

The national literacy mission education essay



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Introduction:

In today's perspective, literacy does not mean about the writing and reading capabilities only. It has gained a broader meaning. It claims to guide people towards awareness and the change which is needed in order to achieve a better way of living. The National Literacy Mission was set up by Govt. of India on May 5th, 1988 with the aim to eradicate illiteracy from the country. The targeted group for the same was people belonging to the age group of 15 to 35 years. The literacy rate of India has been recorded 64.84% (2001 census) against 52.21% in 1991. It has been increased by more than 12% in a decade. Also, the literacy rate is supposed to be around 70-72% by the end of 2010 (As estimated by National Sample Survey). But the goal is yet to be achieved completely (i. e. to obtain 100% literacy). Right to education is one of the fundamental rights for the people. Education for all is the mission of UNESCO that has to be achieved by 2015. Currently, India falls below the threshold level of literacy rate i. e. 75%. The National Literacy Mission Authority has been working to achieve its goal since its establishment. NLMA (National Literacy Mission Authority) works under the ministry of Human Resource & Development.

The Govt. of India has launched several schemes to achieve the goals of NLM. The initial target for NLM was to focus on the people belonging to the age group of 15 to 25 years. There were 80 million people falling under this age group. It was a big challenge to address such a huge lot of people about literacy and its benefits. In a way, it was quite different from all technology based or economic missions. It was conceived as a social mission by all and that helped NLM to achieve the success. The other significant factor was the

political will of leaders at different levels at that time. The politicians and bureaucrats understood the importance of this mission and it has gained a whole hearted success in several states viz. Kerala, Tamilnadu, Rajasthan, Manipur etc. The idea was to convince people about their active participation, mobilization of social forces. Soon it became a national consensus. Thanks to the advertisements, sensitization of local leaders and people's participation. Given below are some of the pioneers of success for National Literacy Mission:

Literacy campaigns have been launched in almost 600 districts of India.

The sanctioned products are supposed to cover 150 millions of neo-literates. 125 million people have already been made literate under this mission.

Female participation (60%) is better than the male participation (40%).

No. of volunteers have been increased significantly to promote the programme and help the community.

One of the biggest characteristic of literacy mission was to stimulate the entire community for putting the faith that learning & literacy should become the integral part of their lives. The method of operation has been to build and develop an environment which is helpful to learn by the communities through their traditions & culture. For spreading the awareness, different types of methods have been used:

Cultural processions

Street plays

Local theatre

Puppet Shows

Folk songs etc.

Also, the Govt. gained the faith of women as the mission was showcased as the provider of empowerment to women. As far as the adult health education plan is concerned, the great strength of this programme has been the participation of women. Still, women form the majority for being involved with this programme. They are 60% of the total participants. This programme has given a great opportunity to adult females who were illiterate. They had been denied the access of formal schooling. Now most of them have overcome from this deprivation. It helped them to improve their status within the family. Generally, women are having a little say in decision making, but education is conducive for them in a way to gain somewhat respect within and outside the family. In most of the villages, it has also been observed that women are becoming the main promoter of education for their children. The adult education programme has provided them a golden chance to read, write and enhance their skills, knowledge and awareness. Govt. Literacy campaigns successfully promoted equality and equity without leading into any kind of bias based on gender, caste, religion or class. These campaigns have pursued to endow them with better understanding so that they can make effective decisions about themselves. Adding to this, this would also help them to serve their community and society in a more meaningful way.

Reasons of the success:

The social involvement and mobilization played a phenomenal role. Basically, there were four types of participants in this collective action - children, their parents, women & teachers. They were well supported by the leaders (at local and state level), volunteers and Govt. / Non Govt. Agencies. The concept of " Education for all, all for education" has been capitalized masterfully by the political leaders. It has been used as a political weapon to gain the support of public. The concept became a huge hit to woo the voters. Evolution of literacy committee at panchayats and district council (zila parishads) level has helped NLM to bloom in grass root level. Zila Saksharta Samiti (District Literacy Committee) is one of the examples which exist in many districts. Leadership has played a vital role in order to promote the vision and mission of NLM. It has also been crucial to implement the strategies. NLM has been highly successful in some of the states where development was the main issue raised by the leaders. South Indian states are the living examples of it. Specially, Kerala and Tamilnadu achieved better literacy rate than rest of the India. Some of the key schemes of the Govt. of India for promoting literacy and education are mentioned below:

TLC -Total Literacy Campaigns

PLP - Post Literacy Programme

CEP - Continuing Education Programme

JSS - Jan Shikshan Sansthan

There are some of the non Govt. efforts too. The key players are ITC, Rotary Club, and Lions Club etc.

