

# **NON FORMAL EDUCATION: A COMMUNICATION PARADIGM TO BRIDGE MASSES THROUGH EXTENSION**

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**Abstract:** “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.” --*Rabindranath Tagore*

While conventional education is equated with a factory churning out thousands of graduates and post-graduates every year, people have remained mostly ‘educated’ illiterates. They see education as the source of making money and leading a good life. Important factors like discipline, moral values and culture are almost forgotten. This pitiable picture can be attributed to the educational system and its widespread commercialization.

Fortunately, some people in India have become conscious of this problem when they foresaw how detrimental it would be to the growth of the country. It has been rightly said that a country’s future lies in the hands of the citizens. It was for the improvement of these very citizens that the concept of ‘non-formal education’ was born.

**Keywords:** Illiterates, Commercialization, Citizens.

**Introduction:** The definition of non-formal education can be put as ‘**the systematic activity in education outside the framework of formal education system to provide learning solutions to adults and children.**’ Non-formal education can be advantageous for youth and adults for whom formal education is inappropriate or unavailable.

Non-formal education can be defined as an organized systematic activity carried on outside the framework of the school system to provide selected types of learning situations to adults as well as children. In today’s competitive world, where importance is given to prestigious jobs and the money following it, people have actually forgotten what education is all about. Today it is nothing but ‘learning for earning’. There is a tremendous need for non-formal education:

- a. **To Universalise Primary Education:** Even after fifty-three years of independence, we have not succeeded in our efforts to universalise primary education. Poverty is the main villain due to which people are uneducated. Children are needed in poor families to supplement the family income. Sending them to school is not a priority. In this situation, it becomes increasingly difficult for us since we believe that in a democratic set-up, it is essential for every citizen to vote.
- b. **To Eradicate Adult Illiteracy:** A large number of people in our country are illiterate. Formal education is out of their reach so non-formal education is the best method to spread literacy.
- c. **To Meet The Omissions of Formal Education:** Provision of universal education is not possible. To overcome this aspect, non-formal education becomes necessary.
- d. **To Aid Financially Backward Students:** Non-formal education enables those students, who had to discontinue formal education owing to financial and other circumstances, to get education.
- e. **To enable the students in geographically remote areas** to avail of education because formal education is not within their reach.
- f. **To rectify the educational imbalance** between those who live in villages and those who live in towns. This means that non-formal education in villages can meet the demands of the ever-increasing demand for education thus providing equal educational opportunities to all.

g. **To provide education to socially and economically neglected sectors** of society and help enhance the quality of life.

A New Vista In Non Formal Education: Adult, Continuing Education, Extension and Field Outreach

As one traces the recommendations of the various Commissions and the UGC guidelines issued from time to time for Adult, Continuing Education & Extension, it is evident that one of the goals of the UGC is to transform the university system into an active instrument for social change through the institutionalization of Extension as the Third Dimension and by ensuring that the university system is adult learner friendly and pro-life long learning.

“If the University system has to discharge adequately its responsibilities to the entire education system and to the society as a whole it must assume extension as the third important responsibility and give it the same status as teaching and research. This is a new and extremely significant area which should be developed on the basis of high priority”.

The acceptance of Extension as the Third Dimension equal in importance to teaching and research was in the context of a growing realisation that the universities and colleges having institutional resources-knowledge, manpower and physical-have an obligation to develop sensitivities to involve the development of the community with particular reference to the overall and diverse learning needs of all the segments of the people of the community.

Firstly its objective was to extend knowledge and other institutional resources to the community and vice-versa and secondly its objective was to gain insights from a contact between knowledge resources and socio-cultural realities with a view to reflecting these in the entire curricular system of higher education including teaching and research. It was to be a two-way process between the experts and the people, an intellectual intervention in the community's living problems which need to be overcome through an educational process. It was to be that education which helped students to face life and its challenges and which created an ambience for a learning society.

**Efforts By UGC:** The opportunity to introduce the Extension Dimension in Universities was taken when the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was announced by the Government of India in 1978. Then Centres/ Departments. for Adult and Continuing Education were set up in Universities. Thereafter, the Adult Education Programme as Point 16 of the 20-Point Programme of the Government of India was introduced (1983-1989) followed by the Area Based Approach Programme (1989-1992) and the Total Literacy Campaign (1992-1997) of the National Literacy Mission. In the Ninth Plan the UGC continued the Adult and Continuing Education Programme in a manner that facilitated the Centres \ Departments of Adult and Continuing Education and Extension to cast their own Plan of Action for the Extension Dimension specific to their own University.

