

Era of National Adult Education Programme

Module Details

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Content Outline:

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7. Role of State Resource Centres
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1. Learning Objectives

At the end of the module, the learner will be able to

- a. Recognise the components of the National Adult Education Programme
- b. Explain how the programme was organised on the ground
- c. Identify the programme content
- d. Ascertain the role of SRC in the context of adult literacy
- e. Differentiate between the strengths and limitations of the programme

2. Introduction

In India, the National Adult Education Programme dominated the adult education scene for a few years after it was launched in 1978. The Government of India identified Adult Education as a priority programme and issued a policy statement in this area. This nation-wide programme, for the first time put adult education on educational agenda of the nation. The National Adult Education Programme was a very ambitious programme with strong political backing. Adult education centres were established at the grass roots, attention was paid to training of instructors, a system of monitoring and supervision was developed at the block, district and state levels and learning material was developed in regional languages across the country.

By early 1970's two significant events - Paulo Freire's writings on conscientisation approach and the deliberations of International Symposium on literacy held in Persepolis in 1975 seem to have influenced the concept of adult education. Viewing education as an element in the process of human liberation, Freire considered that the main task of adult education is to bring about a process of critical reflection that leads to action and change. According to him dialogue and participation are key elements of liberating education and the role of adult educator is to enter into dialogue with illiterates about concrete situations and offer them the instruments with which they can teach themselves to read and write. Freire's ideology was reaffirmed in the Declaration of Persepolis, which considered literacy to be "not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic but a contribution to the liberation of man and to his full development." Further the Declaration clarified that,

"....the concept of functionality must be extended to include all its dimensions political, economic, social and cultural. Just as development is not only economic growth, so literacy must aim above all to arouse in the individual a critical awareness of social reality and to enable him or her to understand, master and transform his or her destiny."

As per the 1971 census report, the literacy rate of India for over 5 years of age was 29.45. Over 70% of the population (over 5 years of age) was illiterate. The National Adult Education Programme aimed at imparting literacy to 1.5 million illiterate persons in the age group of 15 to 35 years in the first year of its implementation. The capacity to deliver adult education programmes was to be built up in the following five years to cover 35 million illiterates under this programme by 1983-84.

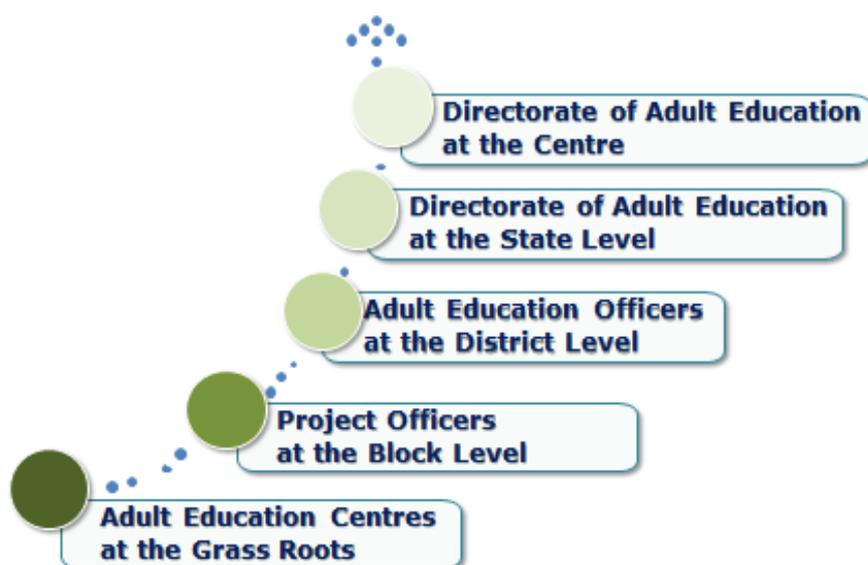
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3. Components of the programme

The National Adult Education Programme in India emphasised literacy, functionality and social awareness. These were the three pillars of the programme. It was realised that unless literacy is used as a tool for development, it will not be sustainable. As per the Census report of 1971, 70% of the population above 5 years was illiterate. Therefore literacy had to be central to this programme. Functionality was linked with education that would improve productivity. Social awareness was vital to make people aware about their own condition and reasons for deprivation. Education was considered to be means of man's liberation and tool for human development. The NAEP visualised adult education as a means to bring about a fundamental change in the process of socio-economic development. The poor will no longer remain passive spectators at the fringe of the development activity. They will be enabled to be active participants at the centre of development activity. It was assumed that the illiterate and the poor can rise to their own liberation through literacy, dialogue and action. Paulo Freire's thinking influenced the approach. It was believed that dialogue and discussion would lead to development. The learners would understand the system, reflect on the system and come together to find a solution for the system.

4. Organisation of the programme



The NAEP was mainly conceived on a project pattern. It followed a centre based approach to literacy. There were a large number of centres operating at the grass roots that needed to be monitored, supervised and guided. A structure was established from national to state, district, block and centre level for monitoring and supervision of this programme.

