

SAAKSHAR BHARAT MISSION: ITS PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract: *Education is an adjustment of man with himself, others and nature to fulfil man's aims in his life and enable him to use the potential of his body, mind, personality, surroundings and circumstances, so that he may accomplish maximum for himself and for others. Education has to be related to life. It should reflect the needs of the community. It is concerned with the whole life in its manifestation. But literacy rate in India is not changing due to different reasons like- over population, lack of school facility, wastage and stagnation, illiterate parents etc. So government of India has given special attention to adult education after independence. Several programmes were formulated to combat illiteracy. In 2009 MHRD, Government of India introduces a new adult education programme which is known as Saakshar Bharat Mission. This programme tries to focus on deprived populations of India but it is first becoming the alternative route to education for those who lack access to conventional education system. The main objectives of this paper are to give an overview about the Saakshar Bharat Mission in India, to identify different barriers in effective implementation of this mission, to give some suggestions for the proper implementation of this programme. For the analysis of the paper a descriptive research method and secondary sources are used.*

KEYWORDS: *Saakshar Bharat Mission, objectives, implementations etc.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a human right and the key for human resource development. It is the basis of the economic and cultural development of a country. Education is essential for sustainable development, peace and stability within and with other countries. A country's progress is measured by the quality of educational improvement, adequate employment or self-employment opportunities, sustainable income, population stabilisation and overall well-being of each individual. Education is an important indicator of development as it is an investment for future and is an instrument of change.

In India, the vast mass of people living in rural areas form the majority of population. If they remain illiterate no upliftment of the country is possible. During 19th century the need for adult education was felt by the Indians. They realised that mass education is the prerequisite for national reconstruction.

II. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Since the time of independence of the country, universalization of primary education has been the focal point of discussion for all the educationist and thinkers of the country. Various educational commissions and policies have been emphasizing on making primary education free and compulsory to make it universal. According to the constitutional provisions primary education had to be free, compulsory and universal within the 1960. But even after 70 years it has not been practically realised. Nearly one fourth of the population of the country remain illiterate.

The government of India has made all possible efforts to achieve the goal of universalization of primary education and wiping out the problem of illiteracy from the country. One of the important schemes for wiping out the problem of illiteracy is National Literacy Mission which is known as NLM. NLM (5th May, 1988) was partly a by-product of National policy of education. It formulated the goal of imparting functional Literacy to 80 million adult illiterates in the age group of 15-35. But it was noticed that despite significant accomplishment of Mission, illiteracy continued to be an area of national concern. 2001 census revealed that there were still 259.52 million illiterate adults in the age group of 15+ in the country. After 2009 MHRD, Government of India introduced another programme Saakshar Bharat, aims to provide a second chance to those who have missed opportunities of formal education. This programme enables the neo-literates, school dropouts in the age

group of 15+ to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalency to formal education level. This programme generally focuses on deprived populations but it is first becoming the alternative route to education for those who lack access to conventional education system.

Low levels of literacy have been persistent problem in India, despite the implementation of strong and sustained government programme to tackle this issue. Literacy and adult education are not being pursued just as a matter of adding to the number of the literate, but to the pool of quality of human resources that the nation so badly needs and the spread of education among women leads to improvement in their status which in turn leads to further educational, social and economic development. The Saakshar Bharat Mission launched at all the Indian level in 2009 aims to promote and strengthen adult learning reaching out to those who missed the opportunity to access or complete formal education. The mission focus is on women and adolescents. The programme has a particular focus on people in rural areas where illiteracy can be highest. Along with the basic education, it covers vocational education and skill development. The programme strives to impart relevant skill development programs to bed literate and improve their earning and living conditions. Due to its approach Saakshar Bharat is described as a “people’s program” with the government acting as facilitator and resource provider, but working closely with local communities to tailor the programme to their needs.

Considering the importance of this programme the investigators tried to give an overview of Saakshar Bharat Mission along with the barriers for effective implementation of the program. They also tried to give some for overcome these obstacles.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of the present study has been stated as, “Saakshar Bharat Mission: Its Problem and Prospects”

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Objectives of the present study are -

- 1.3.1. To give an overview about the Saakshar Bharat Mission in India.
- 1.3.2. To identify different barriers in effective implementation of this mission.
- 1.3.3. To give some suggestion for the proper implementation of this programme.

V. DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Following are the delimitations of the present study:

1. The study is delimited to the theory part of the Saakshar Bharat Mission.

2. Due to lack of time we try to give an overview on problems and prospects of Saakshar Bharat Mission on the basis of secondary sources.
3. In this paper we try to a brief description about current status in Assam only.

