

## Total Literacy Campaigns under National Literacy Mission part-I

### Module Details

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## 1. Learning Objectives

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

- Clarify the concept of Literacy
- Recognize Total Literacy Campaigns
- List total literacy campaign experiments outside India
- Identify the sources of inspiration for TLC
- Apply knowledge of operational strategy for planning TLC
- Explain the Guiding principles of a TLC

## 2. Concept

Literacy is a tool for communication, participation, liberation, conscientisation and empowerment of every individual. It liberates us from the confines of vanity and prejudice, ignorance and fads and directs our creative energies to flow un-encumbered towards a search for and the discovery of the true meaning of our existence. Literacy enables people to overcome the handicaps of their atomized existence and enter the wider world of information, communication, innovation, modernization and skills.

## 3. Total Literacy Campaign

A Campaign for Total Literacy is much larger than a program or an event. It is based on meticulous planning, confluence of creative forces, energies and good Samaritans and a churning of critical consciousness. A sense of urgency and seriousness of concern is essential. A spirit of voluntarism is inevitable. TLC requires pooling of resources from a variety of sources, integrating the resources imaginatively and skillfully to produce the desired results in less time and cost. It has a time bound character and is oriented to learner motivation, result and success. Every TLC believes in cent percent coverage of the relevant geographical area, generally the district in which it is implemented. The area could also be a village, a GP (Gram Panchayat), a Block or a District. 'Selectivity with Guaranteed Success' is the cardinal principle in every TLC.

## 4. Historical Backdrop

Mahatma Gandhi realized this importance of literacy when in 1937 he had to say with a lot of anguish 'Mass illiteracy is India's sin and shame and, therefore, needs to be eradicated at any cost.' Mass campaigns for literacy launched by popular ministries formed in six provinces in 1937-39 in response to the call of Bapu were short-lived; their spread and impact was also minimal. With the onset of the Second World War in September 1939 they completely died down.

With the introduction of the Community Development Programme and the Five Year Plans, programmes of literacy and adult education were launched in the early 1950s. These were known as the Social Education Programme, Farmers' Functional Literacy Project, NFE Programme for the youth, Polyvalent Adult Education Programme and Functional Literacy for Adult Women (FLAW).

These were sector-specific programmes with limited scope, objective, coverage and impact. The NAEP launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1978 had a national dimension, universal coverage, but remained on the ground for seven years (1978-85). It was reviewed by a Committee headed by Prof. D.S. Kothari and the report submitted in April 80 highlighted a few redeeming features and exposed a number of grey areas.

The National Literacy Mission, one of the five Technology Missions of the Government, was formally launch by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1988. Launched after an objective evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of NAEP and Success of campaign approach in silent valley Project, Palakkad district, Kerala as adopted by KSSP for conservation of environment, it was started initially as a Technology Mission for Eradication of Illiteracy to replace NAEP. It was primarily a Government funded, Government controlled, centre-based and honorarium based programme. It was mandated to make 30 million un-lettered persons functionally literate by 1990 & an additional 50 million by 1995.

It was, however, soon realized that while technology may aid the teaching learning environment and process to some extent, it cannot provide the wherewithal for a mass based programme. Along with these basic limitation, there were other realizations also such as (a) the delivery mechanism needs to be preceded by generation of a natural and spontaneous demand for literacy (b) such a demand can come out of a ground-swell which will be possible only with social mobilization for which the Government was ill-equipped (c) this task should be left to a good, experienced and committed NGO; if such NGO is not in existence, it can be promoted and entrusted with the responsibility (d) a mass based literacy programme will have to be campaign oriented (e) a campaign for total literacy can be launched only when there is political will and commitment, and the existing cynicism and skepticism against literacy is replaced by hope, faith and conviction (f) it would be a planned, coordinated and highly structured initiative which will also be area specific, people centered, time bound, cost effective, volunteer based and result oriented and would have to succeed at any cost and not be allowed to fail.

