

National Adult Education Programme

AN OUTLINE

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & SOCIAL WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI

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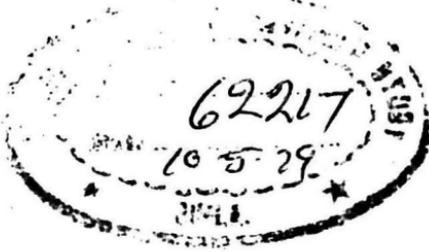
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PREFACE

Soon after assumption of office by the present Government, the Education Minister made a Statement on the floor of Parliament on the 5th April, 1977 declaring that, along with universalisation of elementary education, highest priority in educational planning would be accorded to adult education.

On the basis of extensive consultations with educationists and adult education field workers a draft Policy Statement on Adult Education and an Outline of the National Adult Education Programme were prepared. These documents have been considered in a number of forums and some modifications have been made in the final version.

I would like to call upon all agencies, official and non-official, to make every possible contribution to the National Adult Education Programme to ensure that this challenging task is performed in a manner of which the whole nation can be proud.

13th January, 1978

P. SABANAYAGAM,
Secretary to the Government of India.

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NATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

.. An Outline

This paper aims at delineation of operational details for giving effect to the Policy Statement on Adult Education. This is not an attempt at laying down of rigid guidelines, but rather an exploration of alternatives. It may be recapitulated that the objective is to organise adult education programmes, with literacy as an indispensable component, for approximately 100 million illiterate persons in the age-group 15—35 with a view to providing to them skills for self-directed learning leading to self-reliant and active role in their own development and in the development of their environment. The conceptual position and general strategy is spelt out in the Policy Statement on Adult Education, which should be read as a part of this document.

Phasing of the Programme

NAEP will be inaugurated on 2nd October, 1978. However, for all practical purposes the period from now until the end of March, 1979 will be treated as the period of intensive preparation. Preparatory action would include the following areas:

- (1) Substantial stepping up of the programme from the existing level of approximately 0.5 million to at least 1.5 million in 1978-79.
- (2) Creation of an environment favourable to the launching of NAEP.
- (3) Preparation of case studies of some significant past experiences, particularly those where the failures or successes have a bearing on the planning and implementation of NAEP.
- (4) Detailed planning of the various segments of the programme by appointment of expert groups—this

would include preparation of detailed plans for each State and Union Territory.

- (5) Establishment of necessary structures for administration and coordination and necessary modification of procedures and patterns.
- (6) Identification of various agencies, official and non-official, to be involved in the programme and taking necessary measures to facilitate the needed level of their involvement.
- (7) Undertaking of necessary exercises to clarify the required competencies, particularly in literacy and numeracy, which would form part of all field programmes.
- (8) Development of capability in all States for preparation of diversified and need-based teaching/learning materials as well as making available teaching/learning materials for starting the programme.
- (9) Development of training methodologies, preparation of training manuals as well as actual training of personnel at various levels to launch the programme.
- (10) Creation of a satisfactory system of evaluation and monitoring as well as the required applied research base.

Preparatory action will, however, not conclude at the end of 1978-79. Action on almost all the items listed above would need to be taken for at least a year even after launching of NAEP. Indeed, in a sense preparatory action for the following year, based on concurrent appraisal, shall have to continue right upto the conclusion of the Programme.

The annual phasing of coverage will have to be worked out on the basis of the level of achievement reached in a preceding year. The measure of preparation would include the

probable achievement of target. The success of the Programme will depend on the manner in which the beginning is made in the first couple of years and every effort shall be made to cover the entire population in 15—35 age-group by the end of 1983-84. The present projections of targets are as follows:

Year	Annual Coverage (in millions)	Cumulative Coverage (in millions)
1978-79 (year of preparation)	1.5	1.5
1979-80	4.5	6.4
1980-81	9.0	15.0
1981-82	18.0	33.0
1982-83	32.0	65.0
1983-84	35.0	100.0

It needs to be clarified that these are effective targets and, even if a very efficient programme is organised, there could be about one-third wastage and the programme shall have to be organised keeping this in view.

