

Management and Concept of Functional Literacy Program in India

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Abstract – In the present existence, in India, there are number of individuals who are unable to read and write, there is lack of awareness amongst them, they are residing in the conditions of poverty and backwardness, they do not have employment opportunities, they are unable to sustain their living conditions and, in some cases get involved in social problems, such as, criminal and violent acts. These are hindrances within the course of social life development. Therefore, to alleviate these problems and in making provision of assistance to them to enhance their living conditions, it is important to recognize the mass program of functional literacy. The main areas that have been taken into account in this research paper are, functional literacy, National Adult Education Program, National Literacy Mission, Saakshar Bharat Mission, Functional Literacy for Adult Women, Farmer's Functional Literacy Project, Rural Functional Literacy Program, analysis of the materials and the media software used in the functional literacy programs and recommendations.

Keywords: Functional Literacy, Program, Adult Education, Centres, Awareness, Participation, Materials

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1. INTRODUCTION:

The objective of Simple Functional Literacy is to teach illiterate adults, to read newspapers, hoardings, signage, children report cards, daily accounts or any legal documents they may have to sign. In India illiteracy is considered to be a major factor hindering the desired economic development. Over a period of years Govt and NGOs have taken various steps to reduce literacy level and for this different types of literacy programs have been launched but still a large number of society are untouched and especially women are the at top in this category. Hence this causes a lot of issues in the development of society and finally affect the development of the country. A huge amount of budget is spent on literacy projects every year but the question arises that whether these projects really reach to every illiterate to teach or make them literate or every illiterate is able to reach at the literacy centre? This is important to analyze. May be many of the illiterates are not able to avail this project education facility because of many reasons, that could be their time constraint of daily job, family responsibilities etc. They might not be able to get time to go to the literacy schools for education. If they do so, they would not be able to go on daily job where they get source of income for their family members. literacy .So it could be a major factor that illiterate people are reaching at the Literacy centres run by the

Govt or NGOs and our budget is misutilized. Hence with this view a new model is proposed that Literacy programs should be near the home of these illiterates in flexible timings as per their convenience with their ownership. This model is tested and run theoretically and practically both and found successful in India.

The literacy programs run by Govt and various NGOs have been seems to be expensive and not too much effective.

2. OBJECTIVES:

Objectives of functional literacy program;

- a. Making a person literate
- b. Educational awareness and development
- c. Health awareness
- d. Social awareness
- e. Employment and economic development
- f. Support in Govt. and Society projects

- g. Self-Support Group and Team spirit
- h. National growth

3. PRESENT FORM OF FUNCTIONAL LITERACY PROGRAM IN INDIA

- a. Govt:
- b. Angan Bari
- c. Sarv Siksha Sbhayan
- d. National Literacy Mission
- e. Adult Education centre

4. SCOPE OF RESEARCH:

It is important to understand the present form of non-formal education system in our country where Out of School children and illiterate adults especially women are unable to read and write. They do not find time to go to school because of various reasons and become disadvantaged of government or private education systems.

This is also fact that a large number of illiterate populations belong to women sector that are unprivileged from basic education. The reason behind this may be many but practically these are because of the following; a. They are daily-worker and go for work in the morning come back to home in the evening thereafter they miss the school and education opportunity. Women have other family responsibilities to take care of their children and family members. In the early morning they wake up and start their home exercise first; cleaning, dish washing, cooking for children and family members and then going somewhere else for daily job either for farming or any business unit nearby. In the evening after coming back to home again they have to go through same exercise. So there is a big challenge for them when can attend the school, even if there is interest of learning. Suppose if they find even two hrs leisure time an which could be utilized for learning purpose but the question arises that they cannot leave their job because they have need bread and if they do not do their home exercise, family will accept them. Women in our Indian society and culture have to take family responsibilities also hence the schooling in these exercises is ignored. This is major cause of increased number of women illiteracy in India. Not only this, women illiteracy increases various problems in society;

5. ILLITERACY INCREASES PROBLEMS IN SOCIETY

Illiteracy- the biggest problem and route cause of all other misunderstanding.