4.1 Adult Education Centres at the grass roots: At the grass roots Adult Education Centres were operated. The centres were opened in villages where the learners lived. Literacy was literally taken to their doorstep. Flexibility and non-formality was at the core of organisational matters of this programme. It was a learner centric programme where the centres ran as per the convenience of the learner. Material developed was based on the interest of the learner. The timing was also according to the convenience of the learner. These centres catered to 25 to 30 illiterate adults. They were taught by instructors. School teachers, students in higher education institutions, village youth, ex-servicemen, field level functionaries such as village health workers, functionaries of Cooperative Societies and village *Panchayats* and so on along with voluntary Social Workers. Thirty centres were supervised by a supervisor who visited the centres at the time when teaching-learning activity was on, that is during class time, generally at night. She observed how teachers taught, how volunteers received the instruction and guided the teachers in these supervisory visits. The supervisor saw whether teaching-learning material reached the venue in appropriate

quantity, if the place of learning was suitable and so on and provided administrative supervision.

Project Officers at the Block level: At the Block level, there were Project Officers who monitored activity in 100 to 300 centres. Monitoring and supervision went hand-in-hand. A lot of guidance was expected at the time of supervisory visits.

Adult Education Officers at the District level: The District Adult Education officer at the District level was responsible for planning, supervising and monitoring the adult education programme at the district level. In many states of the country, District Adult Education office was created with Project Officer, Assistant Project Officers and other staff in place.

Directorate of Adult Education at the State Level: Headed by a director, the directorate at the State level was responsible for adult education programme in all districts in the State.

Non-government organisations and institutions of higher education were encouraged to run Adult Education Centres at the grass roots.

Directorate of Adult Education at the Centre: The Directorate of Adult Education at New Delhi was strengthened. It worked as a national resource centre. It advised the Ministry of Education as well as the State Governments. It supervised State Resource Centres. It prepared norms for reading, writing and arithmetic to be attained by learners, developed illustrative curricula for specific learner groups, trained key resource persons, developed manuals, handbooks, reference books and guidelines and so on.

4. Duration of the programme

The programme was conceived on a project pattern. Initially the activity was set out to be of 10 months duration. The learners were to be taught for 30 to 50 hours per month taking the total number of hours to 300 to 500. Subsequent to its evaluation to 1980, NAEP was extended to 3 years. The programme was then carried out in three phases spread over 3 years.

The first phase of basic literacy was for 300 to 350 hours. The second phase was for 150 hours and the third was for 100 hours.

5. Programme content

It was not just the literacy skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but literacy along with understanding of life issues and struggles of the learners and ways and means of overcoming them that was crucial. The content in the first phase of the programme included basic literacy and numeracy along with information on health, family life,

savings, vocations related to the learners' background and so on. The content was relevant to the learner group. For instance, in the primer developed by the Bombay Social Service League for urban learners, a chapter on prevention of household accidents was included. It was a period when cooking gas was newly introduced and urban learners who used gas cylinders for cooking needed to know how to prevent household accidents such as cylinder bursts causing harm to life and property.

In the second phase, there was no specific curriculum. The purpose of the programme at this stage was reinforcement of literacy and its use to daily life as well as improvement of vocational skills. Women learners were given training in income generating skills. This often included training to convert the skills that they already had into small business enterprises. The purpose was also to expand their horizon of information and knowledge in an interesting manner. It was often done through stories. For instance, a book titled 'Our Stories' was published by the Adult Education Department of Bombay University which consisted of stories about 'savings', 'small family norm', 'ill-effects of addiction' and also a chapter on 'we are the government'. Some were stories were purely for entertainment of adult learners. Freedom was given to the organising agencies to introduce locally relevant reading materials for the neo-literates.

The third phase emphasised reasonable degree of self-reliance in reading, writing and numeracy. It was expected that the learner who is brought into the learning atmosphere will now learn on his own. This phase further strengthened literacy skills, reinforced the values and made the person capable of accessing information and functioning as an informed citizen.

