

**NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR
ADULT EDUCATION**

REPORT OF THE EXPERT COMMITTEE



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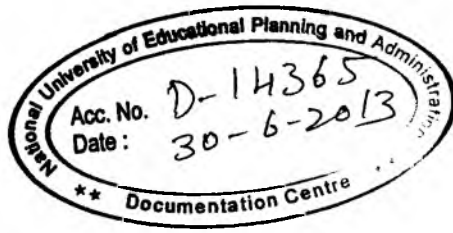


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PREFACE

An Expert Committee was constituted by the MHRD, Govt., of India on 30th March 2010, to draft the National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education in the context of 'Saakshar Bharat' the Central Scheme of National Literacy Mission Authority (List of Members in Annexure-1).

The Expert Committee was to spell out the following issues in the curriculum framework:

- The content and its comprehensiveness in respect of core academic areas and locally relevant issues;
- Teaching-learning methods and processes for achieving the literacy and other objectives;
- Reflecting on national values, and how to address the demands of the learners, while taking into account the diversity of their socio-cultural background, life experience, linguistic skills and motivational levels;
- Striking a balance between the larger social objectives of the Mission and relevance to local contexts and to wider opportunities;
- Laying down guidelines for the syllabi, the T-L approaches, methods and processes and spelling out the levels and norms of learning outcome, and learning assessment system;
- Developing a Curriculum Framework that would serve as the basis for the States to develop the curriculum and learning materials, with adequate reflection of locally relevant issues and aspects.

In its first meeting on 2nd July, 2010, chaired by the Minister for Human Resource Development (MHRD), Shri Kapil Sibal along with Smt. Purandreshwari Devi (MOS) emphasized that the focus of the Expert Committee was to include not just a curriculum framework for literacy but education that would lead to empowerment. He stated that the curriculum should touch the needs of learners and the endeavor for literacy and adult education should lead to true empowerment. The curriculum framework should embed these as pre-requisites and, to that end, the Committee should also take the views of the learners of how literacy could be helpful in their life context.

The Members felt that the curriculum framework should:

- Articulate the vision of adult education, not as literacy, narrowly defined as the 3 Rs, but as a vision of national values to encompass secularism, democracy, social and gender equity and equality, women empowerment, etc.;
- Spell out the national needs, values and approaches rather than try to make curriculum and syllabus;

- Highlight the basis and approach to learning in the context of adults that respects their experiential knowledge and involves them in knowledge creation;
- Harnesses learners' experiential knowledge and enable the processes of empowerment to become an integral part of assessment of the learning outcome, as intended by Saakshar Bharat;
- Livelihood-oriented skills to be considered as inseparable facets of the education program, and to be seen as ongoing process and not as short-term based intervention;
- The content while adhering to core principles such as secular democracy, equity and justice and gender parity, as enshrined in the Constitution of India, must be locally relevant and blend into geographic, cultural and economic diversities of different regions;

As regards the modalities of its working, the Committee felt the need to enlarge the scope of its consultations by also involving all stakeholders in the field. HRM fully endorsed this view and suggested that the Committee visit different regions and States, form an assessment of learning needs of learners through intensive dialogue with all stakeholders and reflect on them for the proposed curriculum framework. Accordingly, the Expert Committee held four Regional Consultations at (i) Hyderabad for Southern Region, (ii) Pune for Western Region, (iii) Kolkata for Eastern and North-Eastern Regions, and (iv) Delhi for Northern Region, with stakeholders such as representatives of civil society, researchers, experts, members from women's groups and officials from SLMAs, State Directorate of Adult Education, SRCs, JSSs, PRIs, faculty of Adult Education of Colleges and Universities, and so on (about 40-60 in each Region).

In respect of academic tasks, the Committee spelled out broad sub themes which related to: (1) Literacy in India: Values, Approaches and Teaching and Learning Processes, (2) Assessment, Outcomes and Equivalency, (3) Sectoral Approaches, (4) Systemic Reform: (i) Government-Administration; (ii) Partnership and Collaboration; (iii) Involvement of PRIs, CSOs, SHGs, etc., and (5) Orientation and Capacity Building. The Committee Members prepared write ups on different sub-themes, which helped during the consultations to gather stakeholders' views, and also ultimately in preparing the document.

By the end of the consultation it was clear that all planning must begin on the premise that it is possible to make India a fully literate and empowered nation. The adult education program must develop institutional capacities to reach out to each and every learner wholeheartedly. It must be a continuous and lifelong education with attainment of basic literacy as a non-negotiable.

It is my privilege to present the Draft Report of the Expert Committee for your perusal. The final report would be presented soon.

I thank the Members for their contribution in enriching the deliberations and their write ups. I should also like to particularly thank Dr. A. Mathew, Senior Consultant (NLMA) for extending his support to the Expert Committee in organizing the consultations and in drafting the report.

Shantha Sinha
Chairperson,
Expert Committee on National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education

Executive Summary

Introduction

A nation that is literate is one where its citizens are empowered to ask questions, seek information, take decisions, have equal access to education, health, livelihood, and all public institutions, participate in shaping ones realities, create knowledge, participate in the labour force with improved skills, exercise agency fearlessly and as a consequence, deepen democracy.

Systems are to be in place to build a nation that builds citizenship which is truly informed and literate and in the process the content of governance, development and democracy is also vitalised.

It is only when there is a credible, whole hearted and institutionalized effort on a long term basis that the learner would take the programme of adult education seriously.

The first step, therefore, is to understand Adult Education Programme as a continuous and lifelong education programme. It must contain all structures and institutions from national to habitation levels, on a permanent basis, as part of the education department. The structures and processes should be receptive to the learners' needs on the ground.

Compared to the model in vogue, these imperatives represent a basic transformation in the character of the programme, with pronounced permanency in learning centres for adult and continuing education in the lifelong learning perspective. This will qualify for the shift from Plan to Non-Plan phasing for planning and budgeting.

Principles of Curriculum Framework

Assuming that the institutional structures would be transformed towards permanency, it then becomes a challenge to define the pedagogy of Adult Education as a long term ongoing process which would be implemented through such a structure. Minimally, Adult Education is a literacy program that imparts rudiments of basic education. That is more or less how it has been envisaged over the years. However, based on the theory and practice of Adult Education internationally, it is much more than literacy and post-literacy; it is the convergence of education, democracy, cultural practice, developmental practices, gender empowerment and much more. Accordingly, it is useful to first outline a set of principles that should inform policy and practice of Adult Education.

Some of the principles that should inform the Curriculum Framework for Adult Education include:

- Developing learners' critical consciousness, leading to their empowerment, and informing pedagogy

- Empowerment that leads to participants becoming politically, socially and culturally active, aware and confident
- Enabling democratic participation and inculcation of constitutional values
- Respecting the learner as a productive person with dignity, sense of well-being and ability to realize his/her creative potential, removing social and other forms of discrimination, and in particular, fostering gender equality.

Pedagogy

- Recognize that pedagogical approaches to adult learning are completely different from that of children and need to be further differentiated for adolescents and women
- Non-literate adults possess experiential skills, knowledge and wisdom. Adult-pedagogy must be based on this fact and help expand their mental horizons. It should be relevant to their learning needs, flexible and participatory, in order to sustain their interest and motivation

Curriculum

- The context and principles of adult learning, as enunciated above, must inform the contents and processes
- Contents must combine new skills, awareness and knowledge, learners' lived experiences and needs
- Structure the programme not as a short-term engagement but as beginning of lifelong education, that includes avenues for equivalency
- Learning materials for adults need to be diverse and varied
- Curriculum must address skills and cognitive development as well as the affective domain including values, self-confidence and dignity
- For curriculum and material development, Adult Education needs to be viewed as a lifelong learning engagement, plural and flexible

Perspectives and Challenges in Provisioning Adult Education

Adult Education cannot and should not any longer be considered as a short-term project for achieving a certain percentage of literacy. It should be conceived as a comprehensive and life-long programme for providing a variety of learning programmes to all adults, including basic literacy, life and livelihood skill development, citizenship development and social and cultural learning programmes.

In a country like India, it should also not be seen as a program to benefit merely individual learners. In addition to such individual benefit, the program should be so conceived and delivered that it promotes and sustains communities of empowered people – of women, farmers, workers and other sections of society. As the objectives of the National Literacy Mission mentioned, literacy should make the learners understand the causes of their deprivation and help them to unite to fight such deprivations. Since the category of illiterates coincides with the deprived sections of the society – women, minorities, low-castes, tribals and the poor, literacy programs should become a vehicle

for these sections of society to use knowledge, information and skills towards enhanced opportunities leading to social justice and equality.

For this, there has to be an institutional framework both for delivering the learning programme and also for capacity building, contents and material development at State, District and Block levels as well as for planning and implementation of the programmes.

There has also to be a system and set up with clear cut administrative and personnel hierarchy at State, District, Block and GP / Village levels. Given the cross-cutting nature of adult education and the variety of learners in respect of their learning needs, convergence between adult education and various line departments cannot be underestimated.

The Adult and Continuing Education in the village, under well trained and motivated Adult Educators and the programme under the control of the community is the base of Adult and Continuing Education in lifelong learning perspective. Such a Centre and Adult Educator would be able to mould the learning programmes as per the needs of different categories of learners. The role of Adult Educator / Facilitator in hand-holding the Adult Learners and guiding them through different levels / programmes is a vital component of the programme.

The responsibility of provisioning for Adult and Continuing Education (CE) in the Lifelong learning perspective at the national level must be backed with permanency of the programme and adequate resources. The institutional framework and mechanism at State, District, Block and Gram Panchayat/Village level must be envisioned and ensured as part of the mandate upon the Central Government.

The State level must be endowed with dedicated staff and the State Govt. / SLMAs must ensure creating of the institutional framework for provisioning adult education as well as capacity building and administrative set ups. Convergence of Adult Education with all Line Departments is a key to the success of adult and CE Programmes.

Existing Institutional Framework

Adult Education is a Concurrent Subject with both Central and State Governments being required to contribute to its promotion and strengthening. At the national level, National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA), an autonomous wing of MHRD is the nodal agency for overall planning and management and funding of Adult Education programmes and institutions. Its inter-ministerial General Council and Executive Committee are the two policy and executive bodies.

At the State Level, SLMAs have been reconstituted in 25 States and 1 UT which have been covered under Saakshar Bharat Programme (SBP). The State Resource Centres (SRCs, right now being 30), are engaged in development of learning materials, training and capacity building, assessment, monitoring and evaluation.

The District level set up for Adult Education in respect of strength and priority, has been on the decline over the years. The Zilla Saakshar Samiti (ZSS), a Registered Society, generally under Chairpersonship of the DM, remained very effective wherever the leadership was committed and involved people's networks from civil societies. It generated a great deal of community mobilization and energy that resulted in songs, poetry, literature and wall newspapers. These witnessed a sharp decline by the end of Tenth Five Year Plan.

The ZSS set up had a precarious existence as the programme itself was a Plan scheme. These witnessed a sharp decline by the end of the Plan. At present, the Lok Shiksha Samities (LSSs) have been constituted by a govt. order at District, Block and GP levels for implementation of Saakshar Bharat Programme.

Continuing and Lifelong Learning Strategies

It is essential to re-conceptualize adult education in the lifelong education/ learning perspective rather than as sequential and short-term.

This approach and strategy has implications for teaching-learning materials, instructional methodology, institutional arrangements, and so on.

Adult learners must be provided with a multiplicity of options that relate to the interests and needs with respect to their profile and work situation.

Learning Strategies: Literacy Centres: The centre-based model continues to be an appropriate approach as it is in the neighborhood and easily accessible to women learners.

It is amenable to suit the convenience of both learners and Instructor in respect of timing, location, issues of local relevance for discussions, etc., and sustaining the learner motivation. Ensuring effective T-L skills by the Instructors who are often Volunteers – school or college students - are formidable challenge to the centre based approach.

Residential and non-Residential Camps of varying duration and age / work / occupation-specific groups, exclusively for literacy as well as for connecting literacy with other interests and needs specific-skills are some of the other approaches.

Each of these approaches has its own specific organizational, pedagogic, content and design of learning materials, training and assessment needs and processes. The duration would be governed by the load of learning content designed for the programme.

Especially for neo-literate adult learners, there should be a basket of short-term and diploma courses either along the UNESCO classification of CE Programmes viz., (i) Income Generation; (ii) Individual Interest Promotion; (iii) Future Oriented; (iv) Quality of Life Improvement Programmes or other specific programmes for Socio-Cultural Learning, and Citizenship Learning Programmes, etc. These certificate and diploma

programmes could also be of levels I, II, III with some approximation with the formal education system.

Both govt. and non-govt. agencies could be engaged for developing and running such courses and programmes under the overall supervision of NLMA, NIOS, IGNOU and such other coordination, quality control, accreditation and certification bodies. The underlying framework governing the programmes is Lifelong Education.

Training

Training for Adult and Continuing Education in the Lifelong learning perspective has been the weakest link in the programme not only in India but also elsewhere. Some of the elements characterizing the weaknesses include; (i) lack of a long term perspective about adult education, short duration of training, lack of sufficient number of professional training institutions, massive number and limited financial resources, absence of local and cultural-specific training material, etc.

An overhaul of the content, approach and process of training is required if it has to be in sync with the paradigm shift in the proposed system of adult and continuing education in the lifelong learning perspective.

One of the pre-requisites is to recognize the variety of literacy and continuing education programmes as mentioned earlier with varying duration, levels of expected learning proficiency, etc. This would be relevant for the purpose of training those engaged in the T-L process - assuming that it would be the same person – Prerak / Facilitator / Adult Educator, etc. Their training and capacity building is necessary to lead the learners at different learning programme situations or leading them from basic literacy to other levels or types of programmes.

There needs to be a dedicated institutional mechanism to impart professional training to the vast numbers / types of personnel engaged in the T-L process of different programmes. And considering the vast social, cultural, linguistic and other types of diversities in our country and also given the volume of personnel to be trained, the institutional mechanism has to function in a highly decentralized manner.

Considering the various types of programmes envisaged such as basic literacy and different types and varieties of Continuing Education Programmes, there has to be a specific dedicated institutional set up at the district level and its block level counterparts. It could be a District Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centre (DACERC) for training of the Resource Persons (RPs) and Master Trainers (MTs) for various programmes.

The existing SRCs need to be upgraded and strengthened so as to enable them to provide the academic, training and research support to the DACERCs and BACERCs. There also needs to be a National Institute of Adult and Lifelong Education. In all these

institutes, there should be separate division for special programmes like Equivalency and various skill development programmes leading to certificates and diplomas.

There may be a number of degree and diploma courses connected with on-going field programmes of Adult Education, needed for developing the academic competencies of Adult Educators. These courses may be designed and conducted at the National Institute of Adult and Lifelong Education.

The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs) should be entrusted with skill development programmes with clear functional linkages with District and Block Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centres.

Assessment, Outcomes and Equivalency

The need for redesigning the evaluation framework arises from the focus of Saakshar Bharat Programme which is an integrated continuum of basic literacy, post-literacy and continuing education. Saakshar Bharat focuses on the need to use literacy to empower women. The assessment would also need to go beyond literacy levels achieved, into assessment of empowerment and its impact through the different programme interventions.

Irrespective of the forms such as, formative and summative evaluation, the key areas or aspects to be covered by the evaluation should be: (i) **Relevance** from the standpoint of the service providers and the participants; (ii) **Effectiveness** as measured in achieving intended objectives of different programme components; (iii) **Efficiency**, in respect of programme delivery; (iv) **Impact**, in broader context of stakeholders, organizations, committees and policies; and (v) **Sustainability** – with evidence of the programme's continuance beyond its govt. funded duration.

Given the multi-dimensionality of the programme, in respect of programme components, the evaluation process also needs to be a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. It would need to include various methods, including participatory method.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) needs to become a part of Equivalency and this will give a great boost to sustain the learning interest among adults especially neo-literates.

Proposed Systemic Framework

The proposed systemic framework for adult and continuing education must have permanent institutions at the Village, Cluster, Block and District levels with a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities at each level. All of them must ultimately offer full support to the adult learner and take her/him along through different stages of learning.

There is a need to establish vertical linkages with line authorities that have the capacity to respond to the dynamic needs of the learners, and also have horizontal linkages to share experiences and constantly learn from one another.

The contribution and participation of the learner to the provisioning of services and in the process adding inputs to the education policy itself must be built into the system.

There is a need to have a process of consultation with learners and local youth who are part of the adult education endeavour, and also the members of the Gram Panchayat and the community who are reviewing the progress at all levels along with the department functionaries.

Basic Postulates

Basic literacy, post literacy and continuing education need to be seen as forming a coherent learning continuum. The Adult and Continuing Education programme is intended to establish a responsive, alternative structure for lifelong learning. It should be capable of responding to the needs of all sections of society.