In all, the programmes introduced by the UGC from time to time, the main focus has been on Adult Literacy, Post-literacy and field outreach programmes. Attention was given in the Ninth Plan to Adult and Continuing Education for university groups, groups that had passed the university system but had a need to return and to groups which did not have access to the university system.

In the Ninth Plan, the UGC has implemented the schemes under its Non-formal Education Bureau. As evidenced from the UGC's vision and strategy for the X Plan, the scheme will continue to be operationalised by UGC under the Non-formal Education Bureau. In order to ensure continuity, the UGC has already released grants to Departments for the years 2002-2003 and 2003-04.

**Current Scenario:** Now as the guidelines for the Tenth Plan period are being cast it is essential that the current situation, internationally and nationally, be considered. It is well known that the impact of globalisation has placed new demands on the education system. Transformation with rapid change is taking place everywhere. The student and youth have to be prepared by the university to adopt change and learn new skills in accordance with the new demands of the world of work. In other words, the

university system has to prepare the student to be a life long learner. Then only will the student be able to sustain his knowledge and skills at an international bench mark level ?

Further private universities are being setup and international universities will soon be entering the country. Also, Information & Communication Technology (ICT) is being more frequently used in the field of learning. On-line learning and e-learning will soon become a regular feature of university courses. It is, therefore, essential that the university system and specially the Departments of Adult and Continuing Education & Extension begin to interact and collaborate with the private sector. Secondly, e-learning and the on-line mode for the conduct of courses be utilized for continuing education to cater to the needs of various sections of society including professionals.

While universities have to enhance student employability skills through a formal system, on the other hand, the non-formal stream of education is being developed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development for reaching education to the unreached. There is a rapid growth of the National Institute of Open Schooling and State Open Schools and improvisation of quality teaching through the development of a momentum in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) under the Education for All programme. Universities also have to integrate formal and non-formal education by opening their doors to adult learners for life long learning programmes and by making the University an adult learner friendly institution. (Refer – Cape Town Statement on Characteristic Elements of a Life long Learning Higher Education Institution, January 2001).

The Departments, will, therefore, have to play a more dynamic role and move from the periphery to the centre stage of the university system and to ensure this the Advisory Committees overseeing the work of the Department need to play a more pro-active role. The Departments also have to play a major role in the development of the human resource expertise in the subject of Adult, Continuing Education, Extension & Field Outreach.

At present, there are 73 Departments/Centres working in the country. As visualized earlier in the Ninth Plan, all Universities are to establish a Department for institutionalizing extension and for meeting the current demands of adult and continuing education in their respective areas of operation.

**The Plan Period And Non- Formal Education:** The thrusts for the Tenth Plan Period are therefore projected taking the current scenario into account. These thrusts are:-

- a) the acceptance of the philosophy of continuing education as a part of total education programme of the institution;
- b) integration between formal and non-formal education and out of school learning processes;
- c) reaching out to the larger sections of adults through the university system and specially deprived groups for the purpose of equalization of educational opportunities;
- d) enrichment of the learning process of faculty and students through exposure to community needs, problems, issues and reaching out to socio-economic and cultural groups;
- e) attending to major issues relating to the National Literacy Mission, bonded labour, child-labour, street children, health conditions and issues on drugs and AIDS / HIV, nutrition, sanitation, environmental issues, gender issues with stress on gender equity, human rights education, consumer rights issues, communal harmony and cultural integration, self-employment generation and use of technology appropriate to the society;
- f) development of the discipline of Andragogy / Adult and Continuing Education & Extension;
- g) research for the development of theory and conduct of action research/operational research;
- h) introduction of courses offered on campus, off campus, on-line and through e-learning;
- i) development of courses linked specifically to business and industry which would include work ethics, work culture and preparation for the changing world of work;
- j) development of a range of credit courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels leading to an Associate degree in Continuing Education and;

**History of Non-Formal Education: The Initiatives:** Up to the end of World War I, there had been very little progress in the sphere of adult education in India which was confined to night schools in metropolitan cities. However, some of the enlightened Indian rulers of the princely States of Baroda, Travancore and Mysore had extended financial support to night schools. They also set up rural libraries mostly in the 19th century, and gave them patronage. The national leaders who steered the freedom movement were also concerned with the question of educating the masses as a part of the independence agenda. When the Congress Governments came to power in some provinces in 1937, adult literacy and education got included among the responsibilities of the Government. A series of provincial mass literacy campaigns were launched during 1937-39. But the Congress governments went out of power and the campaigns petered out. A CABE Committee appointed in 1939 on the problem of illiteracy suggested provision of facilities for adult education on the widest scale and introduction of free and compulsory primary education, as complementary activities. Besides, the Committee also suggested supplementation of official efforts by voluntary agencies interested in social amelioration. However, the Sargent Committee (1944) asserted that the State must accept the responsibility for these programmes and solve the problem within 25 years.