Health issues- An Illiterate woman might not be unaware of various types pollution, seasonal and water bon diseases which effects on her health, their children and family members. If she would have literate definitely with the available information and awareness programs she could have saved herself and family members from unwanted health problems. Lack of knowledge and unawareness creates a lot of health issues in society.

Social issues - Illiteracy enlarge social problems, social bye cuts and differences among people in the society. A small issue even takes a vast and serious form of social problem which finally defaces the value in society and disturbs the whole chain of social life, culture and economic growth.

It has been seen that Illiterate women at time faces social bye cut as well. They are given less weight age in the family comparatively of literates. It is because of less knowledge, illiteracy and un-awareness.

Family dispute- Because of illiteracy various disputes are developed in family. On a small matter they start quarrelling and fighting without any slid reason which affects their whole life system and economic growth. Family disputes create a lot of other issues which hold them back to grow and live standard life.

Community friction- Community development is one of the important issue in the society where literacy has been found very helpful. With the perfect knowledge and awareness, various community services are possible to run with good relationship among the people in a particular area, cluster or colony. Where in absence of literacy, it might be difficult to make them understand on the same line and any critical topic. In this situation community friction arises.

Economic growth: The whole system of human development depends on proper economic growth. In this journey education is one of the paramount factors which cannot be ignored. Economic development and education has very close relationship. The Literacy in this way is found a supportive factor. A literate person is able to understand any project more sincerely and wisely while an illiterate might have difficulties and hence it would affect the economic growth of that person and finally it would be an addition in whole downfall of economic growth of the country. Various development projects, government plans, NGO's efforts are available for society, illiterate person may not avail that benefit.

Political issues - Illiteracy in political world invites various undesired problems and differences in the society. It might be possible that because of their illiteracy, their understanding, speech etc may influence in different ways. Since they are not able to read and write hence depends on others reading and

writings hence they are depending on others talent whether it is right or wrong. Illiterate person can get less opportunity to participate in politics specially women. Many of unprivileged women in society are not aware of their rights and therefore are unable to come forward into politics.

They keep away from availing various opportunities like participation in Panchayat or Assembly elections. Even they are less contributory in political development and any social change. Because of their non-participation, other problems occur. A group of continuous dominating people take over the charge and position in politics and administer the whole society as per his/her own wish.

Regional issues - Literacy help in understanding many regional issues and resolve the problems on discussion and dialogues. While illiterate people are found less participative in open dialogue. Some where it happens because of their illiteracy. Illiterate people might get less opportunity of problem solving technique and understanding of regional issues.

In this way women literacy is again boom for the society.

Population issues - "It is said if a woman in family is educated means the whole family is educated."

An educated, literate woman or man understands the population issues more efficiently. While an illiterate might have less understanding and awareness of various family planning programmes and initiatives of government and NGOs in the field. Increased population has become the biggest challenge in our country and many more population control activities are in process and pipeline also. But still because illiteracy, population control in villages or rural areas have been not been satisfactorily. Children still in poor and illiterate society are known as its God gift and hence should not have control. As a result the country is facing population problem and now facing difficulties in proper planning and development.

Language issues – Literacy keeps balance among different languages speaking people by the way of behavior and understanding. Illiteracy may not have this effect.

Religion issues- Religion in our country is also one of the biggest challenges in politics and developmental issues which definitely affects more or less but again it is paramount to specify that in absence education more religious issues are developed. To avoid this situation Literacy would be a super gift to the society. Specially women literacy is more important so that a literate woman can take more interest to make literate their children and send them for formal schooling. All this could be easily possible if a woman in family is educated or literate.

The question arises that why some people even interested but not able to reach the School even after all possible support?

The answer is very simple; they do not have spare time to go to school while on job. If they go to school, they will not be able to go on job. If they do not do for job, they cannot survive; they can meet the expenses of family requirements. Hence what next no option for going school. Job is first priority for survival in life. Literacy starts only after that.

