

CHAPTER 2.6

ADULT LITERACY & CONTINUING EDUCATION

2.6.1 There was a considerable degree of awareness of the importance of adult education in the pre-independence period though efforts at adult education during this period were modest. This led to the gradual emergence of the view at the policy level that the State must shoulder the primary responsibility in this regard. The strategy followed immediately after Independence and in successive Five-Year Plans to provide education to the masses made a distinction between Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) and Adult Education. Overriding priority was given to primary education on the assumption that the expansion of primary education would automatically take care of problems of illiteracy. It was only in 1977-78 that the government decided to accord due weightage to adult education along with the programme of UEE, and the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) launched on 2 October 1978. For the first time, Adult Education was put on the educational agenda of the nation and thereby made central to the development approach that was pursued. However, the NAEP was not very successful because it was traditional, honorarium-based, hierarchical and government-funded and controlled.

REVIEW OF NINTH PLAN

2.6.2 The emphasis during the Ninth Plan was on restoring the lost momentum of the adult education programme and making it more effective by clarifying the administrative and financing roles of the Centre, the states, Zilla Saksharata Samities (ZSS), Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), other local bodies and non-government organisations (NGOs). Therefore, the focus was on decentralised and disaggregated planning and implementation of literacy, post-literacy and continuing education programmes. The proposed measures to do this were devolution of power from the National Literacy

Mission Authority (NLMA) to the State Literacy Mission Authority (SLMA) for financial sanction to projects under the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) and Post Literacy Campaign (PLC) and empowerment of PRIs and urban local bodies to achieve universal literacy. Other steps included increasing the range and depth of NGOs involvement in literacy campaigns; meeting the special needs of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SCs/STs) and reducing rural-urban and male-female disparities in literacy through the campaign mode.

2.6.3 The element of local initiative was clearly visible in the zilla saksharta samiti, in which the local administration, voluntary agencies, opinion leaders, professionals from the region as well as members of the community were involved in the process of imparting functional literacy. After activities relating to building an environment for education (in which the community is informed, sensitised, motivated and mobilised through *kala jathas*, rallies, wall writings, posters, *melas* and the use of locally relevant traditional folk forms), the identification of learners and volunteers is undertaken.

2.6.4 The NLM programme was revamped in 1999 to remove some lacunae. While increasing the scope of the programme, the parameters and norms of financial assistance of schemes under NLM were substantially enhanced. The main features of the revised scheme were.

- An integrated Literacy Campaign amalgamating all the features of earlier TLC/PLC phases.
- Full freedom to zilla saksharta samitis to attempt synergies with those of local youth clubs, mahila mandals, voluntary agencies, PRIs, small-scale industries, cooperative societies, etc.

- The Continuing Education scheme encompassing removal of residual illiteracy, programmes catering to individual interest and aptitude, skill development, rural libraries, etc., would allow for opening of Continuing Education Centres (CECs) in every major village.
- Major role for NGOs.
- Strengthening of State Resource Centres (SRCs).
- Enlarging the activities of the Jan Shikshan Sansthan to enable them to function as the repositories of vocational/technical skills both in urban and rural areas.

2.6.5 The NLM has covered 96.64 million persons under various adult literacy schemes up to December 2001. At present, out of 593 districts in the country, 160 districts are covered under TLC, 264 under PLC (including 30 under the Rural Functional Literacy Programme) and 152 under the Continuing Education Programme. NLM is now engaged in the task of imparting functional literacy to persons in the 15-35 age group and has set the following medium-term goal for itself (Box 2.6.1).

Box 2.6.1

Goals for Literacy

- To achieve a sustainable threshold literacy level of 75 per cent by 2005.

Programmes/Schemes in Adult Education

Literacy Campaigns and Operation Restoration

2.6.6 Under the revised NLM scheme, an integrated approach to literacy is being followed since April 2000. The new approach envisages the integration of the activities of basic teaching-learning with post-literacy activities to ensure a smooth transition from TLC to Post-Literacy Programmes (PLP). Now, it is possible to take up TLC and PLP activities concurrently as the two operational stages of the learning continuum draw their financial sustenance from a single budgetary provision. In cases where TLC has stagnated, for reasons

beyond the control of the local zilla saksharta samiti like natural calamities, absence of political will, transfer of the collector, lack of grassroots mobilisation etc., it is possible, under the revised scheme, to formulate strategies for restoration of these campaigns.

2.6.7 The funding pattern of literacy campaigns is 2:1 shared between the Centre and the state government for normal districts. In the case of districts under the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) the ratio is 4:1. The per learner cost for one year for a TLC and PLP has been revised upward to Rs. 90-180 for the TLC, and Rs. 90-130 for the PLP with effect from 1 April 2000. The normal time span of a TLC is set at 18 months and that for PLP 12 months. The districts would thus complete the basic literacy and post-literacy activities within a period of 30 months and establish the necessary infrastructure. The Rural Functional Literacy Projects scheme is absorbed into the scheme of Literacy Campaigns and Operation Restoration, which caters to people who have relapsed to illiteracy.