Eradication of illiteracy has been one of the major national concerns of the Government of India since independence. During the first Five Year Plan, the programme of Social Education, inclusive of literacy, was introduced as part of the Community Development Programme (1952). A new implementation machinery comprising male and female Social Education Organisers at grass-roots level and a Chief Social Education organiser at the project level was created. A comprehensive training support was provided through the establishment of Social Education Organizers' Training Centres (SEOTCs). Model community centres, rural libraries, Janata Colleges, youth clubs, mahila mandals and folk schools were encouraged. Folk schools on Danish High pattern called Vidyapeeths in Karnataka and Jagriti Vihars in Bihar provided a variety of skill-oriented adult education programmes to the rural youth. Government of India established a Council for Rural Higher Education for promoting the provision of graduate-level manpower through the scheme of Rural Institutes.

**Literacy At A Glance:** This picture has undergone a complete change after the release of data relating to Literacy Rates -1997 on the basis of 53rd round of National Sample Survey Organisation(NSSO)Survey.

World (in million)

	Total	Male	Female
Population *(2000)	6091.3	3068.9	3022.4
Literacy Rate**(15+)	876.0	313.0	563.0
Non Literates**(15+) (%)	79.4	85.3	73.6

Source:

\* Labour Statistics, ILO - 2000

\*\* Unesco 1999 Statistical Year Book

(Estimated literacy rates for the year 2000)

**Literacy Status In Some Asian Countries:  
South Asian Countries**

Country	Total Non-Literate Population 15+age (in million)	Literacy Rate 15+ (%) (2000)		
		Total	Male	Female
Maldives	--	96.3	96.3	96.4
Sri Lanka	--	1.17	91.6	94.5
India*	NA	58.5	72.3	44.4
Bhutan	0.64	47.3	61.1	33.6
Pakistan	51.67	43.3	57.6	27.8
Nepal	8.27	41.4	59.1	23.8
Bangladesh	49.62	40.08	51.7	29.5

**Other Asian Countries:**

Country	Total Non-literate Population 15+ age (in millions)	Literacy Rate 15+ (%) (2000)		
		Total	Male	Female
South Korea	0.84	97.8	99.2	96.4
Thailand	2.04	95.6	97.2	94.0
Philippines	2.25	95.4	95.5	95.2
Vietnam	3.61	93.3	95.7	91.0
Malaysia	1.83	87.5	91.5	83.6
Indonesia	19.24	87.0	91.9	82.1
China	144.46	85.0	92.3	77.4
Myanmar	4.98	84.7	89.0	80.6
Iran	10.00	76.9	83.7	70.0
Laos	1.15	61.8	73.6	50.5
Afghanistan	8.14	36.3	51.0	20.8

Source: UNESCO 1999 Statistical Year Book (Estimates literacy rates for the year 2000)

**Literacy Status In Nine Most Populous Countries:**

Country	Total Non-literate Population 15+ age	Literacy Rate 15+ (%)		
		Total	Male	Female
Mexico	5.96	91.0	93.1	89.1
Indonesia	19.24	87.0	91.9	82.1
Brazil	17.91	85.3	85.1	85.4
China	144.96	85.0	92.3	77.4
Nigeria	22.80	64.1	72.3	56.2
India*	NA	58.5	72.3	44.4
Egypt	19.83	55.3	66.6	43.7
Pakistan	51.67	43.3	57.6	27.8
Bangladesh	49.62	40.8	51.7	9.5

\* Figures for India are estimated literacy rates on the basis of National Family Health Survey 1998-99 published in November, 2000

Source: UNESCO 1999 Statistical year Book (Estimated literacy rates for the year 2000)

**Literary Campaign And Operation Restoration:**

**Integrated Approach:** The Government has decided that an integrated approach to literacy would be followed now. This means, the Total literacy Campaign and the Post Literacy Programme will now operate under one literacy Project. This approach would enable the enormous illiteracy problem to be tackled in a holistic manner. By treating the imparting of functional literacy as a continuum rather than as a one off benefit for the illiterate person, progress of literacy efforts would be made goal - directed. Literacy campaigns would continue to run in those areas where there are large pools of residue illiteracy. At the same time, for those who have crossed the basic learning phase, programmes of consolidation, remediation, vocational skills, integration with life skills and such other aspects would be considered the basic unit.