VI. OPERATIONAL TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

Saakshar: Saakshar means literate. Those persons who acquired 3 R's i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic knowledge is known as Saakshar. In India those who were completed his primary education is known as Saakshar.

Bharat: In Sanskrit Bharat means "being maintained". This is one of the names of Agni, the Hindu god of fire, and is also the name of the brother of Rama in the Hindu epic the 'Ramayana'. It was also borne by a legendary king, the son of Dushyanta and Shakuntala. The official name of the country of India, Bharat, derives from him.

Mission: A mission is an important task that people are given to do. Here it is an important job taken by government for achieve specific target.

Problem: A perceived gap between the existing state and a desired state, or a deviation from a norm and standard.

Prospect: Prospect means a probability or chance for future success, especially as based on present work or aptitude.

VII. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The following literature have been reviewed

Nanda, (1978) in his study of adult education programme in the state of Panjab found that the programme suffered from many lacunae. In order to remove various lacunae that the adult education programme was suffering from it was suggested that there should be a separate department of adult education and the administration of adult education be strengthen.

Chanam (2007) conducted a study on the literacy rate of the valley area of Manipur and also on the Total Literacy Campaign Programme taken up by various agencies like Government University, Non-Government Organization etc. He compared the outcomes of the Total Literacy Campaign Programme implemented by various agencies. The study found that the enrolled learners in the Total Literacy Campaign Programme were larger in number by women than men. The Non-Government Organization failed

to take up any programme of Total Literacy Campaign due to lack of financial support and lack of volunteers.

Sambaiah (2008) conducted a study on the policy and programme of adult education in India and Andhra Pradesh. The study also examine the strength and weakness of the working and organisational structure of the programme. The study revealed that besides administrative and bureaucratic culture the unequal socio-economic system is the major reason for unimpressive performance in adult education.

Sarong, (2011) conducted a study on adult learners. The main findings of the study is that the literacy efforts must resort to a functionality free concept utilizing most acceptable popular methods of adult literacy learning, simple and straight, institutionalizing and running both programme and mass campaign situation that envisages a painful need for a long term strategy perhaps spreading for over two more decades in achieving total literacy in this country sharing the assessment position of the UNESCO and other research bodies.

Choudary, (2012) conduct a study on adult learning which is related to the on-going programme of adult education would be of greater help to the district administration and National Literacy Mission to chalk out effective strategies for promoting the literacy, post literacy and continuing education programme. The main findings of the study is that the achievement of women learners was better in relation to men groups and the attitudes was also significantly influenced with the performance of the neo-literates in literacy skills. It is necessary to launch motivational campaigns, provide and based learning materials and organic income generating programme.

Assessment of **Saakshar Bharat Programme in Karnataka and Andra Pradesh** was done by the *State Resource Centre, Kerala (2012)* and the important findings of the study are as follows: Training has been given to different levels of Saakshar Bharat Programme Functionaries in both the States. However, the training has been found insufficient with respect to quantity and quality. Erosion of quality has happened at subsequent levels from District to GramaPanchayat Levels. Distribution of Teaching/Learning materials has been completed almost in time primers and supporting learning materials such as note books, pencils etc. were distributed. Monitoring of Saakshar Bharat Programme at different levels has to be improved and more systematic. Participation of local self-government institutions have not been at expected level.

The study on effect of the **Saakshar Bharat Mission- 2012 in the district Chamba of Himachal Pradesh** found that the rationale behind the programme is to create a

literate society through a variety of teaching learning programme for non- literate and neo-literate adults in the age group of 15 years and above with the prime focus on women. The programme is mainly focused on women as the magnitude of illiteracy among women is very high.

Rita Attri and Prabha, (2012) conducted a study on the Impact of Saakshar Bharat Programme for Women. In the recent past due to various programmatic interventions in the area of adult literacy there is an increased emphasis on monitoring and evaluation of such programme in India and elsewhere. In the present research work an effort is made to understand how far had the ‘Saakshar Bharat Mission’ of Government of India lead towards women’s literacy in the State of Meghalaya, India and how effective and functional are the literacy programmes offered by the adult learning centres. The evaluative project report while pitch some new insights into the working of adult education programme will also be useful for professionals working in the field of adult literacy programmes.

Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore conducted the impact study of implementation of Saakshar Bharath Programme in Tamil Nadu during the year 2012-2013, the report appreciated the implementation of the programme especially achievement made in the targets vs coverage of learners in the programme. At the same time, the following problems/ drawbacks were identified: Training is weak and transmission loss from the District Level to Block Level. Difficult to sustain the motivation and commitment of volunteers and learners. Skill development programmes organized are not sufficient. Convergences with line/ Development Departments at the field level are not at the expected level. Inadequate teaching/ learning materials at the centre level and those who have become literates are much interested to continuing their learning beyond literacy. Hence, provisions should be made for conducting equivalency programme and continuing education through libraries.

Thingbaijam (2014) conducted a study on impact of Saakshar Bharat programme in Manipur. The main objective of the study was to examine the impact of this mission on the adult education system of Manipur. The study revealed that the performance of SBM in Manipur is progressing though it may not be a great success at present.

Momin, Marak and Das (2015) conducted a study on “Identifying Hindrances in effective Implementation of Saakshar Bharat Programme in Meghalaya”. The main objectives of the study were to identify the hindrance in the effective implementations of Saakshar Bharat Programme in only the four adopted blocks under the West Garo Hills Districts of Meghalaya. The study used qualitative descriptive method. A self-constructed

and validated reliable questionnaire was administered on officials from District Literacy Society and 52 women.

The study revealed that some of the barriers in the effective implementation of the programme include- lack of time, money, confidence or interest, lack of information about the opportunities, poor socio-economic condition and problem with child care and transportation are made taking into account the effective implementation of the programme.

VIII. METHODOLOGY

As regard to the present study a descriptive method is used where an attempt has been made to analysis about Saakshar Bharat Mission. For the analysis of objectives in this paper are chiefly use secondary sources.

IX. OVERVIEW OF THE SAAKSHAR BHARAT MISSION

Saakshar Bharat Mission is a government of India initiative launched by Prime-minister Dr.Monmohan Singh to create a literate society through a variety of teaching learning for non-literate of 15 years and above. It was lunched on the international literacy day 8th September 2009 but it came into implementation with effect from 1st October 2009. The programme further promotes and strengthens adult education, specially for women, by extending education option to those adults who had lost the opportunity of access to formal education and crossed the standard age for receiving such education.

SPECIAL FOCUS AREA OF THE SAAKSHAR BHARAT MISSION

Continuing Education: Continuing education programme is aimed at promotes a learning society by providing opportunities to neo-literates. The programme recognises increased demand for learning and the potential need of adult learners to enhance their skill.

Basic Education: This programme is designed to enable the neo-literates to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalency to formal educational system. Arrangements will be made to enable young adults to continue their learning till they are able to achieve equivalence level.

Vocational and skill development: It aims at equip non and neo-literates with vocational skills to improve their living and earning conditions. Suitable skill development training will be imparted to the people with no education.

Functional literacy: Instructional learning would enable the learner to acquire proficiency in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Besides the 3R's the programme focuses on empowerment, transportation and application of literacy skill.

STRATEGY OF SAAKSHAR BHARAT MISSION

Saakshar Bharat programme covered all adults in the age group of 15-35 and its primary focus will be on women. Basic literacy, post literacy, continuing education programme from the volunteer based mass campaign approach. Adult education centres are to be set up to coordinate and manage all programmes within their territorial jurisdiction.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR COVERAGE UNDER SAAKSHAR BHARAT MISSION

As per 2001 census, a district that had adult female literacy rate of 50% or below is eligible for coverage under the programme. There were 365 districts in the country that had adult female literacy rate of 50% or below. Home Ministry has declared 35 districts as left wing extremism affected district also had adult female literacy of 50% or below. Therefore 370 is the net number of districts that qualify for coverage under the programme. Since 2001, several eligible districts have been divided into two or three branches. This has raised the total number of eligible districts to 410 out of which 35 are left wing extremism affected district as on 2011. Programmes provide for coverage of only rural areas in the eligible districts.

TARGETS AREA OF THE SAAKSHAR BHARAT MISSION

The mission goes beyond "3" R's for it also seeks to create awareness of social disparities and a person's deprivation. The central and the state governments, Panchayat Raj institutions, NGO's and civil society need to work union to realise the dream to create a "literate India".

The Mission has four broader objectives, namely-

1. Imparting functional literacy numeracy to neo-literate.
2. Enable the neo-literates to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalency to formal educational system.
3. Imparting skill development programme with vocational skill to improve their living and earning conditions.
4. Promote a learning society by providing opportunities for continuing education.

The Saakshar Bharat programme envisions creating a literate society through a variety of teaching learning programme. It mainly focus on-

- Achieve 80% literacy rate.
- Reduce gender gap in literacy to 10%.
- Reduce regional, social and gender disparities.
- Extend coverage to 15+ age groups.