Some of the stages in Lifelong Education Programme would need to include: Basic Literacy; Secondary Literacy- i.e., post-basic literacy, such as post-literacy and continuing education; Life-long education and learning; equivalency; and skill development

The sheer complexity and contextual specificity of the concept of Adult, Continuing and Lifelong Education render any attempt to define it in strait-jacketed terms an extremely difficult exercise.

Institutional Framework from Gram Panchayat to National level

At every Gram Panchayat, there should be a Centre for Adult/Continuing Education/Lifelong Learning, as part of the education department, and more than one if the GP population is above 5,000. This permanent institutional framework should offer full support to adult learners and take them along different stages in the lifelong learning continuum.

The Adult and Continuing Education Centre (ACEC) is to have capacity to offer all the range of services as Basic literacy, Continuing education, Computer technology and internet, Multi Media Access, Village Library, Skill Development, Learning Support Programme for school drop outs to re-join /pursue formal education through equivalency, Residential Camps of flexible duration interspersed with Basic Literacy or CE programmes including life and vocational skills.

The ACEC should have Adult Educators (2) on permanent basis, and Resource Persons (4-6) - on a task based honorarium for assisting the ACEC in all its activities.

The Adult Educators manning the ACEC should be trained to facilitate the processes, such as the establishment of Village Education Committee as a sub-committee of the

Gram Panchayat; hold monthly meetings of adult learners; enable Gram Panchayats to review the functioning of ACECs; and involve community and Gram Panchayat to conduct periodic social audit of the ACEC.

Cluster Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centre (CACERC)

The CACERC could correspond with and be housed in the same place as the Cluster Resource Centre in SSA, so as to ensure its physicality and permanence. It should have permanent personnel like Social Mobiliser (1), Cluster Education Co-ordinator (1); and Cluster MIS (1)

The CACERC will amalgamate all the plans of the ACEC through review meetings with all the adult educators in the cluster, as well as with Members from SHG's, Gram Panchayats, community mobilisers, and local NGO's.

Block Adult and Continuing Education Office (BACEO): The BACEO would have two wings (i) administrative and (ii) academic and programme wing, viz., Block Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centre (BACERC).

The BACEO is the lowest rung of the administrative set up of adult education, with its vital link between the learners and the District level Adult and Continuing Education Office (DACEO). The BACEO would have Coordinator/Officer for: MIS (1); Monitoring and Supervision (1) Convergence and Partnership (1); Procurement and Distribution (1); and Model ACEC (1)

Block Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centre (BACERC): The BACERC would have Academic Resource Persons (4) for different aspects of the ACEC specialised programmes; an RP for Social Mobilisation (1); Training Coordinator (1); and a panel of Block Resource Group of 20-25 persons with expertise on curricular issues, organisational skills and so on.

District Level: The DACEO would have two wings (i) administrative and (ii) academic and programme wing, viz., District Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centre (DACERC). In the case of Administration wing, it would have an administrative head with a reach up to the Block level below and the State level, above.

The DACEO would deal with fund flow, implementation, including procurement and distribution of learning materials, EB, Convergence, Monitoring, MIS, etc. The DACEO would have District Adult Education Officer (1) Programme Officers (2); Convergence Officers (2); Training Officers (2); MIS (2) and ICT (2)

The DACERC would deal with techno-pedagogy and academic support including Capacity Building, EB, Assessment, Research and Evaluation. The academic support system would be an institutional mode, much like the DIET, but specifically for the adult education system.

Panchayat Raj Institutions: The Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) at all levels shall have their respective committees such as the village education committees, block and district education committees, as well as standing committees on adult education at Block and Zilla Panchayat levels. The PRI's at each level, viz., Gram Panchayats, block or Mandal Panchayats, Zilla Panchayats would need to review the programme enable its smooth functioning and approve the new plans and proposals.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan: The brief of Jan Shiksha Sansthan is to provide vocational and life skills as part of Adult and Continuing Education programme.

Krishi Vigyan Kendras: Considering that most agricultural activities are done by women farmers and women workers, it is important that their skills are upgraded through the institutions like Agricultural Universities, Research Institutes and NGOs, under the adult education programme.

State Level (SDACE): There should be a full fledged Department of Adult and Continuing Education at the State level. It should consolidate qualitative and quantitative data on all the programs initiated by the District Adult Education Office down to the habitation level, establish flexible procedures for fund release and ensure releases against district plans, and periodically review with all other concerned departments on issues of collaboration and convergence.

State Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centre (SACERC): The SACERC should be visualized and strengthened in such a manner that it can lend institutional umbrella to reach out to other institutional resources and draw upon expertise from other agencies and institutions and civil society for its varied intellectual, organisational and material resource requirement for literacy and adult education programmes. The personnel for the SACERC must be drawn from those with abundance of field experience.

National level: At the national level, there should be a **National Authority on Adult and Continuing Education**, and in order to imbibe and radiate the paradigm shift in adult education, the nodal agency should also be redesigned and re-designated as **National Authority on Adult and Continuing Education** from its current restricted connotation and ephemeral character, as National *Literacy Mission* Authority. The role at the national level would be multifarious, including making resources available for permanent structures and processes for adult and continuing education, enabling sharing of experiences among state and district functionaries, recognising best practices and showcasing them.

National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education: The need for a proper research and resource centre at the national level with linkages with Universities and other institutions of research cannot be underestimated.

National Open School System: The NIOS could provide Equivalency programme in the context of neo-literate adults, and also lend the system of recognition, accreditation, assessment and certification of **prior learning**.

Providing an equivalency dimension vis-à-vis the formal education system would help to nurture further upgradation in the skill / knowledge area of prior learning.

Convergence

National Rural Health Mission (NRHM): ASHA:

Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA), under NRHM, now at 8,09,637, is a huge force of grass roots level women workers whose intervention could be harnessed for the literacy and adult education programme. ASHA volunteers could also take part in mobilization and awareness building programs. The VTs, Preraks, and Coordinators at Block and District levels could be associated with ASHAs for health awareness creation and such other tasks. The school dropouts among ASHA volunteers could be encouraged to join the Equivalency programme. There has to be an interface and convergence between Adult Education Department and the NRHM network.

MGNREGA: Under MGNREGA, millions of unskilled rural workers are being employed – 39 million during 2010-11, majority of whom belong to the socio-economically disadvantaged sections like, the SCs, STs, Minorities and other disadvantaged sections and a large number of them are women. They also constitute a large percentage of country's illiterate population.

Coordination with MGNREGA is necessary for getting a village wise list of job holders, creation of material and information dissemination on entitlements. The programme of adult education can be coupled with MNREGA for various purposes. Applying for the job-card, seeking work, operating bank accounts and reading of the Job cards, etc., have created an unprecedented demand among these workers for becoming literates. If organized properly along their needs, the processes of learning to read and write could be integrated with their daily life situations as workers in MNREGA. Work Supervisors having necessary competence and qualification can be trained for imparting functional literacy to these workers.

SABLA: The Ministry of Women and Child Development of Govt. of India launched "Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls – SABLA" initially in 200 districts on a pilot basis. The Sabla scheme aims to address the multi-dimensional needs of adolescent girls between 11 to 18 years, including their nutrition and health status, upgrading their life skills, home-based skills and vocational skills, etc. The scheme which will be implemented using the ICDS platform, through Anganwadi Centres and its functionaries, could be converged with functional literacy, equivalency, vocational skill development and continuing education programmes for non-literate as well as literate girls in 15-18 age group either through the Anganwadi centres or Adult and Continuing

Education Centres. The scope for convergence is enormous as there are 7075 ICDS projects and 14 lakh Anganwadi Centres across the country.

Similar convergence must also be built into all forms of practice with the National Rural Livelihood Mission, Panchayati Raj Institutions , particularly since there are millions of elected women members in these institutions, Right to Information and the Right to Education that envisages School Management Committees to be mainly composed of parents of children, half of them women. Properly linked literacy programs can be a great way to prepare empowered and aware members (mostly women) of the PRI's and SMCs greatly benefiting governance and school education.

Role of NGO's / Universities/Research Institutes

For Adult Education to be effectively implemented, the space for genuine long-term partnerships between government and civil society organizations, based on appreciation of their respective strengths and mutual respect, must be evolved. Critical to ensuring this would be to legitimize and institutionalize the different roles of NGOs within the institutional and other mechanisms.

The adult education system envisaged could also allow flexibility for implementation by NGOs. Civil society organizations and NGO's can also be associated in capacity building of GPs, with funds from adult education department or the Panchayats.

University departments/Research Institutes must be engaged in research-related activities (particularly action research and participatory research), undertaking documentation, developing suitable academic programmes for field level functionaries.

The Use of ICTs

Even though the penetration of hardware and support systems is still fairly thin across the country, Information and Communication Technologies never the less provide an avenue that could be effectively combined with person to person contact to add tremendous value to adult education efforts, particularly in bringing knowledge and information resources from all over the World to the doorstep of the learner. In order to prepare the pedagogical value of these technologies, efforts could be weaved into the programmes where ever feasible to use these technologies appropriately, keeping linguistic and cultural diversities in mind. In particular, using and training local resource persons in free software opens avenues for creating a unlimited applications by the locals,for the locals. Many innovative efforts underway in this direction, for example in Kerala, need to be studied for further expansion in other states of the country. In particular, making each Adult Education Center of the country into an e-kiosk could be seriously explored.

Women's Groups

There are a large number of women's self-help groups already in existence which have an urge to be literate as well as to be informed about issues concerning their lives, the

community, village and the country as a whole. A government account gives the number of SHGs, as on 2008, coming under SGSRY of the Ministry of Rural Development, as 28,35,772, of which 23,29,528 were women SHGs (82%). With 15-20 members for each SHG, there would be at least 5 crore membership, most of whom would be the target group for literacy and adult education programmes. Not only the SHG issue could itself become a theme for literacy, but it could also provide the basis for an entire range of capacity building including leadership, entrepreneurship, as well as organization building and development of social capital as well as financial capital.

Many other women's groups, not necessarily self-help, exist in large numbers all over the country, like that of Mahila Samakhya. Linking all these to the literacy effort would be of immense mutual benefit.

CHAPTER-1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

A nation that is literate is one where its citizens are empowered to ask questions, seek information, take decisions, have equal access to education, health, livelihood, and all public institutions, participate in shaping their realities, create knowledge, participate in the labour force with improved skills, exercise agency fearlessly and as a consequence deepen democracy. Systems are to be in place to build a nation that builds citizenship which is truly informed and literate and in the process, the content of governance, development and democracy is also vitalised.

At the time of country's independence in 1947, the literacy rate was a mere 21%. With the expansion of the elementary education structure, this rate was gradually improved, but with increasing population, the gross number of adult illiterates kept on increasing, so much so that the country has an unacceptable population of about 280 million who are termed illiterate today. The first major attempt to address uneducated adults directly was the launch of the National Adult Education Program (NAEP) in 1978. Using a centre-based approach, the program had some limited success till the motivation of the learners and that of the paid centre volunteers flagged in a few years. The next important step came with the launching of the National Literacy Mission in 1989 that initiated nation wide mass literacy campaigns during the decade of the 90s in nearly all the districts of the country. Based on the voluntary mode by involving the community and the Zilla Saksharta Samiti structure, the mass literacy campaign was fairly spectacular initially, but gradually lost steam as volunteer fatigue set in. The campaign mode saw the addition of post-literacy, continuing education and equivalency modes to the adult education program, the remnants of which still exist. The Sakshar Bharat Program is the next step in this process of addressing the needs of adult education of the country. It is vitally important that the challenge that the SBP is to face benefits from an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the previous two major programs that were practised in the country. The learning from these past programs is a basis for the analysis and recommendations of this document.

One such learning is that to meet the challenging task of adult education in India the practice and policy must always be informed by the voices of the learners themselves and the challenges they face in accessing literacy, information and knowledge. This would necessarily entail respecting the poor, their capacity to think for themselves and providing for local institutions and structures that facilitates their participation in a genuine fashion and not as tokenism. Such an institutional framework would undoubtedly throw up new ideas and this would have to be supported by availability of resources and greater investment in education.

It is only when there is a credible, whole hearted and institutionalised effort on a long term basis that the learner would take the programme of adult education seriously.

The first step is to understand the adult education programme as a life- long continuous education programme and not as a literacy mission or even a scheme. It must contain all structures and institutions from the national to the state, district, block, cluster and habitation levels on a permanent basis as part of the education department; and a system in place for reviewing the existing institutions at the national, state and district level and their capabilities for provisioning of education services to the adult learner. Further, it has to identify structures and processes that listen to the voices on the ground and is constantly addressing the new needs of the diverse section of learners.

These, in effect, mark a basic transformation of the programme for proposed planning and budgeting. It will no longer be seen just as a transient activity of turning illiterates into literates. It can no longer be expected to fold-up even as the illiterates fade away. There has to be pronounced and prominent permanency about the centres, their relevance and their utility. Once it is recognised thus, like any other programme, this programme too should qualify for the plan/non-plan phasing. And with just this change in character, the Adult Education Programme which is a lifelong continuous education programme will gain in status, develop roots and, provide scope for embellishments to become a major trigger of developments.

Envisaged in such a perspective, there is need for a paradigm shift in respect of adult education. It should be a regular and permanent system of education of adults, and encompass basic literacy, further higher levels of learning, as well as the learning avenues to meet the needs of life and livelihood skills as a lifelong and continuous endeavour.

Finally provision of adult education must be deemed as a right that has to be guaranteed by the State to each and every individual above 15 years of age who has missed the opportunity of completion of school education.

In order to understand better the transformed structure that is being suggested in this report, we briefly present first the existing structure under which adult education is practised in the country

1.2 Context and Brief Review of Existing Institutional Framework

Despite national and international commitments to achieve a 50% reduction in illiteracy rate by 2015, India still has the largest population of illiterate adults (270 millions) according to EFA monitoring report. Majority of them are poor.

There has been considerable improvement in literacy rates for all populations since 1991.

There are considerable disparities in literacy attainment across region, gender, ethnicity, caste and linguistic minorities.

1. National Level

Presently, the provision of adult education is through the Saakshar Bharat Programme (SBP) which is a centrally sponsored scheme. The programme is to be implemented in mission mode. The National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA), an autonomous wing of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, is the Nodal Agency at the national level. The Joint Secretary (Adult Education) is the ex-officio Director General of NLMA. It is responsible for the overall planning and management of the scheme, including release of funds to States/Voluntary Agencies, mobilization of resources, procurement, mass campaigns, maintenance of national database on illiteracy and adult education, publicity, facilitating techno-pedagogical support, research, monitoring and evaluation, etc. The NLM is to achieve the goals by way of Total Literacy Programmes, Post Literacy and Continuing Education programmes.

The NLMA has a Governing Body, Executive Committee and a Grants-in-Aid Committee. The Governing Body is headed by the HRM, with MOS (HRD) as Vice Chairperson and Ministers of I&B, Health & Family Welfare, Youth Welfare & Sports, Social Justice and Empowerment, Women & Child Development, Rural Development, Panchayatyi Raj, Minority Affairs and representatives of different line departments and the NGOs as Members. The Executive Committee and Grants-in-Aid Committee are headed by the Secretary (School Education & Literacy). At the National level there exists the Saakshar Bharat Mission (National Literacy Mission Authority). The Adult Education Bureau is organised in 6 Divisions, headed by Directors, along with support staff. They manage the SBP, the SRCs (28) and JSSs (271), besides other tasks relating to NGOs, international cooperation, etc.

2. State Level

The State Literacy Mission Authorities (SLMAs) have been re-constituted in 25 states and 1 UT (which have the 365 districts with female literacy rate of 50% or less) which are being covered under SBP. After winding up the Post-Literacy and Continuing Education Programmes on 30th September, 2009, there has been no insistence or instruction for reconstitution of SLMAs in those states not covered under SBP. It has been envisaged that the reconstituted SLMA's would include the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), as the implementing agencies of SBP.

State Resource Centres

The State Resource Centres (SRCs) have been established to play a critical role in the implementation of Adult Education programmes. They are located mostly in the voluntary organisations, and in a couple of universities. In some States the SRCs are directly established as part of the education department.

The current role of the SRC's includes the following:

-Development of primers, other learning materials for Basic Literacy, Equivalency, Life and Vocational Skills and Continuing Education Programmes and Training Manuals.

-Assist the SLMAs in undertaking capacity building of the literacy personnel, including the VT-MT-RP chain, the Preraks, and the Coordinators at Block and District level as well as the orientation of other stakeholders such as the PRI representatives.

-Monitoring and review of Basic Literacy programmes (BLPs) including the ICT-based literacy camps and the activities of Continuing and Lifelong Education Centres (L/CECs).