In effect, the task of making a person actually literate in a sustainable and meaningful way can be said to have been modestly discharged only after the Post Literacy Campaign actually constitute two operational

stages on the learning continuum and now under the same scheme will operate in smooth progression, drawing their financial sustenance from one single and same budgetary provision.

It is proposed that a district, while submitting their initial project, would also submit their strategy for Post Literacy on the basis of their anticipated target and projections of achievements. The per learner financial norms of Total Literacy Campaign and Post Literacy Campaign would be the same as approved by the Expenditure Finance Committee. The structures and strategies would also remain unaltered providing closer linkages.

The integrated proposal seeks to effectively bring the activities of literacy campaigns under one 'Literacy Project' to achieve continuity, efficiency and convergence and to minimise unnecessary time lag between the two.

The existing funding pattern of literacy campaigns is proposed to be continued. The funding ratio between Center and State Government for normal districts is 2:1, whereas for districts under Tribal Sub-Plan the ratio is 4:1. The per learner cost for a Total Literacy Campaign will now be in the range of Rs 90-130.

In many cases for reasons such as natural calamities, absence of political will, frequent transfer of collectors, etc., a number of campaigns have stagnated. The restoration of such project would be continued as was approved by the cabinet in 1994. For this purpose, an additionality of 40-50% on the original project cost, will be admissible.

The revised parameters of the scheme, in brief, are as follows:

ITEMS	EARLIER PARAMETERS	PRESENT PARAMETERS
Name	Special project for Eradication of illiteracy	Literacy Campaigns & Operation Restoration
Per learner cost	TLC-Rs.65/- upwards PLC-Rs.45/- upwards	TLC-Rs.90-180 PLC-Rs.90-130
Duration of PLC	Two years	One year
Rural Functional Literacy Project	separate scheme	Subsumed with Literacy Campaign & Operation Restoration
Sanction procedure for TLC/PLC projects	TLC/PLC projects sanctioned separately. PLC follow TLC. Activities of basic Literacy Continue upto PL stage.	TLC/PLC to be sanctioned simultaneously. Basic Literacy activities to continue during Continuing Education phase also.

**Continuing Education:** The structure of the continuing education programme, launched in 1995 as a fully funded centrally-sponsored scheme, will be retained and further strengthened and expanded in scope and content. A continuing education center will be set up for a population of 2,000-2,500 so that it caters to the need of at least 500-1000 neo-literates. A nodal continuing education will be set up for a cluster of 10-15 continuing education centers.



The function of imparting basic literacy and transaction of literacy primers would be continued in the continuing education phase. The activity of teaching-learning for basic literacy would be available not only dropouts and left-outs but also to new illiterate entrants in the age group 15-35.

The scheme will continue to be implemented by the Zilla Saksharata Samiti headed by the Collector. However, the Zilla Saksharta Samiti may also be headed by a democratically elected chairman of the Zilla Parishad in states where a full-fledged Panchayati Raj system has been established. The implementing agencies-voluntary agencies, mahila mandals, panchayati raj institutions, Nehru Yuvak Kendras, etc., for continuing education centres or nodal continuing education centres will be identified by the ZSS.

The scheme also envisages convergence with the programmes of Nehru Yuvak Kendras, National Service Scheme, National Service Volunteer scheme, etc., at the grassroots level. The infrastructure of these institutions will, as far as possible, be utilized to facilitate the functioning of the scheme.

Revised parameters of the Continuing Education Scheme.