What is aimed is that by 1983-84 a capability to organise adult education programmes for 35 million persons would be built up. At that stage it would be necessary to diversify the programmes—the aim then would be to strive for a learning society in which life-long education is a cherished goal.

Creation of favourable environment

The results of the Experimental World Literacy Programme as well as the experience of the countries where illiteracy eradication programmes have successfully been implemented show that a systematic effort must be made for creation of an environment favourable for launching of such a massive programme. No country, however, perhaps with the exception of

China, faced the problem of illiteracy of the magnitude we are facing. And hardly any country has had such a long tradition of respect for learning and knowledge, or the vast resources which we have. What is necessary, it is indeed a pre-requisite for motivation of all persons to be involved in NAEP, is to engender a spirit of hope and confidence. The Prime Minister and the Education Minister have already declared that the highest priority needs to be given to adult education. Leaders of almost all political parties in Parliament have wholeheartedly endorsed the programme and have given assurance of support. This, it is hoped, would be followed up by leaders in various other walks of life such as trade unions, trade and industry, students and youth. A critical role can be played, in this context, by the mass media—films, TV, radio, newspapers, publicity posters etc. This would require an ingenious and coordinated effort, in which official and non-official media shall have to converge to serve the objectives of the Programme. In addition, a number of other methods could be explored, including holding of seminars and symposia, celebration of the World Literacy Day in schools and colleges, etc. The various ways in which an environment can be created shall have to be studied in detail and necessary measures taken as soon as possible.

The Approach

The two most basic problems faced by our country are poverty and illiteracy. One obliges a vast mass of our citizens to live under conditions of want and degradation, the other hinders opening of the doors of development and affects the ability of the poor to overcome their predicament. Indeed, the problem of poverty and illiteracy are two aspects of the same stupendous problem and the struggle to overcome one without at the same time waging a fight against the other is certain to result in aberrations and disappointments. For this reason, NAEP is visualised as a means to bring about a **fundamental change in the process of socio-economic development; from a**

situation in which the poor remain passive spectators at the fringe of the development activity to being enabled to be at its centre, and as active participants. The learning process involves emphasis on literacy, but not that only; it also stresses the importance of functional upgradation and of raising the level of awareness regarding their predicament among the poor and the illiterate.

Traditionally, distinction is made between the selective and the mass approaches—distinction being based on the extent of coverage and quality of the programme. NAEP is a mass programme with the quality of planning and implementation of a selective programme. In fact, in relating the programme to the needs of the learners, the NAEP is even more audacious than the conventional selective approach. At the same time it has to be recognised that a task of this size can be faced only if NAEP is viewed as a mass movement, to which all sections of people and all agencies must contribute.

One of the recurrent issues in adult education planning is motivation of the adult learners. Even when they can be stimulated to participate in adult education programmes initially, their interest is not sustained and they tend to drop out. The problem is particularly grave in respect of women and persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It is true that if the programme has organisational flexibility and relevance of the content and methods with the felt needs and problems of the learners, it would fulfil the pre-conditions of sustained participation of the learners. Also, creation of an environment favourable to the organisation of mass programme can act as an effective motivation. However, these may not suffice and the matter needs to be examined in a much greater detail.

Exclusion of the vast majority of adult population from the organised system of education will not cease only by organisation of one-time adult education programme. The perspective

of life-long learning, and provision of arrangements therefore, shall have to be kept in view in planning and preparing for NAEP. From this point of view the NAEP will not conclude with the end of the quinquennium. Systematic follow up programmes shall have to be organised almost with the beginning of the NAEP—they would comprise a well organised system of mass production of books and their dissemination and inclusion in the communicational circuit of the neo-literates. It would be desirable to follow up adult education programmes with organised developmental action.

It is important that the adult education movement should be closely linked with the planning strategy, which emphasises elimination of destitution through intensive area planning and by giving employment orientation to development. For this purpose close cooperation should be created with the dominant development activity of the area, whether it goes under the rubric of Integrated Rural Development or Integrated Tribal Development or Employment Oriented Area Planning or DPAP, or whatever. The adult education programmes should strive to establish mutually supportive linkages with that developmental activity.

