

15. EVALUATION OF LITERACY CAMPAIGN IN INDIA

Report of Expert Group on Evaluation of Literacy Campaign in India. New Delhi, National Literacy Mission, 1994, pp.60.

The Department of Education, Government of India constituted a six-member Expert Group to process the proposals and guide the conducting of a Status-cum-Impact Evaluation of Total Literacy Campaigns launched in different parts of the country since 1990-91.

Constitution

The membership of the group was as follows:

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Objectives

- (a) (i) To measure the outcome of literacy campaigns among learners/participants with respect to prescribed levels of literacy as per NLM norms,

(ii) To analyse the estimated number of persons made literate by gender, age groups and social groups (SC/ST and others),
- (b) To study: the processes and effectiveness of environment building/mass mobilization through mass literacy campaigns,
- (c) Involvement and partnership between government bodies and voluntary groups in literacy campaigns,
- (d) Duration of implementation of the campaign with special emphasis on the duration of teaching/ learning,
- (e) Resources available and mobilized for mass literacy campaigns including the cost effectiveness of the campaign,
- (f) To study and assess the fall out and impact of the literacy campaigns on related socio-economic

development programmes such as primary education, health, nutrition, family welfare, gender sensitivity, women and child development programmes, national integration etc.

The expert Group which was set up in April 1993, held 19 meetings, interacted with a number of social science institutions and evaluation agencies, held extensive discussions with field functionaries, programme implementors, policy makers, educationists, academicians and social activists, visited several States like Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh for on-the-spot study and have submitted their findings on the evaluation of the Literacy Mission.

The report of the Expert Group is fairly exhaustive. It deals with history and evaluation of the programmes, the strategy of NLM, the status of campaigns, assessment of the current status of the literacy campaigns, conceptual clarification of the objectives of the Mission, problems, issues and recommendations of literacy and post literacy campaigns and on monitoring and evaluation.

Historical Perspective, NLM Strategy and Status of Literacy/Post Literacy Campaigns

Although a number of lacunae relating to the centre based programmes had been pointed out by evaluation studies, the Mission in the first three years of its existence continued with the same approach until a breakthrough came with the successful experiment of literacy campaign in Ernakulam district. This was not out of any wisdom internal to NLM but out of an experiment made independently in the field. Again, although the Ernakulam approach was then adopted for selected districts and expanded throughout the country, between 1990-93. The Mission concentrated only on high literacy districts and States where it was easier to show results. It is only since 1993 that the Mission has concentrated its effort and taken up the challenge in the major Hindi speaking States which contribute to about 50% of the non-literate population in the country. During 1993-94 out of 107 projects sanctioned, 53 pertained to the four Hindi speaking States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The other new initiatives which have been taken since 1993 are: stress on elementary education and to improve its access and quality; stress on post literacy and continuing education making efforts at strengthening and widening the institutional resource support to the programme; and ensuring greater transparency to the programme at all levels (p.63).

Recommendations on Aims and Objectives of the Mission

The report has emphasized that a proper understanding of and inter-relationship between literacy, education and social development is necessary to shape perspectives, policies and recommendations. **The fact that the Mission has emerged not purely as a literacy mission has been one of its basic strengths.** The trajectory of the NLM has itself reflected a considerable extent an unforeseen and unplanned evolution. It points out that **there had probably been a certain lack of conceptual clarity at the initial stages** regarding literacy, education, social development and of the complex inter-relationships between them.

It has pointed out that it may be wiser to use, wherever possible, the term 'non-literate' rather than 'illiterate' and at the very least, **the pejorative sense in which the word 'illiterate' is used in the campaigns should be avoided.**

The report points out in this conception, a number of areas where the campaigns have had their unforeseen transformational effect on literates-the volunteer teachers, the organizers, the campaigners and the resource persons who between them constitute another critical mass. **The campaigns have fostered new patterns of relationship bridging the gap between the literates and non-literates**, increasing the former's respect for the latter and also their own self-esteem. It has also fostered a two-way learning process. A large section of the volunteer teachers being students, their return to their formal studies will certainly increase pressure for changes in the curriculum, pedagogy and the general teaching learning atmosphere within their institution. **These transformational effects coupled with the sharp increase in enrollment in primary schools and consequent pressure of expansion of educational facilities makes the NLM an attempted National Education Mission.** The Objectives of NLM should now, therefore, include the promotion, consolidation and development of a learning society (p.64).

