social regional and gender gaps with active participation of the community from the planning to the management of the school. The SSA is an effort to recognize the need for improving



the performance of the existing school system and to provide community owned quality elementary education in the mission mode. It is an effort, effectively involving the Panchayati Raj Institutions, Village Education Committees, PTA and other grass root level structures in the management of elementary schools, aimed for states to develop their own system of elementary education. The SSA envisages a bottom-up approach of planning as opposed to the top-down approach. The district plan should have large scale participation of human and other disadvantaged groups in the planning process so that need based plans are formulated at village and school level interactions with the community. The Mission goes beyond '3' R's (i.e., Reading, Writing & Arithmetic); for it also seeks to create awareness of social disparities and a person's deprivation on the means for its amelioration and general well-being. The Central and State Governments, Panchayati Institutions, NGOs and Civil Society need to work in unison to realize dream to create a "literateIndia".

2. SAAKSHAR BHARAT PROGRAMME:

Saakshar Bharat has been launched on 8th September 2009 as a centrally sponsored scheme which is formulated with the objective of achieving 80% literacy level by 2012 at national level, by focusing on adult women literacy seeking to reduce the gap between male and female literacy to not more than 10 percentage points. The mission has four broader objectives, namely (i) Impart functional literacy and numeracy to non-literate and non-literate adults; (ii) Enable the neo-literate adults to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalency to formal educational system; (iii) Impart non and neo-literates relevant skill development programme to improve their earning and living conditions and (iv) Promote a leaning society by providing opportunities to neo literate adults for continuing education. The Principal target of the mission is to impart functional literacy to 70 million non-literate adults in the age group of 15 years and beyond. The mission will cover 14 million SCs, 8 million STs, 12 million minorities & 36 million others. The overall coverage of women will be 60 million. 410 districts belonging to 26 States/UTs of the country have been identified to be covered under Saakshar Bharat.

Under the Central Sector Scheme of "Support to Voluntary Agencies for Adult Education and Skill Development", 32 State Resource Centers (SRCs) and 251 Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs) funded by the Government of India also help in development of academic curriculum for literacy and imparting skill training to non-literates/neo-literates respectively. Besides, Rotary India International is also associated with National Literacy Mission in spreading literacy among 1,00,000 learners. Periodic review meetings of SRCs and JSSs are held for monitoring their performances and sharing the feedback.



Plan-wise targets are fixed to achieve higher levels of literacy in a phased manner. The present targets are to raise the overall literacy rate to 80 percent and reduce the gender gap to 10 percentage points by the end of XII Five Year Plan.

Eligibility criteria for coverage under Saakshar Bharat

A district, including a new district carved out of an erstwhile district that had adult female literacy rate of 50 per cent or below, as per 2001 census, is eligible for coverage under the Saakshar Bharat Programme. In addition, all left-wing extremism-affected districts, irrespective of their literacy rate, are also eligible for coverage under the programme.

3. The National Literacy Mission:

National Literacy Mission was launched in 2000, aimed at attaining a literacy rate of 41 per cent by 2035. It imparts functional literacy to non-literates in the age group of 35-75 years. The Total Literacy Campaign is the principal strategy of the NLM for eradication of illiteracy. The Continuing Education Scheme provides a learning continuum to the efforts of the Total Literacy and Post Literacy Programmes.

The Census 2013 provisional reports indicate that India has made significant progress in the field of literacy during the decade since the previous census in 1991. The literacy rate in 2001 has been recorded at 64.84% as against 52.21% in 1991. The 12.63 percentage point's increase in the literacy rate during the period is the highest increase in any decade. Also, for the first time there is a decline in the absolute number of non-literates during the past 10 years. The total number of non-literates has come down from 328 million in 1991 to 304 million in 2001. During 1991-2000, the population in 7+ age group increased by 176 million while 201 million additional persons became literate during that period. Out of 864 million people above the age of 7 years, 560 million are now literates. Three-fourths of our male population and more than half of the female population are literate. This indeed is an encouraging indicator for us to speed up our march towards the goal of achieving a sustainable threshold literacy rate of 75% by 2007. The Census 2001 provisional figures also indicate that the efforts of the nation during the past decade to remove the scourge of illiteracy have not gone in vain. The eradication of illiteracy from a vast country like India beset by several social and economic hurdles is not an easy task. Realizing this National Literacy Mission was set up on 5th May, 1988 to impart a new sense of urgency and seriousness to adult education. The National Literacy Mission was revitalized with the approval of the Union Government on 30th September, 1999. The Mission's goal is to attain



total literacy i.e. a sustainable threshold literacy rate of 75% by 2007. The Mission seeks to achieve this by imparting functional literacy to non-literates in the 15-35 age group. To tackle the problem of residual illiteracy, now it has been decided to adopt an integrated approach to Total Literacy Campaigns and Post Literacy Programme. This means the basic literacy campaigns and post literacy programmes will be implemented under one literacy project called 'Literacy Campaigns an Operation Restoration' to achieve continuity, efficiency and convergence and to minimize unnecessary time lag between the two. Post literacy programmes are treated only as a preparatory phase for launching Continuing Education with the ultimate aim of creating a learning society. In order to promote decentralization, the State Literacy Mission Authorities have been given the authority to sanction continuing education projects to Districts and literacy related projects to voluntary agencies in their States. The scheme of Jan Shikshan Sansthan or Institute of People's Education, previously known as the Scheme of Shramik Vidyapeeth was initially evolved as a non-formal continuing education programme to respond to the educational and vocational training needs of adults and young people living in urban and industrial areas and for persons who had migrated from rural to urban settings. Now the Institutes' activities have been enlarged and infrastructure strengthened to enable them to function as district level repositories of vocational and technical skills in both urban and rural areas. At present there are 221 Jan Shikshan Sansthans in the India.