Such a realization gave birth to BGVS, a confluence of creative forces and energies, headed by Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, a distinguished educationist with a number of creative thinkers, writers, artistes and activists as members.

## **5. International experience in TLC**

The origin of the TLC may be traced to (a) execution of campaign approach by Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), in the context of silent valley project of Palakkad district of Kerala (b) success stories of TLC as implemented in countries like Cuba, Myanmar, Vietnam, Ethiopia and Nicaragua. In these countries, there was first a revolution which brought in its wake sweeping social, political and economic changes along with the

change of Government Literacy was an off-shoot of that revolution both as a process and product and was facilitated by the revolution. TLCs, as a matter of fact, became an important spring board for awakening and churning of national conscience, the collective consciousness of the people at large and an instrument of national reconstruction.

## 6. Bharat GyanVigyanJatha (BGVJ)

The birth of BGVS was a very timely, positive and pro-active initiative taken by the MHRD. The former adopted the unique strategy of harnessing the folk medium of communication known as Kalajatha to spread the message of literacy, to motivate the un-lettered adults and sensitize the literate youths to shoulder ungrudgingly the social responsibility of making the un-lettered adult functionally literate. Bharat GyanVigyanJatha (2.10.90 to 14.11.90) was a manifestation of this strategy. Undertaken at a crucial juncture of Indian History, the Jatha succeeded in creating a countrywide awareness about literacy and generated an effective demand for literacy while building up a people's machinery to deliver it. Social communication software rested on multiple media and their outputs such as:

- a. Print, electronic & folk;
- b. Songs
- c. Slogans
- d. Skits
- e. Role plays
- f. Simulation exercises

A massive caravan of teachers, students, women and youth called BGVS was planned and launched from 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 1990 to 14<sup>th</sup> Nov 1990. The caravan covered over

100,00,000 villages in 300 districts. It was a massive operation involving 200 Literacy ambassadors, 35 State level organisations, 500 District organisations and 6,00,000 Local level organisations. The Kalajatha performed by BGVS artistes churned the critical consciousness of both the literate and un-lettered and created the ground-swell-essentially a prelude to the launch of a TLC.

## 7. TLC, Ernakulam- the trend and pace-setter

The TLC, Ernakulam Project known as 'Lead Kindly Light' was a joint initiative of the district administration and Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), an NGO with three decades standing in voluntary social work. The idea was mooted by Shri. K.R. Rajan, then Collector, Ernakulam. Launched on 26.01.89 by E. K. Nayanar, then CM, Kerala, this was a meticulously planned, co-ordinated, well directed and monitored campaign which made 1.35 lakh un-lettered persons in the age group of 6-60 fully functionally literate within a short time span of less than one year. The campaign enrolled 1,61,091 potential learners and made 98.5% fully functionally literate

The TLC Ernakulam was also a campaign for cent per cent immunization of pregnant women and children. Over one lakh learners who were unable to read and write due to refractive errors, were provided with spectacles free of cost. Totally participatory in its tone and content, the pace and momentum of TLC was overseen by people's committees in 860 GP wards, 152 municipal wards, over 50 corporation wards. While the survey was conducted in a festival mode, environment building through Kalajatha was a continuous activity. The training of literacy volunteer instructors was primer specific, the analytical and conscientisation oriented teaching-learning methodology conceptualized by Paulo Freire, the outstanding Brazilian revolutionary and adult educator was the essence of the teaching-learning activity in the TLC Ernakulam Project.

## **8. Aftermath of TLC Ernakulam**

Ernakulam was declared as fully literate on 4<sup>th</sup> February, 1990 by then Prime Minister V.P. Singh, then PM and on the same day a TLC for the remaining thirteen districts of Kerala State was also launched. These districts adopted the same strategy as the TLC Ernakulam Project for successfully running a year old campaign and at an impressive ceremony held at Calicut on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1991, the State of Kerala was declared fully literate. In quick succession followed TLCs for the whole of Goa, Puducherry and over 200 districts in different parts of the country. The rest is history.