The Principal target of the programme is to impart functional literacy to 70 million non-literate adults in the age group of 15 years and beyond. This includes coverage of 14 million Scheduled castes, 8 million Scheduled tribes, 12 million minorities and 36 million others. The overall coverage of women is aimed at 60 million.

ASSESSMENT & CERTIFICATION OF SAAKSHAR BHARAT

MISSION

A systematic assessment procedure will, therefore, be put in place and administered periodically through the school education system for which SLMA will have to devise a suitable mechanism in consultation with NLMA. Local school teachers may be engaged as evaluators under a system devised by the state administration. On successful completion and assessment, the learner will have to be issued a certificate jointly signed by the Head teacher of the local primary school and the Head of the Panchyat unless specified otherwise.

Assessment of other components of basic education (equivalency programme) will be conducted as per the provisions of National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and State Open Schools (SOS) and certificates will also be provided to the successful candidates by NIOS/SOS. Assessment of skill development activities will be conducted as per guidelines to be issued separately by NLMA.

XI. BARRIERS OF THE IMPLIMENTATION OF THE SAAKSHAR BHARAT MISSION

Some of the major challenges faced in the implementation of this equivalency programme in Assam are-

i) Socio-Economic Barriers: Effective learning is fundamentally influenced by the availability of educational resources to meet the needs of any society. In many cases, inadequacies in provision are linked to other inequalities in the society such as urban/rural disparities, as well as inequalities arising from discrimination.

ii) Attitudes: Negative and harmful attitudes towards illiterates and poverty in our society remain a critical barrier to learning and development. Discriminatory attitudes

resulting from prejudice against people on the basis of qualification, socio-economic, race, class, culture, disability, religion, ability and other characteristics manifest themselves as barriers to learning when such attitudes are directed towards learners in the education system.

iii) **Inflexible Curriculum:** One of the most serious barriers to learning and development can be found within the curriculum itself and relates primarily to the inflexible nature of the curriculum which prevents it from meeting diverse needs among learners.

iv) **Language and Communication:** A further area of barriers arising from the curriculum, are those which result from the medium of teaching and learning. Communication is essential for learning and development in both formal and informal contexts.

v) **Inaccessible and Unsafe Built Environment:** In many contexts the vast majority of centres of learning are physically inaccessible to a large number of learners, educators and communities. Inaccessibility is particularly evident where centres are physically inaccessible to learners, educators and members of the community. Such inaccessibility often also renders centres unsafe for learners who are not capable to reach the place of learning.

vi) **Inappropriate and Inadequate Provision of Support Services :** Particular enabling mechanisms and processes are needed to support diversity and enable the education system, including educators and learners, to minimise, remove and prevent barriers which may exist or arise. Where no provision exists for such services, barriers cannot be overcome and needs cannot be met.

vii) **Lack of Recognition from civil society and Involvement:** The active involvement of the larger community in the teaching and learning process is central to effective learning and development. Such involvement includes recognition for civil society as the primary support such, that they are a central resource to the education system. More specifically, they are critical components for effective governance of centres of learning and for facilitating community ownership of these facilities. Where civil society are not given this recognition or where their participation is not facilitated and encouraged effective learning is threatened and hindered.

viii) **Lack of Human Resource Development Strategies:** The development of educators, service providers and other human resources is often fragmented and unsustainable. The absence of on- going in-service training of educators, in particular, often leads to insecurity, uncertainty, low self-esteem and lack of innovative practices in

the classroom. This may result in resistance and harmful attitudes towards those learners who experience learning breakdown or towards particular enabling mechanisms.

ix) Lack of Volunteer teachers in the villages in the absence of honorariums: Since the AEC (Adult Education Centre) is meant for the cluster of villages, many learners would not compromise the distances. The AEC centre comprising of 2-5 villages could not accommodate all the learners from all the villages, so a volunteer teacher to teach in their respective villages rose in. However, payment of any remuneration for these village volunteers became a problem. And volunteer's job became a burden without any incentives. The volunteer teachers in literacy programmes are the grassroots workers and they had long been neglected in the name of voluntarism. Incentives and recognitions do work but does not replace salary.

x) No dedicated accommodation for Adult Education Centres: There are any structured buildings in most of the respective AEC centres. Many of the AEC centres are not electrified and hence procurement of some important electrical equipment like computers and television had pose problems.