Ever since its inception the National Literacy Mission has taken measures to strengthen its partnership with NGOs and to evolve both institutional and informal mechanisms to give voluntary organizations active promotional role in the literacy movement. Now under the scheme of Support to NGOs they are encouraged and provided with financial assistance to run post literacy and continuing education programmes in well-defined areas. In order to revitalize, re-energise and expand the role of State Resource Centers, not only their number is being increased but also their infrastructure and resource facilities are being strengthened to enable them to play the role of catalytic agents in adult education. There are 25 State Resource Centers working across the country. They are mainly responsible for organizing training programmes for literacy functionaries in the State and to prepare literacy material in local languages. The Directorate of Adult Education, a sub-ordinate office of the Department of School Education and Literacy has been entrusted with the task of monitoring and evaluating the various literacy programmes being launched under the aegis of the National Literacy Mission. It also provides technical and resource support to the NLM including media support to enable it to achieve its objectives.



The National Literacy Mission is laying great stress on vigorous monitoring and systematic evaluation of adult education programmes launched under its aegis in the country. It has developed and circulated guidelines for concurrent and final evaluation of the Total Literacy Campaigns and Post Literacy Programmes. A comprehensive set of guidelines on continuing education have also been prepared. So far about 424 Total Literacy Campaign districts and 176 Post Literacy districts have been evaluated by the external evaluation agencies. So far 32 districts have been externally evaluated during continuing education phase. It is hoped that the new approach of evaluating literacy campaigns and continuing-education schemes will ensure complete transparency and enhance the credibility of the results and impact assessments.

4. National Adult Education Programme (NAEP):

Intended to be a mass programme, the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP), however, remained a traditional centre-based programme, which was also honorarium based, hierarchical and government-funded and government controlled. As against the target of 100 million, a total of 44.22 million learners were enrolled in adult education centers in different years up to March 1988. On the basis of sample evaluation studies, it has been estimated that only about 45 per cent of the enrolled learners attained literacy. Thus, the level of achievement of this programme in relation to the target set for it was only about 20 per cent. The centre-based programme was reviewed and evaluated by several institutes of social science research and later, the Government of India also appointed a review committee headed by Prof. DS Kothari to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. The strengths and weaknesses of the NAEP as revealed through various evaluation studies are summarized below:

Strengths

1. Women's motivation and participation had been high;
2. Coverage of weaker sections of the society (SCs and STs) was higher than the target;
3. The project approach to management adopted for adult education programme is feasible;
4. The quality of teaching-learning materials prepared by the National Resource Centre and the State Resource Centers was found to be positive;
5. The programme worked well where special recruitment procedures were adopted.



Weaknesses

1. Quality of training of the functionaries was poor;
2. The learning environment in the adult education centers poor;
3. Mass media did not provide appreciable support;
4. Voluntary agencies did not receive willing co: operation from State Governments. The existing procedures for their involvement were discouraging.
5. There was no linkage between basic literacy, post- literacy. Follow-up and continuing education, resulting in the relapse of large number of neo- literates into illiteracy;
6. Achievement levels of literacy were below the desired level;
7. Training of adult education functionaries at all levels lacked participatory and communicative techniques;
8. Political and administrative support of the State Governments and the Panchayati Raj institutions was not forthcoming.

5. MADHYAMIK SHIKSHA ABHIYAN:

This scheme was launched in March, 2009 with the objective to enhance access to secondary education and to improve its quality. The implementation of the scheme started from 2009-10. It is envisaged to achieve an enrolment rate of 75% from 52.26% in 2005-06 at secondary stage within 5 years of implementation of the scheme by providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance of any habitation. The other objectives include improving quality of education imparted at secondary level through making all secondary schools conform to prescribed norms, removing gender, socio-economic and disability barriers, providing universal access to secondary level education by 2017, i.e., by the end of 12th Five Year Plan and achieving universal retention by 2020.

Important Physical Facilities provided under the Scheme are:

(i) Additional class rooms, (ii) Laboratories, (iii) Libraries (iv) Art and crafts room. (v) Toilet blocks, (vi) Drinking water provisions and (vii) Residential Hostels for Teachers in remote areas.

Important Quality Interventions under the Scheme are:

(i) Appointment of Additional Teachers to reduce PTR to 30:1, (ii) Focus on Science, Math and English Education, (iii) In-service Training of Teachers, (iv) Science Laboratories, (v) ICT Enabled Education, (vi) Curriculum Reforms; and (vii) Teaching Learning Reforms.



Important Equity Interventions provided in the Scheme are:

- (i) Special focus in Micro Planning (ii) Preference to Ashram Schools for Up-gradation (iii) Preference to areas concentration of SC/ST/Minority for opening of Schools (iv) Special enrolment drive for the weaker section (v) More Female Teachers in Schools; and (vi) Separate Toilet blocks for Girls.

Implementation of the Scheme:

The scheme is being implemented by the State Government societies established for implementation of the scheme. The center share is released to the implementing agency directly. The applicable State share is also released to the implementing agency by the respective State Governments.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, continuing education in India plays a vital role in addressing the diverse learning needs of its population beyond formal schooling years. With a rich history and evolving framework, it has aimed to uplift marginalized individuals, bridge educational gaps, and foster skill development to meet the demands of a rapidly changing job market. However, challenges such as accessibility, funding, and quality remain significant hurdles to be overcome. As India marches towards greater inclusivity and economic growth, it is imperative that efforts are intensified to enhance the reach, relevance, and effectiveness of adults and continuing education programs across the country. By doing so, India can unlock the full potential of its workforce, empower its citizens, and contribute to a more prosperous and equitable society.

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