## **9. Operational strategy for TLC**

### **I. Size of the unit of operation**

TLC can be taken up in a village or in a Panchayat or a Block or a Municipal Corporation/municipality, a district or even a State. Once the size of the unit has been decided, all adults in that area who are un-lettered will be covered. In deciding the unit, one has to keep in view several factors such as prevailing rate of literacy, availability of the numbers of literate volunteers, infrastructure and logistic support, mode of communication and transport for movement of the people, number of good, well-meaning and committed individuals who will be willing to contribute their time, energy and resources – physical, human, material and financial for the TLC.

### **II. Planning and preparation**

To start with, a Saaksharta Samiti named Zilla Saksharta Samiti (ZSS) is formed at the district level. It is headed by the Collector/DM and has a Chief Executive Officer, Zila Parishad, District Adult Education Officer, other Officers connected with education, health, nutrition, immunization, sanitation etc. at the district level and representatives of an NGO as members. Thereafter, a convention is held at various levels (district/sub-division/block/panchayat) at which intensive consultation takes place among all concerned stakeholders (MPs, MLAs, MLCs, Municipal, Corporators/Councilors, Chairmen, Panchayat Samities, GP Sarpanches and GP ward members). This is directed towards securing consensus from all sections of society before setting up a TLC. The convention

is also utilized to explain to people the handicaps faced because in illiteracy and the gains of functional literacy, the various stages and processes in a TLC and how people can own the campaign, contribute to the campaign and participate in the campaign.

### **III. Constitution of People's Committees**

These committees emerge at various levels in a natural and spontaneous manner through the conventions. The officers of the district remain in the background and facilitate the process of formation of these committees in a democratic manner.

### **IV. Constitution of sub-committees under the Executive Committee of ZSS**

These sub-committees are meant for survey, environment building, preparation of teaching-learning materials, procurement of teaching-learning aids, teacher's training, monitoring, supervision, co-ordination, evaluation of learning outcomes, finance and administration. Some activities like a survey are a one-time activity while some like environment building and training are recurrent.

The committees have to be manned by five to six people who should be in a position to devote full time to their work on a voluntary basis with a sense of urgency, dedication and professionalism.

### **V. Selection of full time coordinators**

The full time coordinators are needed at the district, block, panchayat and village levels. The size of the organisation will determine the number of coordinators needed at each level. It will be useful to have eight to ten coordinators at the district level, two to three coordinators at the block level, one to two coordinators at the GP Level and one coordinator at the village level. Their services should be taken on secondment basis from the universities, government departments, independent and autonomous bodies, local self-governing bodies, NGOs, Institutes of Social Science and Research etc. They are identified on the basis of their character and integrity, organizational capability, professional knowledge and competence and commitment to the TLC. They are required to report on all aspects of operationalisation of the TLC at various levels (Village, GP, Block and District). These reports are scrutinized at the respective level of coordination and in case deficiencies are found, correctives are issued to improve the quality of the operation; this is how it becomes a two way communication process as also a bottom-top approach and not merely a top-down approach.

### **VI. Pre-appraisal mission**

Only such TLC proposals are considered by the Executive Council of NLMA which have been screened and recommended by a pre-appraisal mission. Such a mission comprises of representative of both NLMA, State Government concerned and BGVS; they visit the prospective district in advance to see for themselves if adequate planning, preparations as also a ground-swell exists in the district which will be conducive to operationalisation of the TLC. Such visits are to continue even after the TLC has been sanctioned, formally launched and set in motion on the ground.