xi) Non- payment of Honorarium to coordinators, functionaries and Preraks: As the funds of Saakshar Bharat are not authorized in time, the payments of the employees could not be release in due time which really hampers the smooth functioning of the programme. Non-availability of funds for mobilization at State, District and Block levels and inadequate funds at Gram Panchayat/AEC level is where the district could not take a step further as many monthly review meetings with the Block Coordinators had to be undertaken without travelling allowance (TA) or Daily Allowance (DA) for these functionaries. The Preraks in the GP level had been engaged in survey work without any TA/DA and not getting enough encouragement even before the work could be started.

xii) Vocational Education Programme has no funds : Vocational Education Programme has less funds been out of just Rs.2250/- per month for management in the AEC centre is to be utilized for the training purposes as well. Many AEC Chairmen/Secretaries felt that this amount would meant only for contingencies, meetings, TA/DA, buying books for libraries and purchasing newspapers on daily basis. With all these expenses, there is hardly anything left for the vocational training to be organised.

xiii) Failed of motivation, reinforcement, retention, transference etc.: Some people have intellectual limitations or disabilities that made literacy challenging for them. These may affect reasoning, learning and problem solving. Learning elements amongst adult

learners like motivation, reinforcement, retention, transference failed to be manifested as they responded to this query.

xiv) Not suitable of class timing: Some adult learners cannot attend their classes because the time of the class is not suitable to the learners due to their responsibilities at home and/or work.

xv) Low incentives: Low incentives volunteers as they give their time up for long periods to improve adult literacy.

XII. SUGGESTIONS OR REMEDIAL MEASURES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF SAAKSHAR BHARAT PROGRAMME

1. Increasing need based programme for motivation of the learner.
2. Increase of volunteers.
3. Publicity through different print and electronic media
4. Increasing involvement of non-governmental organisations
5. Institutionalizing continuing education for post literacy.
6. Mass movement by involving each and every formal educational institutions as well as employees.
7. Making available standard learning material on a wide scale, in print and non-print media.
8. A combination of quality primary education, non-formal basic education for adolescents and youth, and a network of non-formal and adult education programmes are essential to combat illiteracy.
9. Provide unlimited duration for the campaigns of literacy courses.
10. Management of literacy, continuing education and non-formal education needs to be based on government-civil society partnership and decentralized enough to make it responsive to local conditions and accountable to the community.
11. Financing of the SBP should be given top priority.
12. Maintenance to provision of learning & teaching materials to administration and evaluation of assessment procedures to regular organization.
13. Provide library facility.
14. Provide daily allowance for the learner.
15. Further educational opportunities to neo-literate adults, who can achieve a qualification which gives them access to further studies.

16. Develop scientific criteria to assess the learning outcomes of adults at the various stages of their development.

17. Volunteers could be given more incentives as they give their time up for long periods to improve adult literacy.

XII. CURRENT STATUS OF THE SAAKSHAR BHARAT MISSION

From 2009-2012 the programme expanded to 410 districts. The majority of the country's states have successfully implemented Saakshar Bharat, as per the framework detailed in the Organisational structure section of this report. 170,000 facilities such as libraries and reading areas have been established as part of the Continuing Education phase of the programme. In a period of 3 years, the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) has assessed and certified 14,438,004 adults for their proficiencies in reading, writing and numeracy. Furthermore, literacy in India is improving. The 2011 census showed literacy in India has increased from 64.84% in 2001 to 74.04% in 2011 and the male-female literacy gap has reduced from 21.59% in 2001 to 16.68% in 2011. All areas of India have almost without exception reported a rise in literacy rates from 2001-11. The total number of illiterates has decreased from 304.15 million to 272.95 million. Prior to Saakshar Bharat was the National Literacy Mission, from which it developed. As a key implementer for literacy we can say the Saakshar Bharat has been successful.

The Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM) a centrally sponsored scheme has been implemented in rural areas of twelve districts of Assam namely Dhemaji, Sonitpur, Darrang, Barpeta, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Dhubri, Goalpara, Morigaon, Tinsukia, Karbi-Anglong and Hailakandi from the year 2010-11 to till date.

XII. CONCLUSION

Saakshar Bharat mission goes beyond '3R's because it seeks to create awareness of social disparities and a person's deprivation and general wellbeing. Its principle target is to impart functional literacy to adults in the age group of 15 years and beyond. For the proper development of adult education there is need for good efficient and systematic planning, cooperation and coordination of all the agencies should be ensured actually working in the field of adult education specially SBM. People are quite aware and very enthusiastic about the literacy programme now with the coming of Saakshar Bharat programme in the state. The government and all stakeholders need to continue this program in the right path to bring more changes and development through literacy.

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