Scheme of Continuing Education

2.6.8 The Continuing Education scheme provides a learning continuum to the efforts of TLCs and PLPs and has been sanctioned for 152 districts till 31 March 2002. Under the scheme, the main thrust is given to setting up CECs and Nodal Continuing Education Centres (NCECs) which function as focal points for providing learning opportunities and facilities such as library, reading room, learning centres, sports centres, cultural centres and other programmes catering to individual aptitude. In line with the existing guidelines, each CEC serves a population of 2,000-2,500 with the norm being relaxed in sparsely-populated areas. One NCEC is set up for a cluster of eight to ten CECs to oversee and monitor their activities.

2.6.9 The norms of financial assistance under this scheme have been revised upwards from 1 April 2000. Accordingly, the NCEC and the CEC are provided non-recurring one-time assistance of Rs.

45,000 and Rs 25,000 respectively once in five years. In addition they get a recurring grant of the same amount each year, 10 per cent of which is provided as administrative cost for each centre.

Support to Non-Governmental Organisations

2.6.10 Under the scheme, initiated in 1988, funds are released by the Centre to the SRCs, which are managed by NGOs or universities. The SRCs are expected to provide academic and technical resource support to the programmes of adult education. The scheme was revised for the Ninth Plan and the following major changes were incorporated:

- (i) Financial support to SRCs has been enhanced from Rs. 30 lakh to Rs. 60 lakh in case of category A SRCs and from Rs. 25 lakh to Rs. 40 lakh in case of category B SRCs. Category C was abolished.
- (ii) Provision has been made for a one-time grant to the SRCs for infrastructural facilities
- (iii) Provision has been made for NGOs to undertake area-specific continuing education projects as well.

2.6.11 Under the scheme of support to NGOs, voluntary agencies are encouraged and financial assistance is provided for various activities such as:

- Running post-literacy and continuing education programmes with the objective of total eradication of illiteracy in well-defined areas;
- undertaking resource development activities through the establishment of SRCs;
- organising vocational and technical education programmes for neo-literates;
- promoting innovation, experimentation and action research;
- conducting evaluation and impact studies; and

- organising symposia and conferences, publication of relevant books and periodicals and production of mass media support aids.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan

2.6.12 The Jan Shikshan Sansthan scheme, which started in 1988, is meant to promote educational, vocational and occupational development of literates, neo-literates, semi-literates and un-lettered persons. These act as Resource Support Agencies especially in regard to organising vocational training and skill development programmes. During the Ninth Plan, the scheme has been strengthened with enhanced funding and a wider scope and area of operation. The focus of the scheme is now shifting from industrial workers in urban areas to the socio-economically backward and educationally disadvantaged groups in urban and rural areas, such as neo-literates, semi-literates, SCs/STs, women and girls, slum dwellers, migrant workers etc. A total of 108 Jan Shikshan Sansthans have been set up in the country, of which 50 were set up in the Ninth Plan period.

2.6.13 The financial performance of the adult education sector during Ninth Plan is given in Table 2.2.2 of Chapter 2.2. Scheme-wise break-up of the Tenth Plan outlay is given in the Appendix.

Box 2.6.2

PADNA BADNA ANDOLAN

A programme for adult literacy in Madhya Pradesh

To achieve the aim of total literacy, the Madhya Pradesh government launched a new programme called Padna Badna Andolan in 1998. Under the scheme, illiterate adults who are interested becoming literate form a group in a village and propose the name of a person who could teach them and make them literate as per National Literacy Mission's norms. The teacher, called Guruji, is entitled to get Rs. 100 per person as *guru dakshana*, the cost of which is borne by the state government. The other learning costs are met under TLC/PLC programme.

GOALS, TARGETS AND STRATEGIES FOR THE TENTH PLAN

2.6.14 In the field of adult education, the National Literacy Mission is in place with clear focus and medium-term goals. The Tenth Plan targets for adult education are:

- To achieve full literacy, i.e., a sustainable threshold level of 75 per cent by 2005.
- To cover all left-over districts by 2003-2004.
- To remove residual illiteracy in the existing districts by 2004-05.
- To complete Post Literacy Campaign in all districts.
- To launch Continuing Education Programmes in 100 districts by the end of the Plan period.

2.6.15 Illiteracy is largely a problem of social groups among whom literacy rates are low and who also suffer from other handicaps which make it difficult for them to participate in the adult education programme. It is, therefore, most important to ensure greater participation of these groups in future adult education programmes. This requires a focused attention to their needs and problems and to the adoption of specific measures to suit their requirements. The focus in the Tenth Plan would shift to residual illiteracy and catering to difficult segments of the population. This means that all the left-over districts and the left-over harder-to-reach groups would need to be targeted specifically. The schemewise break-up of Tenth Plan outlay for Adult Literacy is in Annexure.

Initiatives Proposed for Tenth Plan

2.6.16 Some of the specific initiatives proposed for the Tenth Plan include:

- To tackle residual illiteracy in districts which have entered the post-literacy and continuing education phase, basic literacy programmes would be taken up along with Continuing Education.