Recommendations on Literacy Campaigns

General

The group has made recommendations on decentralization of procedures for pre-appraisal and sanction of projects, constitution of state level core groups to guide, monitor and assess projects and also to recommend to the Central Government for release of grants, on the need to further improve the primers specially with regard to their content reflecting on the status/image of women and to ensure that the content does not lower the self esteem of the learners and made some special recommendations on implementation of the campaigns in the major Hindi-speaking States.

According to the group, a strong political commitment to the cause of literacy, existence at the State and district level of a strong core group fully committed to the Literacy Campaign, village level mass involvement/popular enthusiasm, adequate pre-launch preparations and an atmosphere of a popular movement are the minimum pre-conditions of a Literacy Campaign.

1. A State level core group of 4-5 persons including some from outside the Government known for their full commitment to literacy campaigns must be constituted. This group should provide an adequate framework for preparation/monitoring at the State level before District level Literacy Campaigns are launched.
2. There should be orientation courses for collectors and senior administrators not only relating to the nitty gritty of the programme but also on the conceptual aspects of a literacy campaign.
3. The present system of sanctioning literacy campaigns at the Centre should be replaced by the following procedure: On the basis of a preliminary proposal for Literacy Campaign in a district for environment building and preparatory activities some funds should be released for such activities. At the end of this phase, the State level core group should assess the adequacy of preparation for launching the teaching learning phase and they should recommend further release of grants by the Centre.
4. **The group has welcomed the NLM strategy of sanctioning a PLC when 25% of the learners or 50,000 learners, whichever is less, have completed prime-II. The group has recommended that the concept of "total literacy" at 80% level of success be given up.** The target approach

of achieving "total literacy" should be given up and the objective should be to seek to achieve high success rates rather than "total literacy". A success rate of 55-60% among identified non-literates should be considered to be a good success rate.

5. The resources should be utilized to make the 9-45 age group literate rather than higher age groups. There should be a graded range of learning outcomes such as outstanding, excellent, very good, good, mediocre and poor.
6. There should be a second cycle of literacy campaigns in low literacy/difficult areas after another round of motivational campaigns so as to reinforce the achievement of the first cycle of the literacy campaigns and also achieve substantial results (p.64).

Primers for Teaching/Learning

1. The NLM in collaboration with SRCs should organise **reassessment of the content of primers to remove material**, which patronize learners and send messages that lower the self-esteem and those, which have a general bias against women. The ZSSs will have to play a sensitive monitoring role in this.
2. The SRCs have been seen to be somewhat rigid in allowing local variations in learning material. Some of the **efforts made by district authorities in developing materials have been specially commended by the Group**. The Group has recommended that there should be general willingness to encourage local efforts.
3. All **primers** should inform learners of their **basic constitutional rights and of the national goals**.
4. The language of learning should be the language of the environment to be decided by the learners themselves.
5. The State level core group along with the ZSSs have to be alerted to the need for innovatively incorporating local traditions in all materials for literacy.
6. The primers and other materials sometimes conform to *traditional and stereotypical images of women of high caste middle class background, which should be altered*.
7. *A review process should be initiated in which permanent place should be given to institutions and organisations committed to such concerns for which the NLM should extend support.*

Hindi Speaking States

1. Regarding the Hindi-belt the Group has recommended that attention should be given to *ensure political commitment* particularly to Universal Primary Education and eradication of illiteracy.
2. Stability of administration including *stability of tenure of collectors has to be ensured in these States*.
3. Adequacy of preparation in districts in these States should include the following:

- (a) *Each village should have an identified activist as a key-organiser who would have already distinguished himself/herself in the early part of the environment building phase.*
 - (b) *In States with low political commitment, there is need to ensure such full timers who would be available for the duration of the Literacy Campaigns and great care should be taken to select only those with proven dedication and commitment.*
4. *It should be ensured that the basic education projects in these States are coordinated with the Literacy Campaign projects.*
 5. *Particular attention should be paid to integrate literacy and development even during the course of Literacy Campaigns in these States. At least one government development scheme should be coordinated with the introduction of a full Literacy Campaign project.*
 6. *Programmes and resources of the government should be pooled right from the Literacy Campaign Stage. This will ensure linking of socio-economic development programmes with the literacy campaigns (p.65).*