6. Literacy Norms

The norms for literacy were as follows-

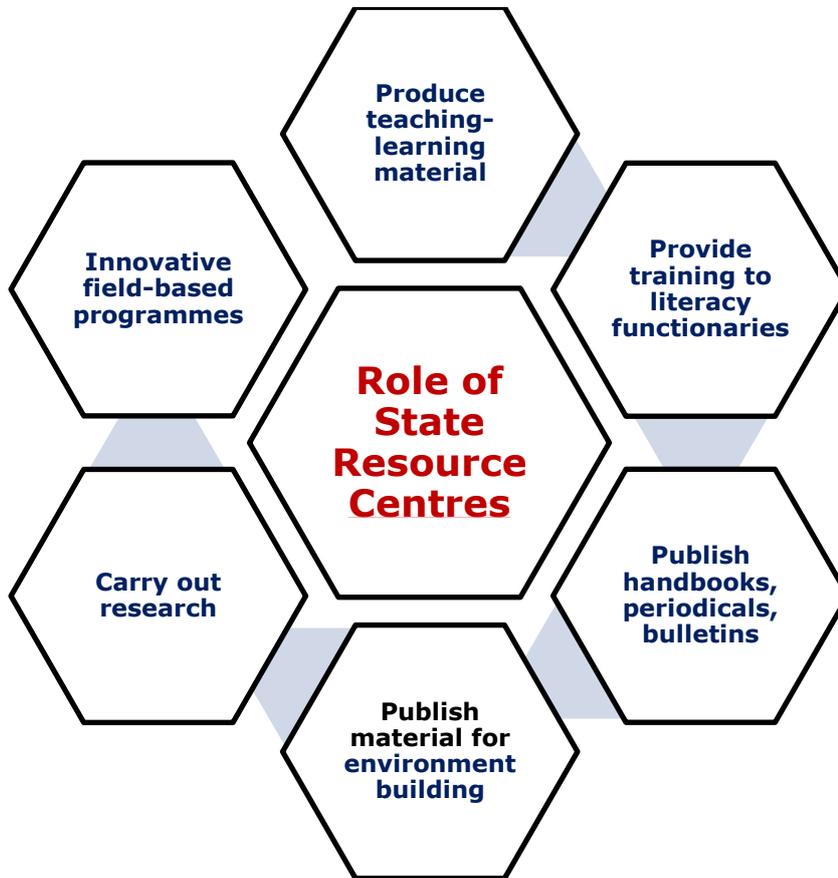
Reading - Reading aloud 30 words per minute.

Writing - Copying 7 words per minute and taking dictation of 5 words per minute.

Numeracy - Reading and writing 1-100 numerals. Doing simple addition and subtraction of 3 digits and division and multiplication up to 2 digits.

The learner who was made literate was expected to have achieved these norms. Under functionality, she was supposed to develop skills leading to income generation. As a part of awareness they were supposed to reflect on their own state of affairs and through dialogue and discussion find a solution for their problems.

7. Role of State Resource Centres



In 1985 there were 16 State Resource Centres providing technical support to 19 States (GOI, 1985). These were started by voluntary organisations, by Universities or by the State machinery. SRCs produced teaching-learning material for adult learners in regional and sub-regional languages. They also provided training to literacy functionaries- to the project officers, resource persons and supervisors. They published training handbooks and other aids. They assisted in environment building through mass media, publication of posters and other materials. They translated materials brought out by the Directorate of Adult Education at New Delhi and by other SRCs. They published books, periodicals and bulletins and even participated in research. Some took up innovative field-based programmes.

At the national level, the Directorate of Adult Education at New Delhi took up the role of national resource centre.

8. Limitations of the programme

The Report of the Review Committee on NAEP (1980) and a number of evaluation studies sponsored by the Department of Education (MHRD) during 1980's revealed that

- The programme remained confined to literacy. Many adult learners learnt how to read and write simple sentences and material written for them. Some started reading newspapers.
- Development orientation of the programme was superficial. Many learners did not understand the issues of underdevelopment, deprivation, poverty why they were in this situation.
- The functional aspect was weak. Connection of literacy with productivity did not get emphasised.

9. Achievements of the programme

- A large number of poor and illiterate identified NAEP as their programme. An adult education instructor taught them with the help of material prepared for them. Assembling for literacy class at a particular place in a specific time gave them the much needed space.
- Members of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women and other deprived sections participated in this programme in large numbers.
- A large number of voluntary organisations were involved in the programme as stakeholders.
- The resource base of adult education was strengthened. The State Resource Centres established in many states of the country produced very useful learning material for adults, primers were developed in many languages, supplementary reading material was developed. Training manuals were developed for training of adult education instructors.
- Involvement of Social Science Research organisations in evaluation of adult literacy programmes encouraged research in adult education. Bordia Anil (1982) has reported that during 1980s as 56 evaluation studies were conducted by different institutions in India.
- As per the Report of Review Committee appointed by the University Grants Commission (1987), in the 1980s funds were provided to 93 universities to take up adult continuing education and extension activities.

10. Conclusion

The National Adult Education Programme launched in 1978 was a priority programme of the Government of India. It aimed at making 35 million people literate by the end of five years. Influenced by Paulo Freire's thinking, the NAEP visualised adult education as a means to bring about a fundamental change in the process of socio-economic development. It was assumed that the illiterate and the poor can rise to their own liberation through literacy, dialogue and action.

The NAEP followed a centre based approach to literacy. Monitoring and supervisory procedure was established and a federal structure was put in place. The programme was learner centric. Material developed by State Resource Centres was as per the interest of the learner. Literacy skills of reading, writing and arithmetic along with functionality and awareness were the main components of the programme. The programme of this scale had limitation, particularly with respect to functionality aspect. But a large number of poor and illiterate identified NAEP as their programme. A large number of voluntary organisations and 93 universities took up the programme. The resource base of adult education was strengthened. A lot of research was undertaken in this area. The evaluation of this programme led to a change in the approach to dealing with illiteracy in the coming years.