Each State will decide about comparative priority to be given to various agencies. However, as a broad guideline, it may be mentioned that owing to the needs of careful local level planning precedence ought to be given to voluntary agencies. In addition to voluntary agencies, a number of other agencies shall have to be identified for implementation, these could include Nehru Yuvak Kendras, Universities, employers of various categories etc. The role of Government would primarily be to coordinate the activities of these various agencies and to fill in the gaps. In several parts of the country the Government may have to take almost the entire responsibility. Wherever it becomes necessary to do so, a beginning would be made with a few selected districts and within a selected district with a few

compact blocks. The objective would be to concentrate effort in well-defined geographical area and then to enlarge the activity.

In practice different agencies will organise programmes which would appear most relevant and feasible to them. In all cases, it needs to be underscored, the programmes would be expected to be drawn up within the framework of the Policy Statement. The range of the types of the programme which may be organised are indicated below:

- Literacy with assured follow-up.
- Conventional functional literacy.
- Functional literacy supportive of a dominant development programme.
- Literacy with learning-*cum*-action groups.
- Literacy for conscientization and formation of organisations of the poor.

Resource development

The conceptual position spelt out in the Policy Statement implies creation and development of a resource base for NAEP. The resource base should include creation of diversified and need-based learning materials, equipping the various categories of personnel for playing their role and infusion of a system of evaluation and research to impart dynamism to the programme. At the national level the Directorate of Adult Education as well as the various agencies of the Central Government and national level voluntary agencies would form the National Resource Group. The important level in resource development is the State Resource Centre (SRC) which, in cooperation with the National Resource Group and continuously interacting with the field can become the focus for resource development. One of the important functions of the SRC is to strive for devolution of resource base at the district or project level. SRCs are not to be institutions working in isolation from other institu-

tions, but rather as coordinating agency for involvement of various institutions and individuals having a contribution to make in resource development. The efficacy of SRCs will depend on the professional and technical capabilities developed by them, their capacity to secure and coordinate resource (of institutions and individuals) available in the region they purport to serve and on the support provided by the State Governments concerned. However, the primary responsibility for resource support to the programme shall have to be at the district/project level. Resource development being of critical importance the Central and State Governments as well as other agencies should be willing to provide all necessary financial and administrative support for this purpose.

Involvement of the people, *i.e.* the illiterate masses for whom this Programme is primarily meant, with resource development will be crucial to the authenticity of the resource base. This is also inherent in the conceptual position as spelt out in the Policy Statement. A number of practical ways shall have to be tried for this involvement. This would include

- Well-designed surveys to ascertain the learners' needs.
- Realistic testing and try-out of methods and materials by securing uninhibited reaction of the potential learners.
- Holding of frequent conferences and camps where workers in the State/District Resource Centre think and work with the rural people.
- Identification of a number of articulate village youth and orienting them in the Programme with a view to eliciting through them the latent as well as manifest problems of the potential learners groups.
- Systematic involvement of persons living and working among the rural people.

In addition to the potential learners, it is necessary that the Resource Centre, whether at the State level or at district level, secures the contribution and criticism of their work by the supervisors and instructors. Appropriate arrangements shall have to be worked out to systematise this, without however letting it get into stereotypes. What is necessary is to always remember that NAEP should be dynamically linked with the existential needs of the learners and for this purpose it is necessary to organise a two-way traffic, from the experts and administrators to the learners and the other way round.

The various resource components may be identified as follows:

Teaching-learning materials: The initial exercise in this, connection shall have to be about identification of learners' needs. Detailed curriculum, indicating among other things the expected learning outcomes, shall have to be spelt out on the basis of the identified learning needs. On the basis of the curriculum and after necessary testing, teaching aids and learning materials shall have to be prepared with the greatest care. The Policy Statement makes reference to imparting of literacy skills in the spoken language. Without taking this to an absurd limit, it should be possible to organise learning in the spoken language wherever necessary with bridges built for the learner to acquire facility in the regional language. Since it may not be possible to develop teaching-learning materials at the district/project level within the next one year, as an interim measure SRCs will prepare materials in standard regional or sub-regional languages/dialects. By the second or third year it should be possible to prepare materials at the district/project level.