Recommendations on Post Literacy Measures

The group has suggested a framework for post literacy and continuing education programmes. They have specifically mentioned that carrying out successful PL/CE remains the single most difficult problem confronting the NLM and the whole of the literacy programme. Following recommendations have been made:

1. *The group holds a strong view that PL/CE should not be attempted in the 'campaign mode'. New forms of institutionalization, new agencies of organisation, new attitudes towards the PL/CE phase fundamentally different from the literacy campaign phase are required.*
2. *At least one PL/CE centre per village or even per Tola or for a cluster of Tolas is essential. The current policy of one JSN per 5,000 learners, which tends to serve a cluster of villages, has not been recommended.*
3. *The literacy campaign and the PL/CE phases must be integrated and should be one continuum.*
4. *Organisational control of the PL/CE should be different from the structure in the literacy campaign phase. Mahila Mandals, women members of Panchayats and staff of primary and secondary schools should play a more prominent role than the traditional village hierarchy in controlling PL/CE activity. Since the literacy campaign and PL/CE are to be integrated, the organisation structure for running the PL/CE must emerge and operate alongside the organizational structure for running the literacy campaign.*
5. *For PL/CE there should be a part, which is a structured programme, and another part which is an unstructured programme. The Group has emphasized that in all such activities participation and leadership role of women should be attempted from the planning stage.*
6. *A sense of 'mission' has to be inculcated in the PL/CE phase without a campaign mode. Ways must*

be found to encourage real and continuing sense of qualitative achievement and empowerment of the people. Secondly, 'sense of mission' has to take the form of 'sense of progress'. This should imply (a) establishing the cultural relevance; and (b) the socio-economic relevance of stabilised literacy skills. The PL/CE phase should be able to link literacy and development in a positive and meaningful way for neo-literates and the poor in general. Literacy will have to be connected to everyday existence in very concrete and sustainable ways.

7. Even within the 9-14 age group, there should be two streams-one which will continue with school education and the other which will be continuing with the PL/CE programmes along with the older age group persons.
8. For the age group 13-16 years, particularly for the girls, it would be better to draw on the experience of the Central Social Welfare Board's Programme of condensed courses and groom them to appear for the school final (XII class examination). Such a strategy may also attract some of the younger persons from the 15-50 age group as well as school drop outs. There is a greater need for experimentation, innovation and combination of general education with vocation oriented skill training at this level especially for girls-to prevent child marriages. While flexibility and responsiveness to local/group needs have to be pursued at all levels, the Group has recommended local coordination between certain specific strategies of different departments and the pooling of resources and experiences across various agencies/Ministries of the Government of India and the States with initiatives taken by development action groups at the local level.
9. To begin with, the PL/CE centre could become an 'information window' in the village. Information about various schemes e.g. for education, for training, for services rendered by different cadres of functionaries is seldom available at the district level and never at the village level. Pooling and dissemination of such information is critical for both neo-literates and planners to widen their own choices, vision and courage for innovation, as well as for making literacy as a means of enhancing 'access' and 'capability'.
10. In this connection, to become really meaningful and useful to neo-literates and programme implementors existing programme literature would require drastic modifications. The Group has recommended that NLM should identify/assist a network for grass root development action/communication to (a) undertake such exercises in different States/linguistic regions and (b) groups to train larger groups to continue and expand such literature. Such trainees should also be drawn from the VTs who have demonstrated creativity in course of the programme.
11. The Group has strongly recommended that access to knowledge about *basic laws and legal procedures* should be an essential component of PL/CE. A great deal of experience and material already exists as a result of the activities of the Committee for Implementation of Legal Aid Schemes (CILAS) in 80's. The Committee has recommended simplified literature to be produced as in the case of literature for development schemes (p.66).