In 2009, The National Rural Literacy Mission Authority has signed a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with four Indian banks. The reason behind it is the Sakshar Bharat Scheme. The prime objective for this is to ensure a hassle free circulation of financial aids and funds that can be utilized by the agencies who are taking the responsibility of implementation of this plant at the Gram Panchayat level. The core banking services are to be utilized to ensure the funding.

Hence NLMA is trying to be more open to technology and external environment. The Sakshar Bharat Programme envisages a cash inflow of Rs. 6000 crores that has to be invested into more than 350 districts across different parts of the country.

Here, NLMA is having contractual entrepreneurial relationships with these banks for fulfilling the following characteristics:

Purpose: It is specific - Sakshar Bharat Scheme

Duration: Short term as it has to achieve the target within the planned duration of time

Agreement: The type of agreement between the Govt. and the banks is explicit one

Objective: to generate / raise funds for the specific scheme

In the mobilization Phase of this process the emphasis was on mass appeal. People were convinced that this literacy would be helpful to minimize their level of deprivation in a way. The key strategy of NLMA was to involve people at grass root level. Their participation as collectives became crucial to the literacy mission. NLMA also got success to target the right segment of people. Relationship and capacity building helped a lot to identify the right participants. People got encouragement from the advertisements broadcasted through the television. The time of broadcasting those ads were kept when maximum no. of people was supposed to watch television. By all these attempts, people were made to believe that there is a significant role of education in their life.

So far as the primary level of education is concerned, Govt. has implemented some new strategies:

The living example is the Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan or Total Literacy Campaign. It has targeted the age group of 6 to 14 years in order to provide them elementary education of eight years. Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative & Innovative Education became the two main components of this scheme which were built for the children living in the areas where no formal school was available nearby (within the radius of one km). To tackle this issue there were 160000 new schools were opened under District Education Plan. Also, around 84000 alternatives schools were established. The different stages of this campaign could be considered as per the following:

Ground Level Work- The very start of a literacy campaign initiates with the consensus and consultation of people who are going to participate actively in

this event. For this purpose NLMA tried to involve children, women and men, illiterate laborers, leaders at local and state level, cultural groups and NGOs.

Building the Environment - This is a vital part of the campaign, where mobilization of people takes place through a several strategies involving media, politics, communication etc. It becomes conducive to build the optimum level of enthusiasm among people and a synergic atmosphere suitable for the activities of learning and teachings.

To inculcate a need for literacy is the main motive of this stage. Environment building captures the following:

Mobilizing the public through affecting their thought process and making them believe that a change is required; specially dealing with the illiterate people in order to make them understand the importance in their life and in the life of their children too.

Involving them through community participation

Identifying and sensitizing the educated ones for doing the jobs mentioned above. These people can be used as volunteers for further stages of implementation.

Training - Training the volunteers with the help of appropriate resources is very crucial for the successful implementation of the programme. Providing the training in small groups of 25 to 30 people has been paved the way to go to next stages for NLMA.

of the Organisational Structure - The campaigns are implemented through district-level literacy committees which are registered under the Societies Registration Act as independent and autonomous bodies to provide a unified umbrella under which a number of individuals and organisations work together. Leadership is provided by the district collector/chief secretary and the zila parishad (district council). All sections of society are given due representation in planning and implementation of the programme. The structure rests on three pillars - participatory people's committees, full-time functionaries and area coordinators, and a support system provided by government officials. It forms an interactive and a communicative process of management and implementation. The campaign is delivered through volunteers without any expectation of reward or incentive.

Surveys - Census And NSS played an important role for identifying the illiterates at district level. Surveys helped to make contacts and facilitated some sort of initial interactions. These surveys provided the dimensions of people's perception about literacy and education.

Development of Teaching-Learning Materials - The objective is to make the materials relevant, while keeping the larger national canvas and its concerns in view. The materials are based on an innovative pedagogy called Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL) that incorporates motivation-oriented teaching-learning material books especially suited for neo-literates and adults have been prepared. A 3-grade primer is used with each grade corresponding to a different level of literacy. The primer contains exercises, tests and space for practice to achieve the objective of imparting literacy in 200 hours.

Monitoring and Evaluation - Monitoring and supervision of total literacy campaigns is done through a periodic system of reporting, and visits of the officials of the National Literacy Mission, State Directorates of Adult/Mass Education and the State Resource Centres. The management information system in a campaign is based on the twin principles of participation and correction. It has to be accountable, credible and instead of being enrolment-oriented, it has to be outcome-oriented.

Though the total literacy campaign is meant to impart functional literacy, it also disseminates a 'basket' of other socially relevant messages, such as enrolment and retention of children in schools; immunisation; propagation of small family norms; promotion of maternity and childcare; women's equality; and empowerment, peace and communal harmony.

The achievement of total literacy campaigns has been slower in the Hindi speaking states of Bihar, Haryana, Punjab, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. The conditions are different and demand innovative approaches.

However, despite the slow take-off, the essence and the spirit of the campaign remain the same.