- Setting up and managing L/CECs as well as basic literacy classes, and literacy camps, and orientation of GP & BP Presidents so as to enable their involvement in adult education programmes.

-Assessment and Evaluation;

-Advocacy and Environment Building;

-Research and Documentation

-Setting up and running of Model L/CECs, Literacy Centres and Literacy Camp, including ICT-based literacy camps.

-Involvement in the nation-wide literacy assessment, undertaken by NIOS.

3. District level

There is a district level set up for Adult Education in every state/UT although the nomenclature varies by the designation of the department under which adult education is implemented, such as Adult Education, Mass Education, Literacy and Continuing Education, etc. But over the years, with the decline in the priority and scale of Adult Education programmes, the size, in terms of personnel strength has also witnessed acute reduction.

Zilla Saaksharta Samiti (ZSS)

In the early 90's the Adult Education Programme was implemented under the aegis of ZSS in the districts. The ZSSs were required to be a Registered Society, usually under the Chairmanship of the DM / DC. It had a General Body, a policy organ, composed of educationists, elected peoples' representatives, NGOs, social activists connected with literacy as well as officials of different line departments to allow for a non-bureaucratic set up. The ZSS also had an Executive Committee, a smaller body, usually of 8-10 people, to take vital decisions regarding implementation, subject to ratification by the GB later.

The design of ZSS as a Registered Society was a conscious choice to allow flexibility, reflecting urgency in implementation of the programmes and to also take up a campaign mode.

The ZSS functioned through different sub-committees, viz., Environment Building, Training, Materials, Finance, Monitoring, etc., with full time Coordinators. Primarily because the district did not have a district level counterpart of the SRC, the ZSS and its different Sub-Committees, also took care of pedagogic and administrative support to the programme by making use of the institutional resources and experts in DIETs and other institutions which had training facility.

The system of ZSS, with its Sub Committees, functioned well wherever there was a leadership provided by the concerned DM or DC involving administration and peoples' networks from civil society. This set up, was replicated at the Block and village levels. In most cases, however, they remained notional just like any other routine government programme having no scope for flexibility or permanence of the committees.

By the end of the 10th Five Year Plan, NLM programmes of TLC, PLP, CE as well as the centre-based adult education programme were covered by 597 districts out of the total of the then 610 districts. In most of the cases, the programmes were implemented under the aegis of ZSS.

District Resource Units (DRUs)

The District Resource Unit (DRU) planned as an integral part of District Institute of Education & Training (DIET), was placed under the Vice-Principal of DIET and another faculty, one in charge of non-formal, and another, for adult education. There were also DRU's sanctioned to NGO's. In reality just one programme officer was appointed for the DRU. In a multi-disciplinary DIET set up and under the weight of the formal education system, the adult education officer(s) were overshadowed. Currently, DRUs in most cases, are empty or the survivors have been diverted to the service of formal education. As of now the DRU's are nearly starved out of existence.

Lok Shiksha Samities

Lok Shiksha Samities (LSSs) at District, Block and GP levels have been constituted by Government Order, for the implementation of Saakshar Bharat Programme. The Lok Shiksha Samities are bodies or committees, with a President/Chairperson, Member Secretary, and Members, much like the ZSSs earlier, as Registered Societies. The Lok Shiksha Samities are decision-making bodies in respect of provisioning, planning, management, implementation, coordination, monitoring, etc., of SBP.

Their duration is co-terminus with the particular Five Year Plan period just as the ZSSs were under earlier NLM programmes. In this sense they are precarious and not institutionalised.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan Scheme (JSS)

Some districts have been sanctioned the Jan Shiksha Sansthans-271 as on date, to take up vocational and life skill up-gradation programmes. They impart skills from candle making to computer skills and have covered hundreds and thousands of neo-literates.

Community Mobilisation and Empowerment

Starting from 1989-90, with the Ernakulum TLC, its model has been replicated in quick succession, covering more than 150 districts before the end of the 8th Five Year Plan in 1991-92. The mass campaign approach for eradication of illiteracy was undertaken through massive mass mobilization and environment building. The model of NLM's direct approach with the Districts, through the ZSS set up generated energy to create songs, literature, poetry, wall newspapers at the local level along with empowered learners with critical consciousness and power to question.

This massive mobilisation and campaign petered down in all the districts.

Village level

Under the SBP, there is a provision for an AEC in a GP with 5000 population, and an additional AEC if the population is more than 5000. In respect of states in the North-East, where the Village Councils are the prevalent administrative units, an AEC provision is allowed even if the population is less than 5,000.

The entire task of running a literacy centre in a village is dependent on a volunteer, who is unpaid and doubles up as a mobiliser, teacher and a trainer imparting literacy for 8-10 learners. S/he is expected to give 300 hours of instruction for basic literacy. Although there is need for educators for higher levels, there has not been a provision of training such practitioners. Their link with the department has been minimal if not non-existent.

The old system of Continuing Education as a cent percent Centrally funded programme for initial three years, and the 50:50 sharing basis for next two years, and the state take over after 5 years, exists in Kerala. In that state, the entire set up and personnel have been taken over by the govt., and implemented through SLMA, and at ground level, by the Panchayats.

CHAPTER-2: CHALLENGES

2.1 Provisioning of Adult Education: Perspective and Challenges

Adult Education cannot and should not any more be considered as a short term project for achieving a certain percentage of literacy. Instead it should be conceived as a comprehensive and Lifelong programme for providing a variety of learning opportunities to all Adults (in the age group 15-50) in the country. In this, Basic Literacy will have to be, certainly considered as an important and indispensable first step/stage in the programme of Adult Education. But it should not be restricted to that alone. These learning programmes will include life skill development programmes, livelihood skills development programmes, citizenship development programmes, social and cultural learning programmes and so on and will depend upon the learning needs of the adult learner communities. Therefore, henceforth the nomenclature of the programme and the institutional framework should be Continuing and Life-Long Education programme.

There is a need to demarcate areas of duties and responsibilities in terms of institutional support that are required for the layers and stages of continuing and lifelong education considering the complexity of the adult learners and the diversity of their needs. This has to be an ongoing process and of a long term nature especially if continuing and life-long education is seen as a major input. It must go beyond being just a scheme.

Thus it shall go beyond the scope of Adult education programmes which were conceived as short term projects to achieve fixed 'targets' in terms of literacy percentages and thus missed the crucial continuity. Each of the bodies or organisational set ups like ZSSs and LSSs and institutions such as, SRCs, DRU/DIET, JSS, etc., have been of temporary in nature. At the district level there are just no permanent structures. There is still no permanent structure either as an institutional set up like the DIET or an agency like the DRDA for adult education at the district level or below in any State with exceptions such as in the State of Andhra Pradesh.

Further, there has not been any organic link among them and the department of adult education. It is important that just as in the case of school education, adult education too must have institutionalised structures at the district, block, cluster and Panchayat level. The need for convergence and collaboration between institutions and agencies in the government and private sectors cannot be understated. Further the institutional, personnel resources and expertise in the formal education system at District, Block, Cluster and GP levels, should also be available, if required.

As we have seen, any continuing education programme has to cater to a larger variety of learner groups in an integrated and sustainable way relevant to the learners' actual living concerns. Secondly, continuing education programmes need to be designed within the contextual peculiarities of the learner. This would mean cross-support to the

programme at the grassroots level from the formal, non-formal and informal sub-sectors of education, as well as various other development schemes. In particular these programmes would have to be dovetailed with the related programmes of training, farmer's centres, self-help thrift groups, other common interest groups and so on. It would also entail strong local participation and socio-economic data collection to make the programme effective and responsive to actual requirements.

The Continuing and Lifelong Education Center's functioning under the control of the community and operated by well trained and motivated adult education facilitators will form the base for the entire programme. As a result, a lot of effort has to be made in stabilizing the Continuing and Lifelong Education Centre and as envisaged in the GOI concept paper, would be incorporated in stages. The mix of components would be decided by the composition of the CEC members. Thus for instance, if most of them are women farmers, then the centre would have a strong bias towards issues relating to agriculture. If on the other hand the members are mostly drawn from among youth, then it would function with a greater focus on training. Issues relating to quality of life would invariably form a component of any CEC. Wherever possible, this would be linked to the setting up of an information centre for the entire village. Once again the emphasis has to be on training the adult education facilitators and developing a cadre of well-trained cadre.

2.2 Role of Adult Educator

Once this basic approach to Adult Education is understood, the present notion about the Adult Educator/Voluntary Instructor/Facilitator also will have to be changed. The new Adult Educator will not be a literacy instructor but an expert facilitator hand-holding the Adult learner to move ahead continuously along the lifelong path of education. In concrete terms she/he will be a person with in-depth understanding about the implications of the long term comprehensive lifelong education process, beginning with basic literacy. She/ he must also have a clear understanding about the intricacies of adult learning processes as different from the child's learning processes. The Adult Educator must be able to constantly link the vast life experience of the Adult Learner with all the learning processes including the literacy learning processes.

2.3 Rights Approach-National Commitment

The responsibility for provisioning of Continuing and Lifelong Education at the national level is to ensure that resources are available in a rights based perspective. It requires establishment of institutions for providing services in all the districts and in both rural and urban contexts. It has to cater to every individual/all groups that are vulnerable and have all stages of adult education fully covered. It is in doing so that the message of indispensability of continuing/lifelong education for the country's development and democracy is sent and the programme is taken with the seriousness it deserves.

1. State Support

At the State level, the Continuing and Lifelong/ Education department has to be fully equipped with staff and personnel from the State to the level of the Continuing and Lifelong Education Centre at the level of the Gram Panchayat. It needs to have the flexibility to meet the demands of the adult learner and yet deliver the services through a well-oiled institutional framework within the education department. There is need to build mechanisms of knowing the strengths and challenges of the programme and introducing systemic reforms/corrective devices so the adult learner accesses the various components of the programme with comfort and ease.

Decentralisation is the Key

2. Convergence with other National Flagship Programmes

Since continuing and lifelong education is cross cutting in intent and purposes, it must be equipped to meet all the learning needs of adults, outside formal education set up. The learning needs can span from basic literacy to a vast array of learning interests and needs including equivalency, skills development and short duration thematic programmes in areas as diverse as NREGS, NRHM, SHG, PRIs, etc. It must also have the ability to coordinate with all other departments viz., Panchayat Raj, Rural Development, Health, Women and Child Development and insist on integrating adult education in their core responsibilities.

The lessons learnt are that while there is a need to create an atmosphere that gives confidence to the non-literates to access adult education, there has to be a process of institutionalising the programme. This would include preparedness of education department to provide for services through its systems and structures on a permanent basis and involve the local bodies, adult learners as well as local NGO'S (if any) in giving support to the programme at the local level.

CHAPTER-3: PRINCIPLES OF CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

3.1 Principles

Some of the basic principles that should embed the curriculum framework are as follows:

- Developing critical consciousness of the learner leading to a continuous process of empowerment and informing the pedagogy. This entails the achievement of a certain degree of autonomy, for empowerment that entails being “given” the power to perform certain actions is but another form of subservience. Thus adult literacy and continuous and lifelong education centrally involves the *fostering of a critical consciousness* that can empower a learner to liberate herself and her society from unequal and oppressive power relations.
- Empowerment of the learner resulting in exercising one’s agency to become politically, socially and culturally active, as also self-aware, confident and with dignity and a sense of personal well being – political as well as self empowerment.
- Building the capabilities of the learner to access and analyze knowledge and make informed choices.
- Enabling democratic participation of the learner in negotiating diversity, demanding accountability, equipping her with skills for critical analysis of democratic institutions and accepting the ‘other’ as equal.
- Respecting the learner as a productive person, a person with dignity and a sense of well being, with an ability to realize her creative potential - to realize and contribute to a body of knowledge.
- Promoting values guaranteed by the Constitution such as, peace, justice, equity, secularism.
- Responding to the reality of illiteracy that coincides with deprivation, dispossession, poverty and discrimination. The pedagogy, curriculum, content and institutional mechanisms must respond to this reality. The learning process must promote and sustain community bonds that unite the deprived to fight the processes of deprivation.
- Continuing and Lifelong education to be crucial in negotiating and realigning unequal power relations based on gender, caste, religion, and ethnicity. It is not only a means to access information but also enables creation of knowledge, especially gives tools to engage with knowledge generation.

3.2 Pedagogy

- Adult learners' pedagogy is different from that of children. Pedagogical approaches to adolescents and women also need to be differentiated.
- Adult learners may be unable to read and write, but they possess a huge amount of experiential skill, knowledge and wisdom. Adult pedagogy must be based on this fact.
- Adult teaching- learning processes and materials must be based, therefore, on their existing knowledge base, rather than ignoring it.
- Pedagogy must also expand the mental and productive horizons of the learners to knowledge outside their experiential base.
- Sustaining motivation amongst learners is a major challenge of adult education pedagogy – one of the approaches must be to relate the teaching learning process to their life situations.
- Adult pedagogy must be flexible and participatory to respond to the learner curiosities and demands. This requires mapping learning needs before fashioning learning materials and programmes.
- Adult pedagogy must also assess the learners' views whether the programme is making a change in their lives.

3.3 Curriculum

The curriculum needs to be based on the context and the principles outlined above.

- The content and process must begin from the life situations of the learners.
- This implies that the curricular process has to be participatory. The teaching learning material must also be developed through a participatory process, which includes a needs assessment of the learners.
- This does not imply that whatever the learners say must be accepted – the implication is that professionals must combine their skills with the needs of the people to produce contents that are academically sound, which also reflect the aspirations and needs of the learners.
- The beginning of the programme must be structured as the beginning of Lifelong Education, rather than as the first stage of Basic Literacy, Post Literacy and Continuing Education. The learner must know from the very beginning that the learning opportunity is not casual and short term, but will lead to a lifelong engagement. Institutional mechanisms will have to be crafted accordingly. The question of equivalency must be seen from this perspective, rather than as a mechanical way of giving class 3, 5 or 8 certificates of school education.

- In terms of the choice of language for the curricular transaction, if the language demanded by the learners is different (including English) from their mother tongue, well known pedagogical methods that accommodate and bridge both the languages should be used in the creation and transaction of materials.

- It is assumed that mathematics, numeracy in particular, has universal methods of learning. This contrasts with the evidence that illiterate adults transact mathematics in their everyday life in market and productive situations with ease, but use different algorithms, that can change from place to place. Therefore just like language, teaching of mathematics, including shapes and geometry, must bridge the ethno-mathematical algorithms with standard methods.

Following on the foregoing, it should be obvious that these curricular pedagogies demand to give up the notion of a single primer and move towards a variety of TL materials.

- The above principles imply that to bring in knowledge, language and skill diversity that exists in our country into the preparation and transaction of TL materials, the institutional process of preparing and transacting these materials needs to be decentralized, even below a district level, to bridge between the local and standard knowledge systems.

- Learning takes place not only in learning centres, but in an overall learning environment. This implies that the literacy programmes must also have larger learning initiatives (libraries, web connected computer kiosks, newspapers etc) as part of the programme, and not as add-ons.

- TL materials should not only address skill and cognitive development, but also address the affective domain that includes values, self-confidence, caring and dignity.

The sheer complexity and contextual specificity of the concept of Continuing and Lifelong Education make any attempt to define it in strait-jacket terms an extremely difficult exercise. Even if a definition is attempted, the results are not uniform. Within a single country, various programmers, academicians and literacy activists have their own understanding of continuing education. Also, each country understands the concept based on its own vision and indigenous requirements. There are two primary reasons for this multiplicity of views. The first can be called normative, in as much as the area of continuing education is inchoate. Thinking in this relatively new field is flexible and open to several interpretations. The second is formal, in the sense that the content and style of the programme is determined by the context of its implementation.

CHAPTER-4: CONTINUING AND LIFELONG LEARNING- STRATEGIES

4.1 Adult Education in the Framework of Continuing and Lifelong Learning

In order to fulfill the principles of the curriculum framework, it is essential to re-conceptualize what constitutes an adult education/literacy programme. An adult learner would need Lifelong Education (now Lifelong Learning) with an understanding that learning and education are not short term processes that can be completed during a particular period or course. Thus the programmes of Literacy, Post Literacy and Continuing Education as they exist now are not to be considered as separate compartments. Consequently, the piecemeal or compartmental approach to literacy and allied programmes has led to massive regression to illiteracy in many parts of the country. Many districts that had declared to be "totally literate" in the nineties are now facing massive illiteracy levels and have to launch fresh programmes.