## 10. Guiding principles of TLC

The guiding principles of TLC are:

- The Collector/DM is the key person of the campaign and he/she is always the first among equals.
- A survey of the area/households is conducted for identification/enumeration of literates as well as the un-lettered, it is also used as a tool for mobilization and environment building.
- The entire process of social mobilization and environment building is sequential and includes:
  - Holding a workshop of creative, thinkers, writers and artistes;
  - Design of appropriate messages for dissemination through Kalajatha;
  - Holding workshops for training of artistes of AksharKalajatha where they rehearse the skits, role plays, nukkadsnataks etc. designed for them and to be staged by them;
  - Holding actual performances on stage to motivate the audience about the relevance of functional literacy in their daily lives;
  - Documentation of the performances and the reaction of the audience to the performance.
  - Improving both the content and process in view of the reaction of the audience.
- Training is meant for equipping literacy volunteers with an appropriate methodology to transact every lesson of the primer not as a laboured exercise but with ease, spontaneity and in a telling manner.
  - Training is both in the pedagogy of teaching adults as also on various issues (Health, hygiene, nutrition, immunisation, child care, maternity protection, sanitation etc. which are integrated into the campaign) of interest and relevance to the life of the learners;
  - While volunteers are to be trained by master trainers, the latter are to be trained by resource persons; such training is to be cascading, participative and communicative in character and is to be recurrent if considered necessary.
  - Three primers modeled on the IPCL technique are to be used in every TLC. The IPCL techniques are multi-graded and integrated. Drills and exercises are given at the end of every lesson. Three tests at the end of every primer and nine tests at the end of the three primers help to test the learners.
  - Self-evaluation of learning outcomes is directed towards achievement of complete self-sufficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic on the successful conclusion of all the three primers.
- Environment building efforts are to be carried on continuously till the TLC experiment has been brought to its logical close.
- The total time frame for a TLC being equally divided between survey, environment building, construction of primers and training in the first half, while teaching learning process, monitoring, evaluation of learning outcome as well as summative and concurrent evaluation of content, process and impact of the TLC and TLC declaration is taken up in the second half
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- Pedagogy of adult teaching learnings should be need based and interest related, appropriate and enjoyable. It should mark a refreshing departure from the stereotypical, dull and un-interesting manner in which instructional lessons in a



primer are ordinarily transacted. It should be based on the principle of progression or leaning from stage to stage, keeping in view the diversity of the situation in which the learners are placed. It should also rest on the strategy of reduced duration, two way communication between the instructor and learners as well as heightened motivation of the latter to learn. Such heightened motivation will come when the instructor introduces words which are of interest and relevance to the day-to-day lives of the learners. Such motivation can also be generated if the learners are enabled to perceive the pace, progress and outcome of learning on their own and build up a sense of self-confidence that 'they can learn'. Self-learning replaces guided learning and heightens motivation.

- Monitoring and evaluation are to be viewed as tools of correction as well as participation. Additionally monitoring is to be viewed as a two way communication process through which:
  - Feedback on the problems and constraints faced by the functionaries of the TLC on the ground as well as information on achievement is to be received at the district level from the coordinators at the GP and Block level
  - This is followed by issue of correctives and guidelines at the district level;
  - This has to be a continuous process directed towards maintaining the even and un-diminished tempo of the TLC.
- Total literacy declaration is conducted as a festival or ceremony and serves two important purposes.
  - It becomes a forum for public recognition of the good work done by the numerous functionaries (literacy volunteer instructors, master trainers, resource persons, coordinators etc.);
  - It becomes a sort of convocation for numerous learners and a source of excitement and joy for those graduating from a world of illiteracy to a new world of excitement and joy.

## 11. Summary

Literacy is described in this module as not just a tool for communication but as an instrument of participation, liberation, conscientisation and empowerment of every individual. History of literacy efforts has been traced from pre-independence era to acceptance of Total Literacy Campaigns as a National strategy. Influence of international experience in adult education has been acknowledged. Bharat GyanVigyanJatha is recognized as a unique activity to spread the message of literacy, to motivate the unlettered adults and sensitize the literate youths to participate as volunteers in the massive literacy campaigns. TLC, Ernakulam is rightly described as the trend and pace-setter of the countrywide activity. Operational strategy for TLC and the guiding principles of TLC have been described in detail.