ITEMS	EARLIER PARAMETERS	PRESENT PARAMETERS
Financial pattern CECs	Rs.10,000/- each for recurring and non-recurring	Rs.25,000/- each for recurring and non-recurring. In addition, Rs.12,000/- per annum per hired building for housing CECs where no public building is available
Nodal CECs	Rs.20,000/- each for recurring and non-recurring	Rs.45,000/- each for recurring and non-recurring. In addition, Rs 24,000/- per annum per hired building for housing NCECs where no public building is available.
Honorarium for prerak	One prerak each for CEC/ NCECs (Rs.300pm for CECs and Rs.700pm for NCECs)	One prerak and one assistant prerak each CCEC/NCECs (Rs.700 pm for prerak and Rs.500 p.m. for assistant prerak for CECs) and (Rs 1200 pm for prerak and Rs.700pm for assistant prerak for NCECs)
Concept of composite project	Not existing	Involment of Zilla Saksharta Samitis and NGOs in running centres
Provision of computer	Not existing	One computers in each district allowed
Recurring grant to SLMAs	Not existing	Recurring grant of Rs.12.50 lakh, Rs.10 lakh and Rs 7.50 lakh per annum for A, B & c grade SLMAS, respectively
Provision for resource support by	Not existing	Rs.1.10 crore per annum to NOS

National Open		
sharing of experiences with other countries	Not existing	Rs.25 lakh per year

**Decentralisation of Administrative and Financial Powers:**

**State Literacy Mission Authorities:** The present approach is towards decentralization of financial and administrative powers to the State Literacy Mission Authorities (SLMAs). The SLMAs - state level registered societies will have a 2 layer structure viz. Governing Council and Executive Council. The State Directorate of Adult Education will serve as Secretariat. The guidelines regarding the delegation of powers to the State Literacy Missions have already been issued, and some projects for continuing education have already been sanctioned by them. 22 States/UTs have set up SLMAs so far.

**Support To NGOs:** Under the Ninth Plan, the release of grants to NGOs other than the State Resource Centres will be decentralized through the State Literacy Missions up to 50 percent of the total grant released during the financial year and the remaining will be disbursed by the National Literacy Mission. Innovative projects in respect of all-India level NGOs will be considered by the grants-in-aid committee at the national level. They will be provided assistance for taking up continuing education programmes in addition to innovative programmes in all part of the country.

Existing State Resources Centers will be strengthened and their annual maintenance grants suitably enhanced. Independent district resource units will now be subsumed in the State Resource Centres.

**Revised Parameters of the NGO's and State Resource Centres**

ITEMS	EARLIER PARAMETERS	PRESENT PARAMETERS
Name	Scheme of Assistance to VAs	NGOs in the feild of education
Classification	Three categories(A,B & C)	Two categories(A&B)
Financial pattern Annual maintenance	Category A-Rs.30 lakh per annum Category B-Rs.25 lakh per annum Category C-Rs.10 lakh per annum	Category A-Rs.60 lakh per annum Category B-Rs.40 lakh per annum
One-time grant	Not existing	Category A-Rs.50 lakh Category B-Rs.40 lakh
Opening of State Resource Centers	As and when required	1999-2000 3 2000-2001 3 2001-2002 4
Sanctioning of VA Projects	Proposel considered by central grant-in-aid committee	Proposals of regional/local NGOs to be considered by respective SLMAs.



**Jan Shikshan Sansthans - District Repositories:** The earlier scheme of Shramik Vidyapeeth will continue with a modified approach and the new nomenclature of Jan Shikshan Sansthan. Under the Ninth Plan, the activities of the Jan Shikshan Sansthan have been enlarged and infrastructure strengthened to enable them to function as a district repository of vocational/ technical skills in both urban and rural areas. Jan Shikshan Sansthans, will be classified into three categories depending on the nature of the city/town and the quantum of work. The performance of the Jan Shikshan Sansthan will be appraised by reputed institutions and accordingly upgraded or downgraded on the basis of the evaluation reports. The revised parameters of the scheme are:

ITEMS
Name
Classification
Financial pattern Recurring
Non-recurring
Building grant
Opening of new JSSs

The challenge of creating a learning society is a formidable one, more so for a nation of one billion people that began its nation-building efforts with such great disadvantages. The National Literacy Mission has been making a modest contribution to the whole process by involving the community in the educational advancement of the people.

**Summary:** Union Department of Education has been implementing specific schemes to support various initiatives of the government in the field of adult Education .

**Scheme of Assistance to Voluntary Agencies in Adult Education** is aimed at securing extensive involvement of Voluntary Agencies in adult literacy programmes of National Literacy Mission

**Scheme of Jan Shiksha Sansthans in Adult Education is also** aimed at securing extensive involvement of Voluntary Agencies:

- a) To enrich the personal life of workers and their families by providing opportunities of adult education physical culture and recreation;
- b) To widen the range of workers knowledge and understanding of the social, economic and political systems in order to create in him critical awareness about the environment and his own predicament for better national integration and development

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