- Flexibility would be built into the operation of the scheme and innovative programmes designed to meet specific requirements of tribal pockets, areas with low literacy, including pockets with low female literacy.
- Exchange visits between different districts for sharing of experiences and educating voluntary instructors of new districts would be encouraged.
- Cooperation would be sought from all sections like educational, social, cultural, religious and other institutions to make the adult education programme self-reliant in terms of finance, implementation and monitoring.
- Institutional linkages with other departments like those of Youth Affairs and Sports, Rural Development, Health and Family Welfare would be developed so that infrastructural and manpower requirements are complemented.
- NLM would integrate literacy with vocational and technical skills and with income generation activities and programmes to improve the quality of life, all of which have a significant impact on generating demand for literacy. To achieve this, strategic plans would be drawn up in a time-bound manner so that the requirements and sensitivities of the target group are taken into account. For the development of innovative programmes, the assistance of NGOs, SRCs, Jan Shikshan Sansthan, PRIs and other local bodies would be taken.
- There would be greater decentralisation of administrative and managerial activities of NLM to SLMAs. The latter would be required to frame policy guidelines based on district-specific requirements. The decentralisation would be carried further to the panchayat level and action plans would be prepared based on the demand coming from the people themselves.
- The Adult Education programme and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan would go hand in

hand to facilitate a wider process of community development and empowerment.

Programmes/Schemes in Adult Education

Literacy Campaigns and Operation Restoration

2.6.17 The focus in the Tenth Plan would be to consolidate the already-sanctioned TLC projects in order to ensure their successful completion. Under the revised scheme, it is envisaged that basic teaching learning activities would be integrated with the post-literacy activities to ensure a smooth transition from TLC to PLP. Special focus has to be given to problems of disadvantaged groups like SCs/STs and women. Regional disparities and special problems of low literacy states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh have to be given greater attention. Priority must be given to the states where the literacy rate is below the national average and low female literacy districts.

Continuing Education Programme

2.6.18 Under this programme, priority would continue to be given to the identification and setting up of CECs and NCECs, identification and training of reading rooms and libraries and the acquisition of audio-visual material and other infrastructural facilities. The NCECs/CECs would be developed at various levels. These would act as (a) centres of convergence of all development programmes in the village/community; (b) centres of learner's participation, providing relevant teaching-learning material, and of regular monitoring of programmes; (c) data banks containing an inventory of traditional and contemporary art and crafts, existing resource/raw material and infrastructural facilities; and (d) centres for designing and implementing the various target-specific programmes which require identification of areas which would require collaboration with other agencies.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan

2.6.19 With the rapid expansion of TLCs and PLPs, the demand for skill development has increased. Therefore, the Jan Shikshan Sansthan scheme would aim at improving the effective skills and the quality of life of its beneficiaries. During the Tenth Plan, this will be done by the following measures:

- The scheme will concentrate on rural areas primarily targeting neo-literates, semi-literates, women and the SCs/ STs;
- at least 30 per cent of the beneficiaries of the scheme must be neo-literates;
- the literacy contents in Jan Shikshan Sansthan courses will be increased. A non-literate or neo-literate joining a vocational training course should get an opportunity to strengthen his or her literacy skills through the Jan Shikshan Sansthan;
- the teaching-learning material for vocational training and skill development programmes will be planned in consultation with the SRCs and zilla saksharta samitis;
- the Jan Shikshan Sansthan would take up vocational programmes which have employment potential in consultation with the zilla saksharta samitis;
- it will provide academic support to the Zilla Saksharta Samitis in organising vocational programmes in the Continuing Education scheme
- the Jan Shikshan Sansthan will be encouraged to undertake innovative programmes; and
- the Jan Shikshan Sansthan will have to run 10 to 15 CECs and at least one NCEC directly under it in consultation with the Zilla Saksharta Samiti.

Support to NGOs

2.6.20 It is expected that the NGOs would take up more innovative projects, which would serve as examples for making policy changes by the NLM.

The SRCs will, over the time, have to develop more expertise in training and implementation of Continuing Education schemes, which would start in most districts by the end of the Tenth Plan. The functions of the SRCs in the Tenth Plan period are envisaged as:

- Development of literacy materials (primers for TLC/PLP), neo-literate material (books, booklets etc.) and other forms of literature;
- development of training manuals for different levels of functionaries;
- imparting training for key resource persons, *preraks*, voluntary instructors, master trainers and district coordinators;
- development of audio-visual aids for adult education programmes;
- coordination with the media (both electronic and print media);

- monitoring and evaluation of literacy programmes being implemented by Zilla Saksharta Samitis, NGOs etc.;
- conduct research studies for the improvement of strategies for adult education programmes; and
- innovations in the field of adult education.

THE PATH AHEAD

2.6.21 A firm view needs to be taken on the content and the reach of the Adult Literacy Programme. Through the schemes of continuing education and distance education it has to be ensured that all the neo-literates do not lapse into illiteracy. Equally important will be the need to enhance the opportunities for their vocational training to enable them to earn a living after they have achieved literacy.