The Group has strongly recommended that the NLM should provide resources to all PL/CE centres to add a minimum of two rooms to any existing public building in every village where PL/CE is initiated-whether it is a primary school, Anganwadi, primary health care centre or any other community building. One room has been recommended for library and the other for continuing education.

13. As a means to link literacy to economic development, the Group has recommended that each village may take up "resource mapping" involving the village and the local community. This will generate a *highly informed demand for development* in the shape of specific projects of their own choice, which the villagers feel, would be effective and relevant to their needs. Resource mapping could even accompany literacy campaigns. Some popular science groups have tried out resource mapping in selected areas and the EC of NLMA should familiarize itself with the methods and organizational requirements of resource mapping as part of PL/CE.
14. The Group has recommended the PL/CE centres should not become centres of economic rivalry e.g. production/trade but they should be centres of economically related cultural/educational activity. PL/CE centres should make efforts to stabilise literacy skills, serve as a community centre for activities related to economic betterment and as an information window for disseminating all kinds of information related to coping with the day to day life situations.
15. In order to considerably *improve availability of existing PL literature*, the Group has recommended publication and dissemination of spontaneous output by neoliterates as a validating strategy for their participation and a critical measure to stabilise basic literacy. SRCs may certainly help in identifying PL literature but should not be encouraged to adopt a censorial role.
16. There should be mobile training teams with necessary expertise to provide training at PL/CE centres to have a greater outreach and be more cost effective than much current institutionalized and, therefore, localized training schemes.
17. For cultural/recreational purposes PL/CE centres should be provided with reading materials such as wall newspapers, periodically produced broad sheets etc. Special radio programmes should also be considered. The SRCs and the district administration should not stifle local initiatives in this regard.
18. The *library is critical* for the success/expansion of PL/CE activities. Support in the acquisition of material and a full time paid Prerak/librarian and caretaker for such PL/CE centres has been suggested. Necessary training for PL/CE librarians on a group basis could be arranged at the block/district levels.
19. On the whole there should be a structured and an unstructured part of PL/CE. There should be both mopping up operation and an element of continuing education. The structured part of PL/CE should be the function of **information window** for all government/non-governmental programmes, legal literacy etc. The unstructured part of the programme should be left to each local community to fill in. Resource mapping may be first introduced in few areas and extended to become a part of the structured part of every PL/CE programme. This should be in the shape of "information system" and a motivating factor for education.
20. One should consider compressed school education for school drops outs and vocational education as part of the unstructured part.
21. The Group has also recommended that any savings in literacy campaign should be allowed to be used for building infrastructure and activities for the PL/CE centres. Activities of literacy campaign should be strengthened further and clarity in objectives/strategies as well as innovations and methods are required of PL/CE (p.67).

Monitoring and Evaluation of Campaigns.

The Group has broadly endorsed the need for and utility of bringing out status reports on a regular basis at the national level as is being done now. These reports are, however, based on internal information being provided by the campaigns. Therefore, there is need to considerably tighten up the system and current practice of external evaluations about which strong reservations have been expressed. It has been emphasised that *proper internal evaluation is a must in every case which should be corroborated/validated by external evaluations.*

The Expert Group has *suggested a framework including objectives, approach and design for external evaluation of literacy campaigns* and has also reflected on impact studies for campaign projects.

A. Objectives

The objectives of external evaluation study have been summed up as:

- (a) Providing an objective and reliable assessment of literacy and social impact of the campaigns in the district which, in turn, implies that such evaluation should be conducted by persons trained in social science research methodology, backed up by a team of experts specialized in conduct of random sample surveys.
- (b) Provide feedback to local organizers about present status of the campaign, its strengths and weaknesses so that remedial measures can be taken; and
- (c) To provide academic inputs into the policy and planning of literacy campaigns at district, state and central levels.

B. Approach to Evaluation

The approach to evaluation should be a participatory approach involving participants in programme implementation and should be non-threatening in nature. In this context, it has been recommended that the concept of "total literacy" may be abandoned so that a target-centered approach does not lead to undesirable pressure leading to manipulation of figures. The Group has specifically mentioned that **increasing the literacy rate in a district from 15% to 50% would be deemed to be quite creditworthy as compared to a progression from 50% to 85%.** This is so because the size of the literate population providing volunteers in the former case is much less than in the latter.