This happened basically because of a lack of continuity in the programme which in turn is due to the absence of a comprehensive framework that relates and links literacy and education with all other aspects of life on a long term basis. This shift in paradigm implies the following:

First of all, the piecemeal, compartmental approach to literacy programme will have to be abandoned. In its place we should adopt a long term, continuum approach. Every learner who enrolls at the basic literacy centre should have the opportunity to continue learning Lifelong. Actually the learner should be entering the basic literacy centre with this understanding. This approach will have its implications on various aspects of adult education including teaching learning materials, instructional methodology, institutional arrangements and so on.

Secondly, the learner should be provided with a multiplicity of options to continue her learning. Formal, non formal or even informal methods and also combinations of these could be employed for this purpose. The most important consideration in deciding the mode and method of continued learning should be the actual learning need of each learner which would depend upon the socio, economic and cultural situation in which she is living. One of the main objectives of the basic adult education programme should be to help and facilitate the learner to identify her actual learning need and choose appropriate learning programmes. It is important to provide a wide variety of options from which the learner can choose.

4.2 Profile of Adult Learners

There is a huge back-log of non-literate population in the country numbering 260 million in the 15+ age group (Census 2001). The five states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan alone account for 50% of population of adult non-literates. Adult learners fall into different groups depending upon their age, experience, occupations, socio cultural situation, aspirations and so on. These differences will naturally affect their learning needs and in turn their choice of learning programmes.

They could be categorised under the following heads although there could be an overlap in this regard:

- Members of 2,65,000 Gram Panchayats, especially women sarpanches and ward members.
- 3.9 crore population of rural labour under NREGA
- Migrant Labourers- 53.6 million non-literates among Scheduled Castes and 30.2 millions Scheduled Tribes 15+ age group
- Non-literates among adolescent girls and boys in the 15 -18 years age group.
- 168 million non-literate adult women.
- Self-help groups
- Joint Forest Management Groups
- Adults who are non-literates requiring basic literacy
- Adults who can read and write but are school dropouts requiring post literacy and continuing education
- Adult learners of younger age group who would like to pursue their learning in the formal stream.
- Adult learners who are motivated to learn further, but at a more informal, leisurely pace
- Adult learners who are willing to take up specific learning programmes relating to specific learning need that they have identified
- Adult learners of older age group who would like to continue learning for recreational purposes.

There may be adult neo-literate learners who have very specific learning needs and would want to join learning programmes that matches their requirements. For example a farmer wishing to learn more about improving his/ her yield using modern agricultural

techniques or a group of tribal women wanting to learn more about tribal rights or a neo-literate Gram Panchayat member wanting to learn more about her duties and responsibilities. There may be even composite learning needs. We recommend that a chain of resource agencies capable of developing tailor-made learning programmes may be established for formulating such learning programmes.

4.3 Adolescents

It is estimated that the number of adolescents in India (11-20) is 30 crores out of which almost 10 crores are illiterates, though some of them could have attended a school for a short while. They are all from families living in extreme poverty. Many of them face social exclusion because of caste biases. Girls face further marginalisation due to prevalent gender subordination in each group. And the villages to which these rural and tribal adolescents belong have several geo-physical disadvantages.

Viewing adolescents as a distinct group with special learning needs is relatively a new trend in educational planning. There is a growing realization that clubbing them with 'children' or 'adults' does not help in evolving an appropriate framework for their education.

The overall finding of some of the researches undertaken for identifying appropriate educational interventions revealed the following pattern:

There is no single way of initiating an educational intervention for adolescents. There can be many approaches ranging from intensive short duration interactions or long duration residential training camps to a yearlong forum through a 'Centre of Learning'. What is non-negotiable for eliciting honest 'real' responses from adolescents is the overall friendly, gentle, non-judgmental tone of interaction.

- There are very strong commonalities that are shared by adolescents across deprived sections of society by virtue of age related changes.
- Cutting across all groups, the adolescents are confronted with anxiety about the changes in their body and their role definitions.
- Repressed anger against perceived or actual injustice is specially marked in the socially excluded caste and girls. These groups have a deep seated resentment against their oppression in society.
- These young people are struggling to develop coherent self identity and positive self-image.
- Unrealistic expectations and goal setting often lead to frustration and conflict.
- In the absence of positive adult role models, the adolescents run the risk of turning to inappropriate role models.

- These adolescents have very few opportunities for healthy adventure and risk taking, such as sports or forums for theatre. They are in danger of getting involved in negative risk-taking activities that can take the form of gang activities, substance abuse or gambling.

- Besides the above common issues are issues like communal conditioning in minority community. Also, an attraction towards inappropriate consumption patterns and addictions like tobacco chewing, alcohol and drugs.

While there is a strong base of common concerns in this age group, the specificity of context is extremely important in designing interventions. It is in their own specificity that adolescents would have to be empowered. The sets of skills that need to be strengthened amongst the adolescents can broadly be categorized under the abilities to:

- Access information and analyze it appropriately;

- Relate positively to people and society so that optimum opportunity can be available for their growth; and

- Discern priorities in life and negotiate their acceptance in the social, economic and political context.

The strategy adopted for an effective intervention would need to take into account the following:

- Adolescents learn best through peer interaction. Learning is also optimal when linked to their own experiences or to the shared experiences, opinions and views of their peers.

- Intervention should be socially and culturally relevant and accessible.

- Continuity of any intervention programme is vital. Ongoing participation needs to be assured.

4.4 Strategies for Imparting Literacy and Adult Learning Programmes

Given the multiplicity of needs at the ground level, there is a need to develop a diversity of strategies. Experience at the ground level shows that while designing and implementing programmes, using a combination of strategies have proven useful. But most importantly the selection of strategies should be decided in consultation with learners.

In the section below are brief descriptions of some of the key strategies that have proven effective. Several of these strategies refer to women as in many cases they have formed a majority of the adult learners.

1. Adult literacy and learning centres

The centre based strategy for imparting adult literacy and learning programmes have a long and chequered history. It however continues to be an important strategy as it is usually neighborhood-based, making it easily accessible, especially for women. Moreover as centres function daily, it is conducive to sustaining learning. With regard to women learners, several studies have shown that besides the learning aspect, women often access centres as they provide a space outside the home for interactions. Experience shows that centres have been effective where:

- * learners have been involved in deciding location, timing and in the overall planning of the running of the centre, which has built long-term ownership
- * facilitators have been local, accessible and where learners have had a say in facilitator selection.
- * learning has been linked to discussion and action around local issues.
- * a long term strategy to sustain interest and learning levels of learners is planned from the outset.
- * multi-grade teaching approach is adopted in the centres to meet the learning needs of women with varying levels of literacy.

Some of the challenges faced are:

- * multi-grade teaching: work related demands, social pressure and migration to other places makes it difficult for women to attend centres regularly. As a result of this, learners at the centres have highly varying levels of literacy skills. This makes it challenging for the facilitator to handle multi grade teaching.
- * role and capacities of the facilitator: the teachers at the centres are involved in imparting literacy and numeracy skills, they are also responsible for conducting meetings on issues. In addition to this the teachers must monitor the progress of learners and maintain regular documentation of centre-related work. There is, therefore, a constant need to develop their communication, facilitation and management skills as well as upgrade their understanding and information on issues on a continuing basis as well as skills to develop materials locally. Investments in such capacity building are often not made.
- * Sustaining interest: Given the demands of survival-related tasks, it is a constant challenge to maintain the motivation of learners. For this mobilization, strategies need to be on-going and not one time events. Facilitators also need to ensure a constant flow of materials and information.

2. Camps

Residential literacy camps were initially experimented with as an approach to work with rural women on literacy and numeracy in the 80s. It evolved in response to the particular learning requirements and styles of women. Longer duration educational camps focussing on leadership development, empowerment and life skills have been held with youth and adolescents. Several women's organisations, NGOs and women's empowerment programmes like Mahila Samakhya have developed and refined the pedagogy, training and curriculum/materials related to the camp approach. Over the years different models have evolved. However, these adaptations have all been based on certain key principles that are fundamental to the camp strategy and essential to setting it apart from other approaches. Some of the key elements of any camps strategy are:

- *Creative and sustained mobilisation:* As literacy camps require participants to be away from their homes it requires a relationship of trust with the community to be built, especially in the context of women. For this, time needs to be allocated and efforts need to be made – which could include house visits, meetings with the women and community etc. Initially mobilising participants for camps, especially women, can be difficult and effort needs to be put into it. Getting women to come essentially means challenging gender relations—of mobility, division of labour etc.—which often leads to resistance from the family and community. Women have to be supported in such situations and a community level base is crucial in these circumstances.
- *Flexibility and involving participants in the planning* – Camps should be organised at times when participants are relatively free from agricultural or other work which is context specific. The timing and duration of the camps should be decided in consultation with the potential participants. Using PRA tools like developing seasonal calendars are a useful way of ascertaining the women/communities annual calendar, ensuring participation as well as building ownership. As camps are not planned as one-off events but are periodic with follow-up in-between, the entire strategy needs to be discussed with women.
- *Structured, holistic and context specific curriculum:* Residential camps provide a setting where there is greater possibility of structuring the teaching learning process and planning a curriculum or modules with specific learning goals. Thus for each camp, the learning goals, content, pedagogy and final evaluation needs to be thought through. Camps combine literacy with other issues --issues such as gender awareness, the right to health, right to work, violence against women and legal rights. Besides issues, other issues like building self-confidence, communication skills etc. form an important part of camps. In such cases, the sessions or content should not be seen as add-ons but integral to the curriculum and learning process. The curriculum and teaching-learning process has to be adapted according to the needs of the group. *A primer alone should not be the*

basis of the camp teaching-learning process. Material does not have to be created for each camp but the camp organisers and teachers need to be trained on how to adapt the curriculum and material to the specifics of a particular camp and its context. An important aspect of camps is to prepare follow-up material worksheets and other material that learners can take away with them.

- *Creating an environment and an intensive collective learning process:* In residential camps an intensive learning atmosphere is created which helps in both ensuring a quicker pace of learning and developing solid foundations. Learning is usually organised in groups, which enables both peer learning and multi-grade learning. Creating a print rich and attractive learning environment is critical to the camp process. It is usually the quicker pace of learning that is highlighted but camps have been effective in building the foundations and motivation for a sustained learning process.
- *Higher-teacher participant ratio and orientation of teachers:* in a centre usually one teacher or facilitator runs the class. Camps are conducted with more than one teacher (depending on the number of participants), as the main emphasis of camps is to create an intensive learning environment. Generally the ratios are 10-15 learners per teacher.
- *Training:* Teachers need to be oriented about the specific pedagogic and other aspects of the camp strategy. It should not be assumed that a teacher/volunteer running a centre will automatically be able to run a good camp. Elements that should be included in the training module are
 - Fundamental principles and pedagogic approach of the camp approach
 - Perspective building on issues like gender, social analysis and critical thinking etc.
 - Developing abilities to adapt the curriculum and material to suit the target group and the varied contexts
 - Developing teaching learning material, aids etc. (it should be assumed that camps would use material beyond a primer)
 - Skills in planning, recording progress and assessment (methods other than testing)

3. Village-based camps

A variation of residential camps is village-based camps. While the response to residential camps has been positive, it is often difficult for adult women to attend such camps regularly. These camps are conducted in the village itself but they are markedly different from centres (which may be running in the village) and follow the basic principles mentioned above. A few facilitators (depending on the number of

participants) go and stay in the village to run the camp. The participants attend the camp at various times during the day and usually a public meeting or issue-based meetings are held in the evenings.

Other types of camps: These can be of different types-

- Thematic camps for women from specific interest or membership groups - for example, elected women representatives or women SHG members, or health workers, MNREGA or Right to Information, etc. In these cases specific material needs to be developed and teachers need to be oriented on the specific issue.
- Leadership development: Courses to enhance literacy along with developing different leadership skills have been tried. These have been appropriate for women, young people who are playing a leadership role in different community contexts (like women's sanghas, federations, panchayat committees, etc.). Such camps have been particularly effective with young people.
- *Camps to address specific learning needs:* Camps have also been organized to address specific learning needs, for example, the needs of 'advanced learners'. Usually in every village there will be a few women who are very keen to continue their learning beyond basic literacy but the village centre is unable to address this. Camps to enable women to take the equivalency exam have also been organized.

Some of the challenges faced while organising camps are:

- Adapting/creating teaching learning material to suit the needs of a particular group is a challenging task for camp organisers and facilitators.
- One of the challenges is establishing mechanisms to sustain learning. A clear strategy and follow-up material (like worksheets and other distance learning methods) needs to be developed from the beginning and not as an after-thought. The importance of having a regular institutional space like a CE centre with an effective outreach programme that actively reaches out to women and provides a supportive learning environment, are essential to sustain the gains made in the camps. Camps are periodic but learning, needs to be continued. Creating a literate environment at the community level through libraries and ensuring access to neo-literate appropriate newsletters are also crucial.
- As Camps are resource intensive, they are often difficult to organise.

There exists considerable experience on conducting residential camps. These experiences need to be collated. Accessible and interactive manuals/ resource books on the camp methodology directed at the teachers should be developed.

4. Thematic Literacies or issue specific literacy strategies

Over the past couple of years, sustained work at the grassroots level with women, various legislative changes and the launch of several national programmes has brought large numbers of women into the public domain. For example, a large number of women have come into formal systems of governance through the Panchayati Raj system. Women members of self-help groups, women's federations and panchayats and NREGA workers are articulating the need for literacy and structured learning interventions. Women are demanding literacy and continuing education interventions that will strengthen their abilities to participate in development and democratic processes, demand accountability, independently access information and manage their new roles as community leaders. Such groups of women as well as other organized groups (eg. workers groups) have very specific demands and needs for literacy and broader learning. Such literacy, numeracy and learning programmes that are designed around particular issues and addressing specific interest groups are broadly being described as Thematic Literacies or issue-specific literacy and learning programmes. While conceptually the idea of Thematic Literacies has been embraced, work on the ground and in terms of various programmematic dimensions (like curriculum and materials, training, programme design, needs assessment etc.) is gradually unfolding and will be an exciting area of work in the coming years. Thus in this approach literacy and learning is embedded within the broader information and skill needs related to specific issues. In many cases women may have basic literacy but have further educational and information needs. Thus a key focus of thematic literacy and learning programmes is on ensuring continued and relevant learning and forms part of continuing education (CE) strategies for strengthening and sustaining women's literacy. This is critical given that relapse into illiteracy is one of the biggest problems. In terms of delivering or implementing the programme, a combination of strategies are being used which includes centres as well as issue specific camps.

Some of the issues that have been worked on by different groups are health, SHGs and Micro-credit, elected women representatives and more recently MNREGA. In some of the innovative work that is being done, specific learning packages are being developed. Such learning packages include content that seeks to build an understanding of gender, caste and class issues; recognize and incorporate local experiences, women's knowledge and health practices; provide new information and use an interactive pedagogy. The teaching learning material that is being developed includes development of thematic primers as well as ways to practically apply such skills. Thematic primers include selection of key words and concepts related to the particular issue. Such material would have a strong component of perspective building, activities and information. The development of such material requires the collaboration of experts working on issues, literacy and education experts, people with a strong experience in community organizing and with a gender perspective.

5. *Short-term courses*

Short-term courses take the experience of literacy camps further. Short week-long to two week-long courses are organised for which specific curriculum are organized (prepared?). Many of the pedagogic principles mentioned in the camp approach are followed in the courses as well. Information on different aspects like government schemes, general health problems, HIV/AIDS, PRIs and participation of women, legal literacy, violence on women, etc. was integrated into the curriculum frame work developed for the intervention. Institutional visits to organizations and departments like Banks, Railway Station, SC Corporation, Family counseling Centres, Mahila Pranganam etc. for interactive learning along with skill development programmes were part of the daily schedule that paved for sustaining the interest.

4.5 Adult Learning Classroom Processes

For neo-literate adult learners who are not keen about joining the formal stream, a basket of short term certificate and diplomas courses can be offered. These courses can broadly fall into the UNESCO classification of CE programmes, namely 1) Income Generation Programmes 2) Individual Interest Promotion Programmes 3) Future Oriented Programmes 4) Quality of Life Improvement Programmes. A number of short-term courses can be identified under each of these categories. More categories like socio-cultural learning programmes, citizenship learning programmes and so on can be added to this. The objective of these programmes should be to strengthen and develop the literacy skills that they have acquired during the basic literacy programme and also to link them with the world of learning. These certificate and diploma courses can also be classified as Level I, Level II and so on. Horizontal and vertical linkages among these programmes can be developed using credit accumulation systems. Learners who wish to migrate from such informal courses may be facilitated to do so after acquiring sufficient number of credits.

We consider it important to also take into account the need for special learning programmes for aged neo-literate adults, physically challenged / differently abled neo-literates etc. A number of interesting learning programmes suitable for neo-literate adults belonging to advanced age groups can be formulated around recreational and cultural themes. Similarly, possibility of developing Braille-based primers and teaching learning material for the benefit of visually impaired neo-literate learners should be explored.