So this research focuses on an exclusive model and wisely workable which could be possible for these working man or women and out of school children, unprivileged persons of society who could spare sometime around one hour a day in their leisure time when they are comfortable after or before job timing near their home only where they can sit in front of a computer screen and can follow the audio visual lessons designed by Tata which is called Computer Based Functional Literacy system. It is designed keeping in view the illiterate's capability of understanding so that they can learn reading and writing in three months if regularly follow the lesson. They would feel after sitting there as sitting at home, no wastage of time in traveling, no cost of expenditure involved, no hesitation because sitting with family members and children, not afraid of any school teacher as traditionally was happening because Instructor is from their own circle, family or colony, no beaurocracy, no senior junior feelings. It is treated just like watching a T V serial or program with their family members at a decided leisure time at a designated place in locality or Instructor's place. It is very friendly school where they feel home environment, participate freely and takes more interest. Though this module provides opportunity to enable a person who can able to read and write in three months of regular lessons but if three months more time is given they would be able to get more benefits of further lessons enabling them for simple calculation, history, geography etc.

This research also study on the opportunities of their jobs and vocational training to become them independent and prosper. With this reason the model explores more areas where a learner from literacy centre can get opportunity of earnings.

Government, Corporate Sector, Business units and NGOs can be very helpful in this way helping them and providing opportunities for earnings.

So the situation provides opportunity to develop an exclusive Literacy Centre model where they should have flexible time for taking lessons without wasting time in travel, without attending the whole day school, without losing their jobs, without and social and family reason.

6. RESEARCH JOURNEY FOR AN EXCLUSIVE LITERACY PROGRAM MODEL

Very interesting, this research journey in fact starts from year 2003 when me and Mr Anil Virmani one of the trustee of Dhanpatmal Virmani Education Trust Delhi running school in North Delhi, attending a program organized by TCS at India Habitat Centre New Delhi. The program was on Functional Literacy. We saw the audio visual learning lesson designed by TCS and thought this may be useful for us and hence we took one C D of Computer Based Functional Literacy (CBFL) module. We contacted TCS for further support; definitely they came forward and promised to provide technology and few computers initially.

The idea was that we will ask our School Principal to start a centre at the school to teach illiterate adult women through this module. We discussed this program with the Trustees. Late Mr Vineet Virmani Vice President of the Trust observed this program has lot of potential and can be used in our school. Mrs Asha Kishore, very supportive and an active member of the Trust came forward to support this program. Now a very good team evolved.

Finally one Literacy Centre was started at Virmani School in 2003 with the help of then present Principal Mrs C K Sharma. The literacy Centre time was 3 to 5 pm as a non formal adult education centre. The difficulty was that no learners were able to come for lessons; also ladies were hesitating to come out from home leaving their family and children. Teacher of the school, other staff and people were also not convinced that this program is workable. Very sad situation. Our purpose was to encourage women learners first to come at the school from nearby area but after all efforts no success found. We failed to bring them at school. In this way we had already spent more than six months.

At the end of year 2003, second Literacy Centre was started in Dhanpatmal School with support of Principal Dr Dharamvir Singh and one Teacher Mr Rajeev Rodrick Lal of that school. As a trial then School timing was changed 1-3 pm so that learners will come to school from nearby area in after noon time but no favorable results so far seen; people were not coming at all.

The second thought developed, we promised to pay them rickshaw fare, bus fare etc. But no favorable results.

Me and Mr Anil Virmani had not left hope for success of this program and still we were struggling for a solution.

Third thought, we promised to serve tea/coffee, rickshaw and bus fare so they would come. After all efforts two three women came one or two days but not regular. Again issues remain same.

Fourth thought, we promised to provide them free lunch along with other facilities as above. With this reason few of them were forced to be agreeing to come but after taking lunch immediately they leaved. Hence the main purpose was not fulfilled. They were saying that they have to go to home to look after their children or on job immediately so cannot stay at school for literacy lessons.

Centre timings were changed as a trial basis that some good results will come, morning session and evening session, but the issues were same, no one attending the literacy centre. Some of them were making plea that they cannot go far from her colony and home area. Some of them had issues of social bye cut that how a lady alone can go to school; some of them said family restrictions, parents' husband not ready to allow them to go anywhere alone. Some of them had to go on job so no time for Literacy centre was possible. It was fact that without job how they would survive. Some of them were very shy and hesitating to sit at the centre in a group. Some of them had no interest in learning without any known reason.