The Group has recommended that the objective of external evaluation should be to validate the results of internal evaluation. A process of concurrent evaluation during implementations of the literacy phase may be introduced in which the selected external evaluation agency keeps in touch with the project and visits the district for secondary data collection, observation and interaction with organizers 2 or 3 times during the literacy phase and prior to the final external evaluation. The external evaluation may be commenced when about 60% of the enrolled learners are reported by the internal evaluators to have completed the third primer.

External evaluation studies would need to adopt a multi-dimensional research approach where data from testing and interviews are complemented by secondary data collection, observations, group discussions and other research methods depending on the capacity of the external evaluation agency.

External evaluation agencies should be preferably drawn from social science institutes or departments of some local/regional universities and associating persons from Department of Statistics in the neighbourhood so that the organisers of the campaign and external evaluators can be in touch with each other right from the beginning of the literacy campaign. In almost all the states every district has a qualified District Statistical Officer and every block has an Assistant District Statistical Officer who could be associated with the evaluation study. It may be useful to involve local primary school teachers as part of the large external evaluation teams coming from outside the concerned district. However, the leadership, the initiative and the final say should rest with the external evaluation agency.

The group has in this connection also recommended that there should be a nodal evaluating agency for each State and this nodal agency itself or in association with other agencies evaluate the different campaigns taken up in the State (p.68).

C. Design for External Evaluation

This has been suggested based on the basic principle to ensure that every member of the target population gets an equal chance of being included in the sample and also special groups of learners belonging to SCs, STs, minority community, other backward castes etc. get a fair representation. It is important to cover varying social demographic and regional characteristics of the district and different organizational features of the campaign.

Every district should be divided into strata and their number should not exceed 10. In districts with less than 10 blocks, each block should be covered. In districts with more than 10 blocks this can be achieved by combining two neighbouring blocks into one stratum for the purpose of sampling. In each block/block cluster four Panchayats may be selected through a process of random sampling and in each panchayat selected in the sample four villages may be selected again by random sampling. To do the sampling, the list of Panchayats/Villages along with the number of learners in each Panchayat/Village would have to be drawn up in serial order and Panchayats picked up on random basis. All learners in the selected villages may be tested by the external evaluator.

In districts with large number of learners belonging to special categories, the Panchayats/villages should be further sub-divided into two sub-strata-one with predominantly SC, ST population and the other consisting of other Panchayats/villages. Then the same sampling and testing procedure as given earlier should be followed ensuring that at least one Panchayat/village is selected in the sample from the special (first) sub-stratum. There can be more than one panchayat/village in the sample from the first sub-stratum depending on their numbers in the stratum.

Thus 16 villages are to be selected from each block/block cluster and all learners in those villages are to be tested. The aim should be to cover 5 to 10% of the target population. In case the sample size of learners exceed 10% , the number of sample villages may be reduced from 4 to 3, thus reducing the number of selected villages in each stratum from 16 to 12 based on performance of sample learners in the test one can estimate the success rates at the stratum level. For the entire district the success rate can be worked out by taking weighted average of the figures of success rates for different strata. The method of estimation of sampling errors has also been suggested.

There is a problem of absenteeism of learners in selected samples. All effort should be made by repeated visits by the team, if necessary, to test minimum of 80% of learners. After 80% of learners are tested, the over all success rate may be taken as the average of the success rate which is found in the available sample and the success rate assuming that the absentees have failed the test.

Workshops have been recommended to be held frequently to orient external evaluation agencies. It has also been recommended that to ensure uniformity of following the procedures and adopting a scientific evaluation procedure all evaluation reports should contain details relating to the sampling procedure adopted and the formula used for estimating the overall success rate.

Internal evaluation should be conducted for all learners on 100% basis and should conform, as closely as possible, to the standards set for external evaluation. This would also help to provide baseline information to chalk out all PL/CE strategies and activities. The internal evaluation data should be properly stored at appropriate levels.

Impact evaluation studies should be conducted after 1-2 years of the literacy campaign adopting a 'household survey' approach by selected social science institutes/departments of universities (p.69).