A number of agencies, governmental and non-governmental can be assigned with the task of developing Lifelong Learning courses and preparing course material (in the form of readers, supplementary texts and so on) under the overall supervision of NLMA and NIOS. In the long run, it would be useful to establish a National Institute for Lifelong Learning in order to provide academic leadership for formulating and conducting these learning programmes.

We feel that the National Curriculum Framework for the Adult Education in the country should be based on the concept of Lifelong Education. This would assure that every neo-literate learner will have the opportunity to continue to learn even after he/she achieves minimum levels of literacy. This probably is the only way to ensure that the neo-literate is able to retain, strengthen and use the literacy capabilities that he/she attains.

CHAPTER-5: TRAINING

5.1 Training for Lifelong Adult Education

Unfortunately training has been one of the weakest links in the implementation of most of the Adult Education programmes in our country and elsewhere. It would be worthwhile to look at some of the important reasons for this situation.

1. Lack of a long term perspective about Adult education.

Most of the Adult education programmes were conceived as short term projects to achieve fixed 'targets' in terms of literacy percentages and thus missed the crucial continuity (lifelong adult and continuing education) aspect. This naturally got reflected in all the AE training programmes as well.

2. Short duration of training

Most training programmes were of very short duration (15-20 days in two or three laps) and focused on techniques of imparting literacy. Thus crucial issues like nature of adult learning, linking adult life experience with learning, etc. were mostly neglected or under-emphasized.

3. Lack of sufficient number of professional training institutions and trainers

Unlike in the field of mainstream school education, there are very few institutions which can undertake professional training programmes for adult education programmes. Hence people drawn from different walks of life were selected on the basis of their commitment to literacy. Though there was no doubt about their commitment, the type of training they received was quite insufficient. SRCs were entrusted with the task of training on various occasions. But their limitations, human and financial and structural did not allow them to function effectively in this area.

4. Massive numbers and limited financial resources

During the mass literacy programmes, a very large number of learners were enrolled and a substantial number of voluntary instructors were required. In such conditions, it was natural to depend on the cascade model of training. It was ineffective in many places and resulted in learner drop-outs, low quality teaching learning processes and so on.

5. Absence of local specific, culture-specific training material

Very little attention was paid to preparation of comprehensive facilitator / voluntary instructor support material. Hence most of the instructors had to resort to their own

intuitions and understandings. As a result, despite the initial orientation, most of the voluntary teachers were dealing with the adult learners as if they were children!

Even though attempts were made to rectify some of these deficiencies by involving national level training agencies like NIRD, their inexperience in the field of adult education did not allow such a process to yield any significant change in the situation.

Under these circumstances, an overhauling of the content, approach and process of training will be required to obtain desired results in the new paradigm of comprehensive continuing and lifelong education programme. Only committed and properly trained facilitators will be able to inspire and guide the adult learner through learning processes which she/he has decided to pursue at a rather later stage of her/ his life. The sustainability of the adult learner's interest in learning and her / his capacity to link the learning with life depends to a large extent on the approach and attitude of the adult educator/ facilitator.

5.2 Approach to Training for Continuing and Lifelong Education

Adult Education cannot be and should not be any more considered as a short term project for achieving a certain percentage of literacy. Instead, it should be conceived as a comprehensive and lifelong programme for providing a variety of learning opportunities to all adults (in the age group 15-50) in the country. Though basic literacy will have to be, certainly considered as an important first step/stage in the programme of adult education, it should not be restricted to that alone. These learning programmes will include life skill development programmes, livelihood skills development programmes, citizenship development programmes, social and cultural learning programmes and so on and will depend upon the learning needs of the adult learner communities.

Once this basic approach to Adult Education is understood, the present notion about the Adult Educator/Voluntary Instructor/ Facilitator also will have to be changed. The new adult educator will not be a literacy instructor but an expert facilitator hand-holding the adult learner to move ahead continuously along the lifelong path of education. In concrete terms she/he will be a person with in-depth understanding about the implications of the long term comprehensive lifelong education process, beginning with adult literacy. She/he must also have a clear understanding about the intricacies of adult learning processes as different from the child's learning processes. The Adult Educator must be able to constantly link the vast life experience of the adult learner with all the learning processes including the literacy learning processes.

This leads us to suggest that there is an urgent need to develop institutional mechanisms to impart professional training to a large number of adult educators in the country over the coming years. Considering the vast social, cultural, linguistic and other types of diversities in our country and taking into account the substantial number of adult learners who are expected to enroll themselves through the programme, it is clear

that these institutional mechanisms will have to function in a highly decentralized manner.

5.3 Structure of Training Mechanism for Continuing and Lifelong Education

The training structure will have to take into consideration different kinds of learning programmes within the larger framework of the comprehensive, lifelong adult education programme. The most important of these are the following:

Training programmes for the Basic Literacy component

Training programmes for various equivalency (level I, level II etc.) programmes

Training programmes for other specialized courses (life skills, livelihood skills, socio-cultural, citizen education etc.)

5.4 Training of Basic Literacy Facilitators

For quite some time the accepted practice in the Literacy campaigns has been to engage one Voluntary Teacher/Instructor per 10 learners during the Basic Literacy stage. No minimum qualification has been prescribed for the selection of VTs. These VTs are provided with some basic training for 3-4 days initially and then further training of same duration two or three times more. VTs are trained by Master Trainers and MTs in turn were trained by District Resource Persons. DRPs are to be given training by SRCs or similar agencies.

This training pyramid was conceived during the Total Literacy Campaigns and is being followed more or less in the same manner till date. Such a training pyramid became necessary because of the large number of learners involved in most of the districts that undertook TLCs. In the Saakshar Bharat programme launched by the NLMA it has been stated that the Preraks of Lok Siksha Kendras at the Gram Panchayat level should have minimum of matriculation qualification. Even though the Saakshar Bharat documents clearly underline the necessity of providing high quality training to VTs and Preraks it does not discuss the details of training methodology or content.

Under the new curricular framework we would like to make the following recommendations with regard to training for Basic literacy.

In order to provide effective training to Continuing and Lifelong Education Facilitators and Preraks, it is very essential to have a decentralized training structure.

It is recommended that every district establish a District Adult Education Resource Centre (DAERC). This centre should be adequately manned and equipped to undertake and coordinate all the training needs with regard to all the AE programmes in the district. This will include training of Master Trainers for Basic Literacy Programme,

Training of Resource Persons for Equivalency Programmes and also training of other specialized Continuing Education Programmes.

The DAERC should be in charge of the preparation of Primers (Basic Literacy), Text Books (for Equivalency Programmes and other courses) and other supporting TL material.

Each Block may establish a Block Level Adult Education Resource Centre which may function under the overall guidance of the DAERC. BAERC will be responsible for providing day to day field level support to all adult education functionaries in the Gram Panchayats. Master Trainers and Preraks working at the Block Adult Education Resource Centre should constantly interact and hand-hold the Voluntary Instructors in the Basic Literacy facilitation. They will also handle various equivalency programmes.

The existing SRCs may be upgraded and strengthened so as to make them capable of providing the best of academic and research support to the DAERCs and BAERCs. There should be greater clarity about their role in the new scheme of affairs. People with enough field experience, vision and academic capabilities should be attracted to these institutions. If necessary, they may be reorganized and restructured as new institutions (State Adult Education Research Institute?) in order to imbibe the new vision of a comprehensive lifelong AE programme.

It is also suggested that a National Institute of Lifelong Education be set up in order to take up in depth studies and long term planning with respect to emerging areas and concepts of Continuing and Lifelong Education. This Institute can initially function as part of NUPEA or NIOS and gradually become autonomous.

Each Basic Literacy volunteer/ facilitator must be given an intensive training for 15 days followed by another 15 days of follow-up training in two laps. They will also receive periodic training in the field through Master Trainers / Preraks with the support of the BAERCs. The volunteers must be provided with the opportunity to take up professional training in Adult Education (Details discussed below)

Master Trainers/Preraks must be given intensive training for at least 2 months. This may be divided into an initial training of one month and further training of 15 days each in two laps. Every Master Trainer/ Prerak must be persuaded to join long term professional training programmes in Adult Lifelong Education.

5.5 Training for Running Equivalency Courses and Skill Development Programmes

So far all the AE programmes were mainly focusing on training of volunteers for the basic literacy programme. Since the Saakshar Bharat Programme and the new framework for Adult Education is proposing to go beyond Basic Literacy, adequate training will have to be provided to facilitators/ trainers involved in post Basic literacy programmes like Equivalency Programmes and other specialized Skill Development programmes.

For this purpose each of the resource agencies proposed above (State Institute of Adult Lifelong Education, District Adult Education Resource Centers, Block Adult Education Resource Centers) may constitute separate divisions for Equivalency Courses and Skill Development programmes. All the Master Trainers and Preraks should receive additional training for running these programmes. The training provided for running Basic Literacy programme will not be sufficient to effectively conduct the Equivalency and Skill Development programmes.

Training of Adult Education facilitators should not be conceived as a one time affair. It should be a continuous process and they may be provided with enough opportunities to upgrade their competencies through appropriate academic programmes leading to acquisition of Diplomas / degrees

5.6 Long-term Academic Programmes in Adult Lifelong Education

Since Adult education is not anymore conceived as a short term project but a long term continuing programme, there is an urgent need to build up a cadre of professionally trained Adult Educators. Large number of volunteers, master trainers and Resource Persons are involved in different Literacy and AE programmes in the country. But unfortunately none of them get opportunities to upgrade their academic capabilities in the fields.

It is suggested that some major programmes for developing academic competencies in various aspects of Adult Education, a number of degree and diploma courses may be urgently initiated. There are some courses already in some of the universities. But unfortunately these have not so far been effectively connected to various ongoing AE programmes in the country.

We feel that the at least three different academic courses may be initiated immediately; (i) A short-term diploma course in Basic Literacy; (ii) A higher level Diploma Course in Continuing and Lifelong education and; (iii) A degree course in Lifelong Education. The levels and types of courses may be further expanded in due course.

These courses may be designed and run by the proposed National Institute of Lifelong Education. The courses may be conducted both in regular mode and also in distance education mode.

The long term objective should be to enroll all the literacy volunteers in the country to course one and all the Master Trainees and Preraks to course two. Of course there should be provision to move from one course to the other vertically or horizontally.

The above mentioned academic programmes may be made available in all important languages in the country. Once the core course is designed by the National Institute of Lifelong Education, the language versions of the course can be conducted through the State Institutes of Adult Lifelong Education. Appropriate NGOs and other agencies may also run the courses under the overall control of the National / state institutes.

5.7 Jan Shiksha Sansthan (JSSs) and the AE Framework

There are several JSSs in the country which have been entrusted with the task of imparting skill upgradation and skill development programmes as part of the AE. Their role and linkage with the comprehensive Lifelong Education needs to be reviewed and redefined in the new context in order to achieve better results.

The JSS may be entrusted with the task of developing a variety of skill development courses that are relevant in each specific context. There should be clearly defined linkages among JSS, DAERC, BAERC and similar agencies. At present linkages between various institutions and agencies do not seem to be effectively defined or coordinated.

JSSs should systematically understand the skill development / upgradation needs of each community and continuously design new courses, long term and short term. They may probably work in collaboration with agencies like NIOE etc. More discussions may be required in this regard.

5.8 Convergence of other Development Programmes and AE Programmes

There are a large number of government programmes under different schemes that affect the day to day life of the learners in the AE centres. A number of useful training programmes are organized as part of these schemes. There should be a mechanism to effectively converge these training/ learning programmes with the AE programme. The DAERCs and BAERCs may be entrusted with the task of coordination.

Any attempt to over-standardize the learning programmes is likely to be counterproductive and de-motivating. So it is necessary to have Resource support mechanisms that can take care of the specific learning needs of different categories of learners.

CHAPTER-6: ASSESSMENT, OUTCOMES AND EQUIVALENCY

6.1 Need for Re-Designing Evaluation Framework

In the Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs), assessment had focused on self-evaluation by learners, internal evaluation at the village level as well as external evaluation by external teams. Each learner had to ascertain his/her progress through the three tests contained in each of the three primers, making a total of nine self-evaluation tests. In internal evaluation, records of completion of the terminal tests were to be maintained, learner-wise, at the village level. For external evaluation, each district had to undergo concurrent (process) evaluation and final (summative) evaluation.

The TLC experience, however, showed that self-evaluation by learners, though desirable, did not achieve the intended goal nor was internal evaluation carried out successfully. On the other hand, the external evaluation studies tended to confine themselves to ascertaining number of adults made literate. Thus, a uniform literacy test was administered to find out whether adults had reached the prescribed norms laid down for determining reading, writing, and numeracy skills of adults. Such evaluation studies, carried out by expert teams, were reduced to mechanical exercises, and often generated literacy statistics of questionable value and reliability. Besides conceiving literacy merely as a technical skill, such assessment studies did not capture the manner in which literacy had brought about changes in the lives of adults at personal and community levels.

Since Saakshar Bharat focuses on the need for literacy to empower women and has conceptualized literacy broadly, it would be necessary for assessment studies to capture the various changes that take place in women as they acquire literacy skills. Also, since the sequential phases of literacy, post-literacy and continuing education, no longer exist and the focus of the programme has now changed to continuing and lifelong education to include literacy and basic education, vocational and skills development, equivalency and continuing education programmes, it would be necessary to redesign the evaluation framework.

6.2 Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluation fulfils several functions. It is undertaken for purposes of assessment in literacy programmes- assessment of learning and assessment of achievement. These are two different purposes and require different approaches. Assessment of learning, also known as 'formative' assessment, is designed to help in programme design and in on-going programme improvement. It may start at the beginning of the learning process to identify learning needs, continue during learning to identify areas of progress and problems and also take place at the end of the learning cycle to demonstrate to learners themselves what they have learnt. Assessment of achievement, sometimes called

summative or outcome' evaluation, is designed to confirm that learning has taken place and certain standards are met. Assessment of achievement can provide:

- a qualification for a learner- qualifying a literacy test may have an intrinsic value for learners as recognition of their achievement, or achieving a school equivalent qualification that may have extrinsic value if they are recognized by employers for employment or for entry to further education
- outcomes of the learning process- such an assessment would show what changes have taken place within individuals as well as within communities. This evaluation would ascertain whether the empowering and transformative potential of literacy has brought about changes, and if so, in what direction.

Evaluation also has an internal support function. It aims at analyzing the past in order to understand and influence the future. The evaluation framework has to be such that the resulting studies are able to inform the policy makers about each of the dimensions of the programme process separately for necessary modifications and changes in strategy. Furthermore, evaluation fulfils an accountability function. This includes cross checking of accounts and financial operations with reference to the quantum of work done and the time taken to do it.

6.3 Key Issues to be Covered by Evaluation

In keeping with the above parameters, evaluation would need to cover the following five key issues- Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. These five key issues raise the following types of questions:

1. Relevance:

Is the programme relevant? The stakeholders could be the service providers as well as the learners themselves. A different set of questions would need to be addressed by the service providers and the learners in terms of the relevance of the programme.

If service providers are stake holders, they would be working in diverse contexts. For instance, they may be concentrating on tribal or minority population, disturbed border areas, draught affected areas and so on. Their focus may vary. They may be engaged with SHGs, adolescent groups, mahila mandals, or groups needing livelihood skills and support. Literacy may not be their central concern. They may have their own ideas about why and how people should be made literate.

Does the programme make sense to them? How do we find out if it makes sense to them? These are key questions that need to be addressed while evaluating the programmes.

If stake holders are learners, they could have different needs and they may be at different levels - from those who need literacy to those who wish to get into formal

education at a higher level or those who need livelihood skills or perhaps those who are elected leaders and need to learn literacy and numeracy along with governance issues

2. Effectiveness: Is the programme achieving the intended results?

What is the programme intending to achieve through literacy and numeracy programmes, basic education and skills development programme and continuing education programme? The principle target is to impart functional literacy to all the non-literate adults in the age group of 15 years and beyond. Auxiliary target of the mission is to cover 1.5 million adults under basic education programme and an equal number under vocational (skills development) programme while simultaneously implementing the continuing and lifelong education programme in its diverse streams. Within these targets, the focus is primarily on women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities, other disadvantaged groups and adolescents in rural areas of low literacy states.

The programme itself entails identification of non literates through a survey, area-wise mapping of their learning needs and imparting them instructor based teaching of about 300 hours spread over three months or beyond, depending on motivation of the learner and local conditions. It is expected that successful completion of the 300 hours of instructional learning would enable the learner to read and comprehend unknown text, apply skills of writing in day-to-day activities like writing applications, letters etc. and compute simple problems involving multiplication and division. A certificate will be issued to every successful learner based on evaluation of learning outcomes. This will open up opportunities for further education through open learning systems. For fulfilling the third objective of equipping neo-literates with vocational skills to improve their living and earning conditions, Jan Shikshan Sansthan and other agencies in the public and private sector will be utilized. For fulfilling the fourth objective of establishing a learning society by providing opportunities to neo-literates and other targeted beneficiaries for lifelong learning, establishment of Continuing and Lifelong Education Centres is planned.