So keeping in various aspects in mind it was observed that there are some genuine problems which must be examined and an exclusive model needs to be evolved.

7. CASE STUDY:

Hence a case study was proposed with a sample of 360 possible targeted learners in that area to find out the results. Survey was done without quoting their (women) names as they had some reservations that not to disclose names, hence open survey was conducted. I prepared Questionnaire to find out desired results and initiated immediately.

One day suddenly a fourth class illiterate worker working that time as Attendant/Aya in the Virmani school, age around 60 plus years came forward and shown interest that she will be the first student of this literacy school. She expressed that since no one is coming to this Centre from outside leaving their job or sparing time, so I, during my office time here, in lunch time or after office time will take lessons.

Wau ! Such a miracle ! Hope ! It was realized that some drastic change will definitely happen. She was the great inspired lady ANGURI DEVI. We are proud of her.

Thus with one woman student a Literacy Centre again started at Virmani School. Mrs C K Sharma Principal and one teacher Mrs Rekha both tried to continue teaching her for two-three months and she could learn writing her name and started signing on paper. First time in her life when she signed and got rid of doing thumb impression, how happy she was

no one can believe. Even how happy we were no one can imagine.

8. SURVEY

In the mean time I completed the survey. As per the survey report, women who were part of learning program had some valid reason for not coming at the Centre. These are the observations;

“The common problem found that they are unable to go to Centre leaving their job because maximum of them were daily wage worker. They do not find time during working hours to go to the Centre and in the morning and evening they take care of their children and family. Some of them had social security issues if they go too far from home alone.”

So major issue was time constraint and social security, hence came to conclusion that Centre should be run during flexible hours as per convenient of the learners keeping in view other observations of survey. Also the merits and demerits of other similar literacy programs run by Govt and NGOs were examined.

Based on survey results and other similar literacy programs run in various schools, I designed and suggested an exclusive model which is very simple to run adopt and manage.

9. SELF-RUN AND SELF OPERATE (SRASO) FUNCTIONAL LITERACY PROGRAM MODEL CONCEPT:

The Concept is very simple; a literate woman from the area where Literacy Program is proposed to be started; is selected. This Woman is preferred from the family of area Pradhan/Sarpanch or anyone who is local in that area willing to run the centre. This is because she will have command to assemble women from the locality at a convenience time in the evening when they could spare one hour as entertainment time which they generally spare for watching TV serials or sitting idle and gossiping after coming to home from job or in the day time even when few people who are not going on job ; can take benefit of the program. The Program is conducted within walking distance nearby their home/colony. The Trainer is encouraged that she would be provided a computer by the Organization which she can use for her own work, children and family members after and/ or before lesson timings. She would keep Computer at her home/place in her safe custody and during lesson time as decided every day she will call 15-20 illiterate women to sit in front of computer screen and take the lessons. The lesson though computer system would be simple so that Trainer needs to just give command of lesson by switching on or off, back, forward etc easily. The Illiterate women with can watch the program and listen the lesson sincerely at least one hour continuously. If it is repeated regularly three months, they would be able to read and write the language in which they are

taught. The lessons can be audio visual which can be learnt by seeing and listening. This model may takes only three month's time to make literate a woman, without any formal schooling, school teacher, school building, huge investments on staff, maintenance etc. The model helps in women empowerment and literacy. The program works in three steps; Preprogram, In Program and Post program

10. OPERATIONAL SYSTEM

The Centre can be on Self Run - Self Operate (SRSO) basis which encourage Trainer to earn while learn and provides social status and reputation.

In this model the Trainer herself gets financial benefit and social status as well hence

The Centre can be supported / adopted by Govt / NGOs.

The Centre can be supported / adopted by Business Units to run in their name under CSR projects.

The Centre can be supported / adopted /run by an Individual in his / her name for a good cause in society.