Effectiveness of the programme will have to be evaluated by assessment of learning outcomes. Interim evaluation will have to be carried out not only after completion of a financial year, or before launching an up-scaled version of the programme, so as to help in maintaining the quality of the various aspects of the programme. Findings of the evaluations can be used for mid-course corrections in the programme. Periodic assessment of learning outcomes will be required in the following areas:

- to find out the level of literacy attained by the adults who are in the process of becoming literates;
- assess learning outcomes of those participating in basic education and the level of equivalency that they have attained with formal education (number of neo-literates who have entered formal education and the levels at which they have entered) will be necessary to find out the effectiveness of the basic education programme;

- assessment of the level reached by those who are participating in skills development programmes will be required to find out the effectiveness of such programmes;

- assessment of the Continuing and *Lifelong Education Centres* to be set up at Gram Panchayat level to provide need-based short duration thematic courses, library and reading room facilities and other activities as well as learners associated with the Continuing and *Lifelong Education Centres* will be vital for understanding the usefulness of the continuing education programme .

- assessment of developmental outcomes of this programme would, no doubt, be important. However it would be more appropriate to assess these with reference to impact of the programme. An important question that needs to be answered with respect to assessment of outcomes is - *Are the results that are expected to be achieved, the same as those which the learners wish to achieve?*

3 Efficiency: *Were the deadlines set for various tasks under the programme met? Was the funding sufficient? Were the funds released on time and were the funds judiciously used? The costs include human, material and financial resources as well as the time frame required to attain the expected results.*

Efficiency may be tested at various levels. At the apex level, attainment of the stated milestones could be assessed and the information used to have a fresh look at the targets and the strategy employed and time-frame needed to attain the targets.

Making funds available for the programme, optimum use of the finances made available, and appropriateness of the fund-flow would indicate financial efficiency. Assessment of efficiency will also require appraisal of the management structure at the national level, intermediate level as well as at the grassroots level and their efficiency and effectiveness in performing the tasks assigned to them.

4. Impact: *What has been the impact of the programme on the broader context, e.g., stakeholder groups, organizations, communities, policies?*

Have the stakeholder groups, organizations, communities changed in any way? Are they able to participate in collective decision making? Do they make informed decisions? Do they feel they have changed? Is there any evidence to show that people's participation has increased in policy making?

The programme aims at reducing gender, social and regional disparity in literacy. Women, SC, ST, Muslim community and hard-to-reach groups are the priority groups. Low literacy areas, North Eastern India and left wing extremist-affected districts are the focus areas. An important aim of the mission is to minimize inter- and intra- regional / state disparities. Interstate disparities range between 33% and 88%. Intrastate disparities are equally alarming.

It is expected that improvement in literacy of women will be a force multiplier for all other development programmes. The programme is also expected to create critical

consciousness among poor rural women so that they can face and challenge the multiple deprivations and disabilities suffered by them on the basis of class, caste and gender considerations. Therefore impact assessment needs to be done in the following areas.

Assessment of large scale changes in the literacy levels of people in different states or regions as it will impact implementation of policies and programmes in other sectors;

Impact of improvement in literacy on access to other socio-economic and development programmes, especially with respect to women, scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and minorities, as these are the priority groups;

The actual impact of improvement in female literacy on school education, health, nutrition, skills development and women's empowerment in general.

5. Sustainability: *Is there any evidence to show that the results or activities of the programme will continue beyond the project lifetime?*

Have any new structures developed? It is a known fact that the adult literates relapse into illiteracy due to disuse of literacy skills acquired in adulthood. In order to establish a learning society, programme provides learning opportunities to neo-literates and other targeted beneficiaries for lifelong learning. Continuing and *Lifelong Education Centres* are to be established at the Panchayat level of the districts covered under the programme. It is envisaged that the Continuing and *Lifelong Education Centres* would act as a centre for registration of learners for all teaching learning activities in its jurisdiction. It would be the nerve centre for the literacy campaign. It would be the operational arm of the mission at the grass roots level and would be responsible for delivering the entire range of activities from identification of learners and volunteers to running of libraries and provision of short term courses. It would provide institutional, managerial and resource support to literacy and lifelong education at grass roots level.

It is to be seen if the *Centres* and such other structures created under are sustained beyond the timeframe of the programme. It is also to be seen if the educational levels attained by the learners are sustained and skills acquired are used for the purpose for which they were learnt.

6.4 Evaluation Process

Given the multi-dimensionality of the programme, the evaluation process would be quantitative and qualitative in nature and would include a variety of methods such as documentary review, survey methods, and participatory evaluation methods. It would no doubt be necessary to obtain statistical data on project performance to justify the significant investment of public funds on the Saakshar Bharat programme. Likewise, considering the need to collect national level statistics on literacy, it would be necessary to develop formal literacy tests for the learners. But such tests would have to be context-specific, keeping in mind the varied cultural and social contexts. The data

obtained in the process of monitoring the programmes at all levels would be useful data available. Such documentary and survey data would have to be combined with the findings of participatory evaluation.

It is necessary that the programme is decentralized to the level of the Gram Panchayats. This is in keeping with the growing conviction that evaluation should and can be used to empower the local citizens to analyze and solve their own problems. Thus participatory evaluation would mean involvement of local people, development agencies – both government and non government, and policy makers in deciding together how progress in literacy, basic education and skills development should be measured, and results acted upon. It can reveal valuable lessons and improve accountability. It is a challenging process for all concerned since it would encourage people to examine their own assumptions about what constitutes progress, and to face up to the contradictions and conflicts that can emerge.

Special efforts will have to be made to have process-oriented, qualitative assessment, which is participatory and people-centred (rather, women-centred) in nature. Rather than expert teams conducting assessment studies with the help of hired investigators, it would be communities and learners themselves that would be undertaking participatory evaluation.

Such evaluations will be useful not only when these are used for mid-course corrections but also for continuous improvement in the programme. It is essential that the Panchayat Raj institution, which is the implementing body at all levels, be involved in the evaluation. Mechanisms for involving the community and the learners themselves have to be evolved. Suitable capacity building would have to be undertaken to ensure that PRI institutions as well as the community at large, are enabled to undertake participatory evaluation. A resource support group may be constituted to assist the community to participate in a continuous assessment of Saakshar Bharat programme at the grass roots level.

One participatory evaluation method that has been found to be effective is the Most Significant Change (MSC) method. It is a unique method in that it uses stories of significant changes to assess the impact of the programme as well as monitor the processes and outcomes. The method, also known as monitoring without indicators, is unique because it enables different stakeholders to dialogue and select the changes they perceive as the most significant within a certain period of time. The use of this method at the grassroots level offers an opportunity for initiating dialogue among the stakeholders and helps to provide valuable insights about the programme from people's perspective. The MSC process can become a tool for empowering communities by providing opportunities for opening dialogue on diverse issues, fostering a vision that is shared by all, as well as building capacities of staff and volunteers.

Beside the MSC method, there are other participatory methods, now tried and tested, that need to be used. It would be useful to look at some innovative outcome studies

undertaken largely by NGOs in order to understand the scope and the potential of taking up such studies.

It has to be understood, however, that evaluation flows from other processes that are adopted right from the programme planning stage itself. Thus, participatory evaluation would not be possible if programme planning and implementation are not participatory in nature.

6.5 Equivalency

Another characteristic of the programme is the emphasis that it lays on equivalency. As adults, progress with their learning, it is possible that a section would like to enter the formal stream of education or even be interested to join in the regular stream of employment. It would therefore be necessary to design an educational programme that recognizes the knowledge and skills these adults possess, acknowledges and accredits them so that they can enter the formal stream of education at an appropriate level. Besides developing suitable equivalency tests, appropriate curricular materials would have to be developed that are in consonance with adult needs and interests. Such materials would also need to keep in mind the pedagogy of adult learning, particularly women's learning needs and learning styles. The Basic Education programme would make possible an interface between it and the formal system of education. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and the State Open Schools would play a pivotal role in developing innovative curricular materials and in setting up a mechanism whereby the equivalency programme becomes operational. A useful starting point would be to look at any innovative work that has been undertaken in this area so far.

6.6 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) provides individuals with an opportunity to validate skills and competencies which have not been formally recognized. The importance of recognizing skills, including prior learning and previous experience, irrespective of the countries where they were acquired and whether acquired formally or informally, is also highlighted by the ILO's Recommendation (No. 195) on Human Resources Development: Education, Training and Lifelong Learning.

Most of the adults, whether literate or illiterate, learn many skills informally from their own environment. Their mind is just not like a clean slate. They come with a host of life experiences and also mostly possess certain skills learnt informally to earn their livelihood. They also acquire necessary minimum skills required- may not be refined ones- to perform their economic activities effectively. In the Indian context, more so in developing countries, the skills are transferred from one generation to the next through informal working experiences. For example, a son of a carpenter inherits the basic skills on carpentry from his father, so also in the case of a mason, plumber etc. Those workers who acquired skills predominantly on the job or through other activities are often disadvantaged in gaining access to formal education and training, or in securing

employment which adequately reflects their skills and experiences. Workers with inadequate or no formal qualifications are most vulnerable in securing decent employment. By formally recognizing their skills, RPL is seen as a means of creating a level playing field in order for them to gain opportunities for further learning and to improve career prospects. Recognition of skills can contribute greatly to workers' self-esteem and motivation. For enterprises, a better recognition of workers' skills is a way to overcome skills shortages and match skills demand with supply. It can also provide an opportunity to improve the overall skill level and work performance of an industry. One of the focuses of the programme therefore is to acknowledge these skills acquired through the informal modes of learning. Hence the evaluation components of the curriculum development process needs to pay concerted attention to this aspect. A mechanism needs to be developed on how to assess the prior learning of the adult illiterates.

CHAPTER-7: PROPOSED SYSTEMIC FRAMEWORK

7.1 Introduction

The systemic framework must have permanent institutions at all levels from the village, cluster, Block and district with a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities at each level while all of them must ultimately offer full support to the adult learner and take her/him along through different stages of learning. There is a need to establish vertical linkages with line authorities that have the capacity to respond to the dynamic needs of the learners, as well as have both horizontal linkages to share experiences and constantly learn from one another. The contribution and participation of the learner to the provisioning of services and in the process adding inputs to the education policy itself must be inbuilt into the system. In other words, it must be seen that in an adult education programme, the adult learner must be regarded as supreme, who wants to learn, has the capacities to do so and that the entire system is geared to meet the challenge of making it possible. In turn the system and the adult education policies too must change. The programme must be conducted in a manner that the learners begin to recognize themselves as bearers of dignity.

It takes organisation and management skills to convert the institutions at the level of the village and beyond i.e. at cluster, block and district to respond to the learners' requirements. Thus while institutions at all these levels are necessary, there is a need to have processes of consultation with the learners and local youth who are part of the adult education endeavour, members of Gram Panchayat and the community who are reviewing the progress at all levels along with the department functionaries.

In other words, there is a need for dialogue and discussion in a systematic manner of all stakeholders to make the programme successful. It must be recognised that both civil society and the State are equal partners and that community mobilisation and involvement initiated by civil society and processes of institution building must go on simultaneously.

7.2 Diversity in Stages and Inputs of Adult Education Programme

Basic Postulates

Basic literacy, post literacy and continuing education need not be viewed as totally separate programmes, but should be seen as forming a coherent learning continuum. Such a stand-point has the following implications:

- There should be linkages between basic literacy, post literacy and continuing education. The three programmes must strive towards a unified programmatic, pedagogic and social perspective.

- The programme should establish a responsive, alternative structure for lifelong learning
- It should be capable of responding to the needs of all sections of society. Learning should be regarded not only a function of alphabet but should constitute some aspect of every methods of human capacity-building
- Learning should begin at, and be based on, the existing cultural and technical skills of the people and inculcate a sense of pride in them for their accomplishments

Some of the stages in the Continuing and Lifelong Education Programme are as follows:

- Basic Literacy- The world of reading, writing and numeracy
- Secondary Literacy- i.e., post-basic literacy, such as post-literacy and continuing education
- Continuing Education Programme /Lifelong education and learning - sustained engagement with a world of ideas, local, national, empowerment, rights etc.;
- Lateral Entry into formal school system especially for adolescents- National and State Open Schools
- Skill development

The sheer complexity and contextual specificity of the concept of Continuing and Lifelong Education make any attempt to define it in strait-jacket terms an extremely difficult exercise. If a definition is attempted, the results would not be uniform. Even within a single country, various programmers, academicians and literacy activists have their own understanding of continuing education. Also, each country understands the concept based on its own vision and indigenous requirements. There are two primary reasons for this multiplicity of views. The first can be called normative, in as much as the area of continuing education is inchoate. Thinking in this relatively new field is flexible and open to several interpretations. The second is formal, in the sense that the content and style of the programme is determined by the context of its implementation.

7.3 Institutional Framework: From Gram Panchayat to National Level

7.3.1 Gram Panchayat Level

Adult Education Centre/Continuing/Lifelong Education Centre (L/CEC) is the permanent institutional framework which will offer full support to adult learners and take them along different stages in the lifelong learning continuum.

There should be an Adult and Continuing Education Centre (ACEC) as part of the education department in every Gram Panchayat. Should the population of a Gram Panchayat be more than 5000 it would be eligible for additional ACEC.

The location of the centres is to be done in active consultation with the Gram Panchayat. The interest of women and disadvantaged sections of society are to be kept in mind while setting up ACECs and NACECs to ensure their unimpeded access.

Typically each ACEC should have a separate building as in the case of a school, with at least three rooms; a room for the library, a hall for indoor activities other than the library and a store. It must also have facilities for drinking water and toilets. The layout may be as per local traditions and style but the building must be well lit and airy. In order that the community owns the ACEC right from the beginning, it is essential that local people are associated with the design, construction and interior design of the centre.

The Continuing/Lifelong Education Centre should have capacity to offer all the range of services as indicated below. The bare minimum is the existence of an ACEC and depending upon the size of the villages and habitations in the Gram Panchayat and also the numbers of adult learners some of the services may be offered at a habitation/Panchayat or even at a cluster level.

- Basic literacy
- Continuing education centre
- Computer technology and internet, Multi Media Access Centre- TV, Radio, Wall newspaper, News papers
- Village Library
- Skill Development programme
- Learning Support Programme for school drop outs to re-appear for formal Board exams or the National Open School
- Residential Camps of flexible duration with one week to 3 months programmes / intervention, interspersed with Basic Literacy or CE programmes including life and vocational skills.

Personnel

Adult Educators (2) - Permanent basis

Adult Educators will have administrative as well as academic functions. Care has to be taken regarding the recruitment of adult educators. Prescribed formal qualifications are important, but more important are their capacity to blend with the community and have adequate knowledge about their living conditions, public policies and all entitlements. In

a way it should be a process of self-recruitment where the candidate emerges through a process of public awareness and campaign. S/he must have the capacity to transform the situation for a collective group of learners and their situation of exclusion. The entire structure of the adult education department must recognise this role of deepening of democracy and give whole hearted support for the programme at the ground level.

Resource Persons (4-6) - on a task based honorarium for assisting the ACEC in all its activities from I to VII of 4.1.1. They are to assist Adult Educators to provide basic literacy and other skills on specific task basis.

Processes

Adult Educators are to facilitate the following processes. They are to be trained for the same:

- Establishment of the Village Education Committee as a sub-committee of the Gram Panchayat to assess ward-wise requirements of the adult learners and their path of education.
- Hold monthly meetings of the adult learners to take their views and feedback on the programme at the village level as well as the level of a Gram Panchayat.
- Enable Gram Panchayats to review the functioning of the ACEC and participate in the VEC meetings; set up norms for provisioning of all the components of the ACEC whether it has to be made at the level of the village, Gram Panchayat level or cluster level; assessment of the population of learners under each category and for each service.
- Make sure that a Cluster level ACEC Resource Person attends all the VEC meetings, to help in making plans, provide material and technical support for the proper running of the ACEC and contact the Block level ACEC Centre to share the needs of the adult learners. In a way the Cluster Resource Person would act as a link between the Block and the habitation.
- Involve community and Gram Panchayat to conduct periodic social audit of the ACEC.

7.3.2 Cluster level

Cluster Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centre (CACERC)

The Cluster Adult Education Resource Centre could correspond with and be housed in the same place as the Cluster Resource Centre in SSA, so as to ensure its physicality and permanence.

The Cluster Adult Education Resource Centre would play a role in reviewing progress of all the components of the Adult Education Centres and identifying needs of learners.

The Centre would be the link between the ground level programme and the Block.

It would keep track of the diversity of learners, the layers of interventions and the stages thereof and constantly provide support and inform the Block about the new needs that emerge on the ground.

It would identify members of Gram Panchayats and enlist them as learners, and at the same time, create material in consultation with the members of Gram Panchayats

Personnel

Considering the complexity of the programme and its various stages, it is necessary to have at least the following personnel:

Social Mobiliser (1) with skills to engage with the community, local youth, Gram Panchayat, as well as the Department of Adult Education at the Block and District levels.

Cluster Education Co-ordinator (1) with skills to support and facilitate all the education programmes at the level of the village and, Gram Panchayat, inspire the functionaries to take on innovative interventions, maintain quantitative and qualitative information on status of ACEC, inform Block on training requirements, material support, and other needs that come up from the ground.

Cluster MIS (1) will log in both quantitative and qualitative data.

Processes

Cluster Resource Centre will amalgamate all the plans of the ACEC through review meetings with all the adult educators in the cluster; understand the challenges of the adult educators in contacting the learners, the new demands made on the centre and all its components; identify needs for residential camps; new material; workshops; training and material generation.

Members from SHG's, Gram Panchayats, community mobilisers, local NGO's, and a Block level education officer will also be present during the above exercises.

A bi-monthly work plan will be made after all such consultations and presented to the Block level Adult Education Centre

7.3.3 Block level

Block Adult and Continuing Education Office (BACEO)

The BACEO would have (i) administrative and (ii) academic and programme wings.

(BACEO) (Administration)

The (BACEO) is the lowest rung of the administrative set up of adult education. It would be the vital link between the learner and the District level education department Resource Centre on Adult Education.

Its main functions would be to:

- Keep the tempo of activities going and in informing the district regarding all the emerging needs across the clusters.
- Plan for the entire Block based on the information flow for the implementation of the adult education programmes, design all trainings, ask for resource persons to facilitate the programme.
- Manage the entire task of assessment of the programme - both ACECs, Cluster Resource Centre and also the progress of learners,
- Facilitate smooth functioning of all components of the adult education programmes.
- Identify and respect local demands and innovations and enable administrative support for grounding the initiatives.
- Monitor and supervise adequacy and quality of services offered.
- Ensure accountability, set up an MIS and performance audit of the regular as well as honorarium-based personnel engaged in various adult education programmes and activities.
- Ensure fund flow and compliance.

Block Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centre (BACERC)

The **BACERC** would be engaged in providing the academic and pedagogic support and guidance to the adult education personnel and activities in the Block, including training and capacity building of educators of the ACECs, equivalency programmes and life skill and vocational skill development programmes in the Block. It would have linkages with BACEO for administrative support and with District Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centre (DACERC) for academic and programmatic support.

Personnel

Administrative wing

Coordinator/Officer (1) for MIS, with skills in data management for monitoring and support giving functions; creating formats for logging quantitative information and reporting to the District;

District Adult and Continuing Education Office (DACEO) (Administration)

The functions for the administrative wing would include fund flow, implementation, including procurement and distribution of learning materials, EB, Convergence, Monitoring, MIS, etc. Specifically, the functions would be to:

- Consolidate all the plans that emerge from the clusters and blocks to frame a district plan to be sent to the State government for approval.
- Ensure that the fund flow is smooth for the ongoing programmes.
- Run at least one Nodal Block Adult Continuing Education Resource Centre
- Encourage and respond to proposals for residential camps; skill training; material production; social mobilisation and trainings; and any other activity from the AECECs, Cluster or Block Resource Centres, Gram Panchayats and NGO's in a time bound manner.
- Enable a link between adult education and formal systems of education for school drop outs, adolescent learners and ensure mainstreaming them.
- Sift through all the practices on the ground, review how they could be supported and enhanced.

District Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centre (DACERC)

The academic support wing would deal with techno pedagogy and academic support including Capacity Building, EB, Assessment, Research and Evaluation. The academic support system should be an institutional mode, much like the DIET, but specifically for the adult education system, a district level extension branch of the SRC. The district plan of adult education would be an ensemble of Block, Cluster and Village adult education plans, just as would be an ensemble of district adult education plans at the state level.

The functions of the DACERC would be as follows:

- Guide in the preparation and shaping the plans regarding all academic dimensions of the programme including learning materials, training and capacity building, learning assessment, research and documentation and hands-on in running Literacy and Adult Education Centres. The academic aspects of the EB, would include preparation of scripts and contents and training the artists, etc.,
- Provide the academic and pedagogic support and guidance to the adult education personnel and activities in the district level, including training of the cascade system viz., the VT-MT and the RP.
- Training for equivalency programmes and life skill and vocational skill development programmes in the district.

- Orientation and capacity building of other stakeholders, such as the PRIs and other line departments for convergence.
- Make a panel of Resource Persons and experts for the various components of the programme and constantly make them available at the cluster level training workshops.
- Constantly update information on new schemes, programmes and entitlements and inform the Block and cluster level functionaries and the Resource Persons to introduce these themes at the ACECs.
- Collaborate with cultural organisations, artists, creative text book writers and involve them in all components of the programme.
- Develop district-specific learning/supplementary learning materials, including for Life Skills and Vocational Skills and Equivalency Programmes; EB and Publicity; Research and Evaluation; Documentation, and running Model ACECs.

Personnel

District Adult Education Officer (1) - To be the overall coordinator for the programme and liaise with all stakeholders at the sub-district level as well as the State.

Programme Officers (2)

Convergence Officers (2): District level coordination with line departments, by taking the lead in convening meetings and liaising with line departments, for chalking out strategies, plans and schedules for convergence at the operational level. This could also involve organisation of orientation and sensitization programmes for convergence with line department officials and functionaries.

Training Officers (2): In conjunction with the Training RP of the Academic wing, evolve the training strategy for different categories of people engaged in adult education programmes, including basic literacy, running the ACEC, Equivalency and Skill development programmes. This would also need to include orientation and sensitization of other stakeholders like the PRIs, User Groups and thematic groups like NREGS, ASHA, SHGs, etc.

MIS (2): The entire gamut of adult education would need to come on public domain for social credibility and accountability, and hence, credible and reliable data would be critically important. An enormous amount of quantitative and qualitative variables would need to become part of the MIS that could form the basis for research and evaluation of the outcome and impact of adult education programme.

ICT (2): Tapping the enormous potential for the use of ICT in its different forms and formats, like Radio (especially Community Radio), TV (dedicated channels or dedicated programme slots in other channels for adult education), Computer, and Mobiles for

literacy and adult education programmes, trainings and in-service professional upgradation.

Processes

- Create a democratic, deliberative and participatory forum at all levels, insist on genuine participation and actively respond to new demands on creation of new institutions, structures and processes at local levels, material support, etc.
- Facilitate interface with NGO's, PRI's, and the different line departments at block and district level.
- Convene meetings with all training Coordinators at block level as well as some active cluster level training Coordinators and design a comprehensive training programme in consultation with them. Once the themes are fixed, involve Resource Persons and experts in the session plan, material and pedagogy for training.
- Convene meetings with other departments and programmes to plan for collaborative action, especially NREGA, PRI, NRHM, SHG, Sabla, NIOS, and so on.
- Share budgets and expenditures with the local bodies at all levels.

The formation of the Offices and Centres at all levels, from the Gram Panchayat to the District level must use the same principle that is embodied in the formation of the ZSSs, the School Management Committees under the Right to Education Act and the State Literacy Mission Authority, namely, that these are not merely offices manned by the paid staff, but more broad based Associations or Councils (Samitis or Parishads) that include official representatives from linked governmental structures and departments, like the PRI, Health, Rural Development, Agriculture and so on, as well as community leaders, involved NGOs and so on. Such broad basing, as has been demonstrated by the Zilla Saksharta Samities goes a long way in ensuring vibrant linkages between government personnel and with the community.

Panchayat Raj Institutions

- The Panchayat Raj Institutions at all levels shall have their respective committees such as the village education committees, block and district education committees. There has to be deliberation over the progress of the adult education programme in the meetings.
- Every Zilla Panchayat must have a standing committee on adult education.
- The PRI's are to be given training in reviewing the ACEC, Cluster and Block Adult Education Centres
- PRI's at each level must review the budgets and expenditures in a systematic fashion.

- PRI's at each level viz., Gram Panchayats, Block or Mandal Panchayats, Zilla Panchayats shall review the programme, enable its smooth functioning and approve new plans and proposals.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan - Vocational Skills

The brief of Jan Shiksha Sansthan is to provide skills as part of Adult Education programme. They have to be integrated into the adult education programme and the ACEC's. There are several innovative skill development programmes in the country that need to be mapped and incorporated into the JSN's. For example:

- There are some successful collective enterprises that have brought together entrepreneurs from very poor sections of the society and given them, organization and management skills as well as access to markets, credit, raw material and other entitlements such as health insurance. They have also been formed into cooperatives while their individual interests have been protected
- There are good initiatives in the country where the local youth are trained to become local leaders, defenders of human rights and social entrepreneurs offering para-professional services for social/community mobilization to bridge the gap between services provided by the government and the poor. The issues they have gained expertise are on right to education and abolition of child labour, infant and maternal care and so on. JSS will have to invest in a detailed mapping out of all such practices and create a training module for neo-learners as part of continuing education programme
- Enable visibility and replication of the practices that enhance the capacity of youth, and give them skills
- Foster exchange visits and new learnings among facilitators of a diverse range of skill providers-from livelihoods to leadership skills
- Insist on standards on work conditions, wages, health care and maternal entitlements, education rights of children even when a business enterprise outsources, in all its ancillary units and at all stages in the supply chain
- Establish a link with National Skill Development Programme of Ministry of Labour

Personnel

The personnel will be decided by the respective Board of Management and the category under which the JSS is sanctioned.

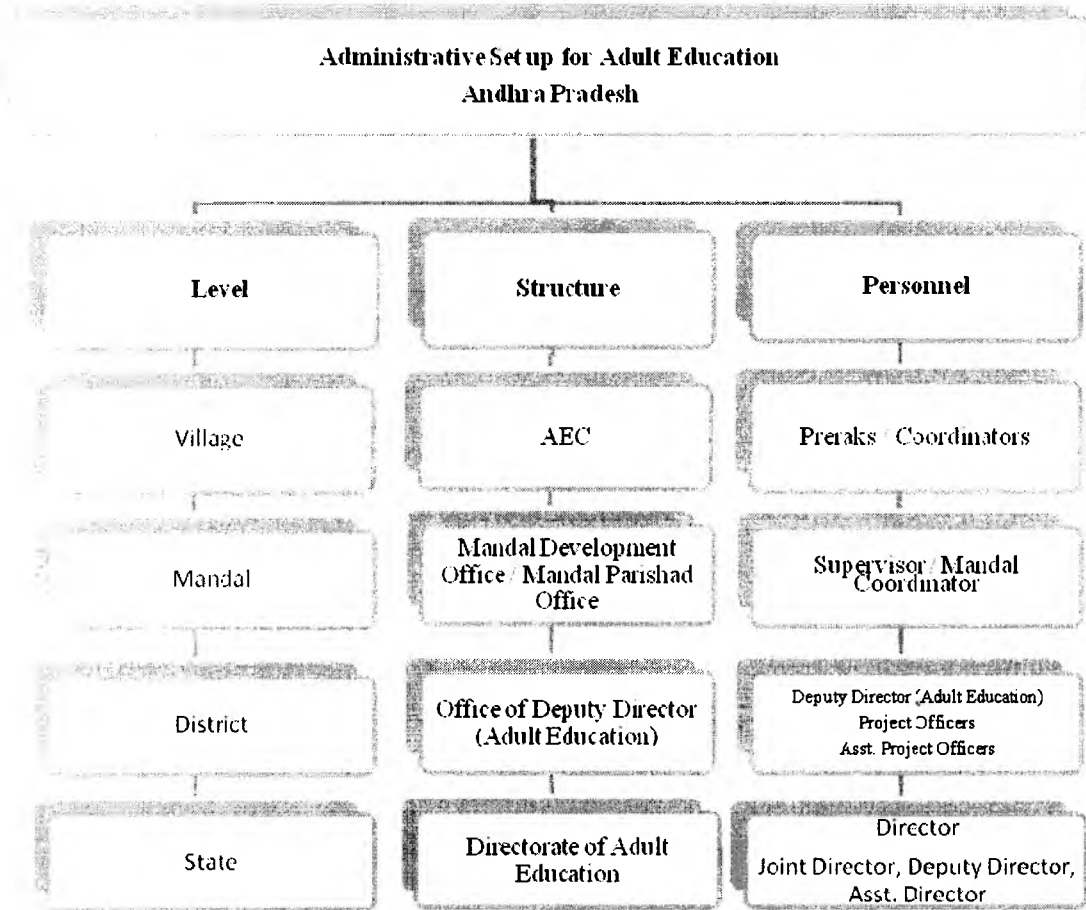
Krishi Vigyan Kendras

The Krishi Vigyan Kendras are run by Agriculture Universities, Research Institutes and NGO's in all the States. Considering that most agricultural activities are by women

farmers and women workers it is important that their skills are upgraded through these institutions under the adult education programme.

7.3.5 State Level

There must be a full fledged department of Adult Education at the State level with clear cut roles and functions. The example of the institutional framework in the State of Andhra Pradesh, as indicated below, could be one such example.



- Consolidate qualitative and quantitative data on all the programmes initiated by the District Adult Education Office through the department down to the habitat level.
- Establish flexible procedures for fund release and whetting of proposals that are received by the district and review their implementation periodically.
- Create systems for evaluation and equivalence to be rolled out by the districts against several interventions of the adult education programme.

- Ensure releases against district plans.
- Periodically review with all other concerned departments on issues of collaboration and convergence;
- Specially table in every State Assembly an Annual Report on the progress of adult education.

State Adult and Continuing Education Resource Centre (SACERC)

The SACERCs should be visualized and strengthened in such a manner that it can lend its institutional umbrella to reach out to other institutional resources and draw upon expertise from other agencies and institutions and civil society for its varied intellectual, organisational and material resource requirement for literacy and adult education programmes. The personnel for the SACERC must be drawn from those with considerable field experience.

The tasks of the SACERC's would be to:

- Provide inputs for building *processes* of interaction between the adult education institutions at all levels and the educators and learner communities;
- Establish processes of consultation for creation of teaching and learning materials which includes modules where the community /adult learner participates; training programmes where the cluster, Block and district resource persons are involved;
- Constantly be informed about the innovations regarding basic literacy, continuing education and skills and enable sharing of such practices as well as principles that guide the innovations with all the functionaries of the adult education systems;
- Foster development of linkages with resource persons and experts across disciplines, within the system-both vertical and horizontal with SACERCs, BACERCs and DACERCs;
- Provide information both to the national level as well as to the district and below on all aspects of the adult education programme;
- Liaise with research institutes and Universities for conducting research and documentation; and
- Develop modules for certification, assessment and evaluation of the adult education institutions as well as learner achievements.

7.3.6 National level

National Authority on Adult Education

In order to imbibe and radiate the paradigm shift in adult education, the nodal agency should also be redesigned and re-designated as National Authority on Adult Education from its current restricted connotation and ephemeral character, as National Literacy Mission Authority. The organizational and management set up for the system of adult learning and education in lifelong learning perspective should have its own administrative and academic support structures at national, state, district, Block and village levels, parallel to the formal school education system.

- The role at the National level is multifarious, beginning with inspiring the functionaries as well as the civil society at all levels by giving them constant encouragement.
- The National level has to make resources available for permanent structures and processes for adult education in Lifelong learning perspective.
- It has to enable sharing of experiences among state and district functionaries, recognising best practices and show casing them.
- Encourage universities, especially the education departments to have courses on adult education and prepare functionaries for the same. This has to be reinforced by building a cadre of professional educators at the village level and beyond.
- It has to have a compendium of all NGO's as well as government servants who are involved in the programme and facilitate their coming together at a regional and national level. They are to be involved in implementation and monitoring the programme, in a systematic fashion.

National Institute of Lifelong/Continuing Education

The need for a proper research and resource centre at the National level with linkages with Universities cannot be underestimated.

National Open School System

In its vision and philosophy, Open Distance Learning (ODL) has the potential of democratising educational and learning opportunities. Vast sections of rural and urban poor as well as the socio-economically marginalized sections that are disadvantaged in the matter of formal education have a second chance through the ODL, through NIOS and SOS.

The NIOS could provide the following services in addition to creating opportunities for school dropouts to catch up with their peers:

Equivalency programme in the context of neo-literate adults giving system of recognition, accreditation, assessment and certification of prior learning.