The cost of expenditure per centre is very less in comparison with other models. An amount as an incentive ranging around INR 2500-3000 per month payable to Trainer (Cost may vary depending on other aspects) and the computer maintenance from time to time if required.

Supervision is done by the Sponsor Organization directly or through any other channel as per situation.

On the basis of survey results and finding the SRSO model was designed to overcome the issues which were initially in the year 2003 obstructing the program to run successfully.

The SRSO model resolved the issues as below;

Learners can come easily to the centre because, it is nearby just next to door of their home so travelling issue resolved.

Learners can come easily to the centre because, it is nearby just next to door of their home so Social Security resolved.

Learner can come easily to the centre as per their convenience flexible timing when they are at home either in day time or evening for one hour, doing their job so the job issue resolved.

Learners can come easily to the centre because, it is nearby just next to door of their home and all are friendly to each other so hesitation issue resolved.

Since centre is managed and run by Trainer itself at her home or common place, so no rent for centre place is required to pay, no electricity, water and maintenance cost required to pay, no security guard required so maintenance issue resolved.

In lieu of all above services rendered by the Trainer, the Organization/Sponsor Body pays a lump sum amount equal to her wages which she could have earned in a month if she had gone for daily job. So Incentive motivated the Trainer sitting at home to earn and learn.

11. CONCLUSION

This model helps in woman literacy and empowerment.

The Learner can read and write in three months on regular attendance and practice.

After learning the reading and writing skills; the woman can now write her name, read the bus number, route name, city name, read the newspapers, can know that where and on which paper she is signing, hence no one can take her wrong sign and cannot cheat her.

These illiterate women after getting lessons are encouraged to train others.

They are also connected with local Govt, NOGs, Business units where they can get job opportunity either on daily basis or regular.

They can participate more actively in democratic activities and developmental works.

The Trainer gets a status and reputation in the society.

The learners also get status and reputations in the society.

This model is based on the following criteria:

Selection of location: This model starts from selection of a location where the centre has to be established. The location is most important in success of the model and centres both. While selecting the location the following points must be kept in mind;

Availability of non-literates' population in location where centre is to be established.

The location where ratios of non-literates are comparatively more than literates should be preferred. This is because there would be similar interest and team spirit among the learners without any

discrimination to participate in learning and attending the program.

Selection of Centre: Centre in this model is selected wisely.

In the proposed location, a centre, where the program would be run, is selected.

The Centre is selected with the help of centre Instructor.

at his/her own place/room or arranged and managed by him/her at a common place or community place

The Centre should have minimum required space where at least 15-20 or more persons can sit either on mat or ground or chairs.

Centre should have facility to operate the computer software such as electricity or battery back-up.

One table on which a computer is placed.

In front of computer screen at least 10-15 persons are managed to sit either on mat, carpet or chairs as per their convenience and availability.

Selection of Instructor:

a. Instructor is selected from their colony or area only that is literate or semi-literate and has some sense of knowledge to manage the centre.

Training to Instructor

The Instructor is trained by the Head Instructor to operate the Computer based literacy lessons.

The Instructor after getting training and running the centre after three months gets experience and become head instructor who can train others. So this chain expands gradually.

Arrangement of Desktop Computer with audio system- A desk top computer with audio system for this program to display the lessons is required. It is provided by any of the below source;

Sponsored by corporate

Donated by any one

Provided by Govt or NGOs

Arrangement of Lesson software: CBFL(computer based functional literacy) software is developed by Tata and they providing this software for this program who is willing to run literacy program.

Connecting with local supporter: Local supporters and educationists are connected to the program so that regular encouragements are possible.

Connecting with local business units: Business units in the area are connected with this program for support and they can adopt the Centre in their CSR activities.

Connecting with local govt. bodies, NGOs: Govt bodies and NGOs are connected with this program for the support of learners.

Naming the Centre – The Centre can be named by anyone who wants to support and fund the Centre to bear the cost of expenditures.

Running the Centre- Individual, Corporate Sponsorship, Govt.- anyone can run this Centre Govt, Corporate, Individuals.

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