Providing an equivalency dimension vis-à-vis the formal education system in order to nurture further upgradation in the skill / knowledge area of prior learning.

Recognition, assessment and certification of proficiency levels of literacy, knowledge and skills of adult neo-literates and those with rudimentary levels of learning qualifications for meeting the needs of the Right to Education (RTE) of adults.

7.4 Convergence

7.4.1 National Rural Health Mission (NRHM): ASHA

NRHM provides for the selection of Community Health Worker i.e., Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) in every village with a population of 1000. Launched in 2005-2006, total of 8,09,637 ASHAs have been selected and put in place till 2009-10. As is evident, this is a huge force of grass roots level women workers whose intervention could be harnessed for the literacy and adult education programme.

ASHA volunteers could take part in the mobilization, awareness building programmes on adult education and literacy.

Similarly, the work force of literacy and adult education, including the VTs, Preraks, and the Coordinators at Block and District levels could be associated with ASHAs for health awareness creation and such other tasks.

The skills of ASHA workers could be upgraded through a certification programme.

The school dropouts among ASHA volunteers could be encouraged to join the NIOS.

There has to be an interface between Adult Education Department and the NRHM network, controlling or managing the ASHAs hierarchy, at village, Block and district levels.

7.4.2 MGNREGA

Under MGNREGA, millions of unskilled rural workers are being employed. During the current year 2010-11 39 million workers have engaged under MGNREGA. Of these, majority belongs to socio-economically disadvantaged sections like, the SCs, STs, Minorities and other disadvantaged sections and a large percentage also are women. They also constitute the large percentage of country's illiterate population. Coordination with MGNREGA is necessary for getting a village wise list of job holders; creation of material and information dissemination on entitlements. The programme of adult education can be coupled with MGNREGA as follows:

-Processes in MGNREGA like, applying for the job-card, seeking work, operating bank accounts and reading of the Job cards have created an unprecedented demand among

these workers for becoming literates. If organized properly along their needs, the processes of learning to read and write could be integrated with their daily life situations as workers in MNREGA.

-MGNREGA provides workers opportunity to work together in groups supervised by the work supervisor thus providing a basic organizational structure at the grassroots level for running literacy classes. Work supervisors having necessary competence and qualification and can be trained for imparting functional literacy to these workers.

-Many workers/work supervisors would be interested in upgrading their skills or learning new skills. Based on the mapping of their needs they can be linked with the continuing education and vocational education interventions under AE programme.

7.4.3 SABLA

The Ministry of Women and Child Development of Govt. of India has approved the implementation of "Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls – SABLA" as pilot basis initially in 200 districts. The Sabla scheme aims to address the multi-dimensional problems of adolescent girls between 11 to 18 years. The programme objectives of Sabla include: improving the adolescent girls' nutrition and health status; upgrading their life skills, home-based skills and vocational skills; promoting awareness about health, hygiene, nutrition, adolescent reproductive and sexual health, and family and child care; mainstreaming out of school adolescent girls into formal/non-formal education, so as to ensure their self-development and empowerment. The scheme will be implemented using the ICDS platform, through Aanganwadi Centres, functionaries, monitoring system, etc., and in alternative sites, like school, Panchayat Bhawans, community halls, where ICDS facility is not available. There could be convergence with education departments for mainstreaming out of school children in appropriate classes and functional literacy, equivalency, vocational skill development and continuing education programmes for non-literate girls in 15-18 age group through the institutional set ups for adult education, like the literacy centre, Adult Education Centre (L/CEC) or the ICDS. The convergence could also draw upon the support and services of the Aanganwadis.

The scope for convergence is enormous as there are 7075 ICDS projects and 14 lakh Aanganwadi Centres across the country, of which 6560 ICDS projects are operational.

Similar convergence must also be built into all forms of practice with the National Rural Livelihood Mission, Panchayati Raj Institutions, particularly since there are millions of elected women members in these institutions, Right to Information and the Right to Education that envisages School Management Committees to be mainly composed of parents of children, half of them women. Properly linked literacy programs can be a great way to prepare empowered and aware members (mostly women) of the PRI's and SMCs greatly benefiting governance and school education.

7.4.4 Role of NGO's /Universities/Research Institutes

For Adult Education to be effectively implemented, the space for genuine long-term partnerships between government and civil society organizations, based on appreciation of their respective strengths and mutual respect, must be evolved. Critical to ensuring this would be to legitimize and institutionalize the different roles of NGOs within the institutional and other mechanisms. In other words the engagement of civil society needs to be systemic and not ad hoc or project driven.

NGOs can play a crucial role in building a perspective on gender and social inclusion issues and ensuring that these become integral cross-cutting concerns informing different aspects of the programme – for example, training, curriculum and actual transactions of literacy, basic education and skill development initiatives.

The adult education system envisaged could also allow flexibility for implementation by NGOs, in cases where such NGOs have been found to have long association with literacy and adult education programmes or women's empowerment through literacy. NGOs and civil society organizations can also be associated in the matter of capacity building of GPs, with funds from adult education department or the Panchayats, wherever the PRIs is the implementing agency.

Civil society should be included in any institutional mechanism being planned at the state as well as the district levels. The implementation of MGNREG Act provides a good precedent, where state level commissioners have been appointed to monitor the implementation of that Act. In several instances, commissioners are active civil society members who have undertaken several initiatives to ensure that awareness is built around the Act and to articulate grievances.

While government structure undoubtedly has an important role in implementing the programme, mobilizing support of large number of people and institutions for successful implementation of the lifelong/continuing education programme will be crucial.

NGOS could be involved in:

- Keeping a constant watch on listening to the adult learners and their needs
- Providing support as experts in many areas of provisioning of adult education
- Helping in training and capacity building of community based organizations and PRIs, developing culturally appropriate teaching learning materials, running industry linked vocational education courses, training of literacy instructors etc.
- Building processes for community support to the programme and ensuring their participation in all the forums from the village level to the State

University departments/Research Institutes must be engaged in research-related activities (particularly action research and participatory research), undertaking documentation, developing suitable academic programmes for field level functionaries.

7.4.5 Women's Self-help and other Groups

The Women's Self-help Groups are already in existence and have an urge to be literate as well as informed about issues concerning their lives, the community, the village and the country as a whole. A government account gives the number of SHGs, as on 2008, coming under SGSRY of the Ministry of Rural Development, as 28,35,772, of which 23,29,528 were women SHGs (82%). With 15-20 members for each SHG, there would be at least 5 crore membership, with each SHG having a President and Treasurer. The SGSRY beneficiaries, who are mainly the BPL category, and who account for almost the entire SHG membership of 5 crores, constitute the major chunk for the target group for literacy and adult education programmes. Not only the SHG issue could itself become a theme for literacy, but it could also provide the basis for an entire range of capacity building including leadership, entrepreneurship, as well as organization building and development of social capital as well as financial capital.

Many other women's groups, not necessarily of the self help variety, exist all over the country, for example of Mahila Samkhya, and linkages with them must similarly remain a priority.

Academic & Administrative Setup for Adult Education

Level	Institutional Setup	Personnel
Village	AEC	Adult Education-2 RPs 4-6
Cluster	Cluster Resource Centre	Social Mobilizer Officer - 1, Cluster Education Coordinator - 1 Cluster MIS - 1
Block	Nodal Block Resource Centre	Block Academic RPs - 4, Social Mobilization Officer - 1 Training Coordinator - 1, Block Resource Group 20-25
	Block Adult Education Officer	Coordinator - Monitoring - 2, MIS Officer - 1, Convergence & Partnership - 1, Procurement & Distribution - 1, Model AEC - 1
District	District Extension Centre of SRC/DIET with DRU	Coordinators for Training - 1, T-L Material - 1, EB & Publicity - 1 Documentation - 1, Research & Evaluation - 1, Model AERC - 2
	JSS	Director RPs - 2, POs - 2, APOs - 2
	DAEO/DD-Adult Education	DAEO/DD - Adult Education Programme Officers - 2, Convergence - 2, Training - 2, Monitoring/MIS - 2, ICT - 2
State	SLMA/SDAE	Director SLMA - 1, Jt. Director - 2 Dy. Director - 4,
	SRC	Director Programme Coordinator - 2, Convergence - 2, Training - 2, TLMs - 2, Monitoring - 2, EB & Publicity - 2, Documentation - 2, Research & Evaluation - 2

CHAPTER – 8: CONCLUSION

Our country has, as per 2001 Census, 259.52 million adults in the age group 15 years and above who are non-literates and therefore living a life of marginalization and utter deprivation. Most of them belong to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities and are women. They are also the invisible labor force participating only in the informal sector under exploitative conditions and as migrant labour constantly in search of work.

However, most of them can now be reached through the self-help groups or as job card holders under the MNREGA and also members of Gram Panchayats. Certainly all of them could participate better in their networks if only they had the skills to read and write and were empowered with knowledge and information about their own predicament as well as about the world around them. This might even enrich the capacities of the programmes which are meant for them.

All of them recognize that it is only through education that they can join the mainstream but due to compulsions of every day battles of survival they have given up on aspiring for education. Therefore only a serious programme with a serious message that reaches out to them and enables them to adopt a new and different routine of accessing an education programme of their choice will fulfill their desire for learning.

An Expert Group was constituted to draft a National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education to meet precisely the above challenges. After intensive deliberations across the country, the group recommended that there should be sturdy institutions from the level of the Gram Panchayat to the National level established for provisioning of educational services for adults. It was felt that these institutions must be very much like the formal educational systems with predictability and multiplicity of paths. In fact considering that the learner is an adult it is felt that there is a need for a continuous education programme starting with basic literacy while simultaneously offering programmes of vocational skills; encompass information about the existing schemes and policies with emphasis on entitlements that adults can demand as a matter of right; enabling access to further knowledge, new scientific developments, if the adult learner shows interest in pursuing them; and foster full citizenship participation of the learner. In a way it would be complex provisioning of services that would stimulate the learner to pursue continuous and lifelong education.

The Expert Group also felt that facilitating lateral entry into the formal education system would give credibility to the on-going process of continuing education. Having said this, it was agreed that every stage of education was equally important and had an impact on

provisioning and quality of education. In a period of transition, equal access and equal share in educational resources was therefore a must. Indeed the importance of equivalence, assessment and certification was equally underscored.

In so doing, the Expert Group emphasized that values of equity and justice as enshrined in the Constitution of India will have to be adhered to. At all levels, it was felt that principles of gender equity must be internalized by both men and women learners. The cultural diversities and language are to be respected. Most importantly, the learners must be respected as adults having a set of skills and knowledge of their own, compelling the programme to also learn from them. In other words, the learner must be included in the process of building knowledge and must be consulted even if s/he is a participant. All this implies the presence of a trained cadre of functionaries, working with dedication and commitment and having training institutes at all levels for the same.

The Expert Group hopes that their recommendations would be taken forward by the Ministry of Human Resource Development to cover every adult learner who has missed the opportunity to enter the educational system. The commitment for adult education has to be whole hearted as the costs of delay can only escalate with passage of time. The attainment of education is a matter of right for all in the country and has to be done with passion and a belief that it is possible.

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Understanding Gender¹

As discussed earlier, the aim of literacy is not merely to develop functional skills but also to equip learners to work towards their own empowerment as well as social transformation. Central to the processes of self-empowerment and social transformation is an understanding of social and political inequalities, of which gender relations are the most pervasive. Additionally, since the focus of the Saakshar Bharat Mission will be on women, this section develops a conceptual understanding of gender and its relevance to literacy. It outlines a critical approach even as it provides a working understanding of constructions of gender.

It is not enough to merely take cognizance of existing gender relations and understand their workings in society, for gender relations keep changing through time as patriarchies keep reconstituting themselves in new ways. So it is equally important to foster a critical approach in learners, to enable them to both assess independently the workings of gender in every new situation, and to envision modes and strategies for transforming exploitative power relations that exist between most men and women. Basic questions have thus been posited here, in relation to every aspect of gender relations, to equip learners to reflect upon their own specific situations independently and critically, and to conceive possible modes of transformation.

• ***What is Gender – The Difference between Sex and Gender***

- Sex refers to natural, biological characteristics, to physical and physiological differences between male and female bodies.
- Gender is a social construct that allocates distinct qualities, roles and actions for men and women. It refers to norms and expectations that govern our lives, and signify distinct, often binary opposite “masculine” and “feminine” forms of behaviour.
- Such constructions of gender however do not pass the “reality test”. Actual experience reveals that men and women seldom remain tied or confined to such binary constructs of gender.
- Both men and women have to deal with internal conflict between what they “ought” to do and what they need or desire to do.
- Even those whose lives, needs and actions run contrary to gendered norms have to accept their predominance in society.

¹ This section draws substantially from V Geetha: Gender. Kolkata, Stree Publications, 2002.

- We need to ask why people are expected to be exclusively “masculine” or “feminine”?
- Gender is both an aspect of the world we live in, as well as a way of understanding the world. It is a part of the reality we live as well as the lens through which view that reality. Thus it is an important category for analyzing the ways in which unequal power relations between men and women are arranged in every society. A critical understanding of the ways in which gendering prevents women from realizing their full potential and achieving fulfillment as equals in society enables us to reflect upon the important question: ***Are there other non-hierarchical ways of arranging the world?***
- Gender is specifically characterized by the power of men over women in most societies, parallel to the way in which the concept of class is characterized by the power of the rich over the poor or of caste by the domination of “lower” caste people by those of the “upper” caste. Critical issues we need to understand are: ***What are the ways in which women have been rendered subordinate to men? What is the nature of male authority and the ways in which it works? How do men experience and explain it?***
- Gender is a critical node in the creation of power, but not the only one: it works in tandem with others such as caste and class power, and religious authority. This becomes clear if we ask: ***What role do class, caste and religious identity, position and authority play in the exercise of men’s power over women.***
- Women are often trapped in tension of contrary demands of gender and class, caste or community: every person has multiple identities of gender, class, caste, community etc. That intersects with each other, and can often make conflicting demands on her. When one exercises her rights as a woman, it may be seen as going against the usually male dominated norms of her class, caste, or community identity. So when an adult woman marries an adult man from another caste by choice, she may be expelled from her community, or even killed, for betraying her caste; or if woman files a case under the secular criminal procedure code rather than the personal law of her community to secure her rightful due, she may be seen as betraying her community. Often dalit or working class women sexually exploited by upper-caste or upper class men are forced to remain silent about such violations in order to safeguard the interests of their community. In times of violent rioting between communities, women, who may have exercised their rights and violated the gendered norms of their community, have needed to go back to the shelter of the community, even if it means giving up their hard won rights as women. The crux of the problem lies in the ***Question of why caste, class or community identities should be framed in ways that can deny women their rights as equal citizens of a democratic nation?***

- Gender relations are not based on sexual difference as is commonly assumed. In fact, aside from the differences in reproductive function, and breast feeding, it is difficult to identify actions that both men and women cannot perform, to greater or lesser degree. In fact, differences of ability are to be seen even within the same sex – some men can carry heavy loads or run fast, while others cannot. And commonplace ideas of masculine and feminine strengths and weaknesses also prove to be incorrect. There are also some women who can carry heavier loads or run faster than some men. Some girls are weak in mathematics, while others can do better than most men. And some of the best cooks and nurses in the world are men, while some of the best scientists and doctors are women. So, if gender is not based on sexual difference, then ***what is the basis for differences of gender? And how or why have unequal gender relations survived across centuries?***
- Gender is falsely posited as “innate”, “universal” and “eternal”:
 - Gendered roles and relationships are misleadingly said to be “innate”, and given, or “natural”, but are none of these - they have been made and remade by human beings across time.
 - Gender is untruly posited as “universal”: it actually varies *across cultures*, and within cultures too, across caste, class, religion. In fact it can vary even from family to family.
 - Gender is wrongly posited as “fixed” and “eternal” but gendered attributes, norms and expectations do change across time, and can be changed in fact, given that gender is a construction of human agency, human beings can also challenge and change gendered norms and expectations.
 - **Since it is possible for human beings to change oppressive gendered relationships what are the ways in which we can begin to do so?**
- Men and women are gendered through various social processes, and allocated “masculine” and “feminine” roles and attributes through
 - Socialization in family / school / society: assumptions about a particular sex are learnt behaviour. The male sex is generally socialized to dominance; the female to dependency.
 - Systems of punishment & reward: specially punishment, marginalization or even expulsion in case of deviation from expected characteristics/behaviour/roles.
 - Unequal power relations in society that perpetuate inequalities of gendered experience
 - ***How should these social processes of gendering be transformed?***
- Transformation of gender relations involves challenging the economic and social hierarchy of men over women. It also involves re-making human relationships, and transforming our notions of love and comradeship.

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