Training: The categories for whom training shall have to be provided would include

- Key functionaries at the national and State levels.
- Professionals and experts in specific areas such as curriculum construction, preparation of teaching/learning materials, training, evaluation etc.
- Functionaries at the district, project and block levels.
- Field level supervisors.
- Adult education centre instructors.

The Directorate of Adult Education, in cooperation with Unesco and several national agencies, is developing methodologies and manuals for training. Training of key personnel at the national, state and district levels has to be the responsibility of the Central and State Governments. SRCs should be able to coordinate training programmes for project and block level functionaries as well as for supervisors and the responsibility for organisation of training programmes for the instructors of adult education centres shall have to rest with the agency responsible for implementation of the programme at the field level. Various alternatives shall have to be explored regarding duration, comparative emphasis on one-time and recurrent training, methods of training etc. Unless unavoidable, new training institutions should not be set up; the existing ones should be encouraged to develop capability for training of various categories of functionaries involved with NAEP. Universities and other institutions of higher education may have an important role to play in this behalf. Generally speaking, the agencies responsible for training should function as coordinator to secure the assistance of various institutions and individuals who can contribute in organisation of satisfactory training programmes.

Monitoring, evaluation and applied research: A mass education programme, inevitably, faces the risk of considerable wastage and misreporting. In this connection the importance of systematic monitoring and evaluation cannot be exaggerated. It must

permeate the entire programme and should provide feedback for introducing necessary correctives from time to time. It is also important to have inbuilt arrangements for applied and coordinated research so that the experience of NAEP is systematically analysed and provides guidelines for future action. The Central Government and State Governments are naturally interested in systematic monitoring. Universities and institutions of higher education as well as SRCs will have an important role to play in evaluation and applied research. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should get built at the district and project levels also, for it is mainly there that the feedback has to be used for introduction of correctives.

The "instructional" agencies

The Policy Statement makes reference to the various agencies to be deployed for organisation of instructional arrangements and to share responsibility with Government for the NAEP.

The governing consideration in assigning responsibility for instructional arrangements should be the suitability of the persons concerned to organise programmes with a grasp of the conceptual standpoint and with a spirit of commitment. The various categories of persons who could be assigned instructional responsibility would include the following:

- (a) *School teachers*: In spite of several obvious limitations based on the experience of their performance, particularly authoritarianism and rigidities connected with the formal system, the teachers may have to be one of the main agencies for organisation of instructional arrangements in NAEP. Although, ultimately work in an adult education centre could be made an essential part of the duties of the teachers, for the present it would be desirable to keep this entirely voluntary. Even amongst persons who volunteer to take this responsibility, a selection may have to be made of persons who can be expected to be

genuinely committed to this programme. It would also be fair to provide an honorarium of Rs. 50/- per month for this work. Involvement of school teachers can be facilitated if the support of their professional organisations is secured.

- (b) *Students*: Either as a part of the National Service Scheme, which may have to be suitably modified, or in any other appropriate manner, students in institutions of higher education may provide a valuable agency for organisation of adult education centres. For this purpose it would be necessary to involve the teachers of these institutions also. It would be necessary to re-think regarding the present timing of academic sessions, the system of credits, certification etc. Student involvement in this programme should be voluntary but the leaders in the university system shall have to create an atmosphere in which students find this work worthwhile and satisfying.
- (c) *Village youth*: There are a large number of unemployed or under-employed village youth with some education who could be entrusted this responsibility after they are given a carefully planned training for necessary upgradation of their academic level and an orientation for this responsibility. Besides, village youth who are not unemployed or under-employed but who have had some education could also be motivated to function as organisers of adult education centres. Work among women and tribal people can be greatly facilitated if persons drawn from their groups are re-introduced as peer leaders to organise the adult education centres. Such persons can continue to pursue their vocation and can be paid an appropriate monthly stipend. The unemployed or under-employed youth, who take up this programme

on more or less full-time basis, could also take responsibility for organisation of nonformal education centres for pre-school children or for 6—14 age-group. Apart from providing a most suitable category of adult education instructors, this could also help generate a new class of rural leadership and may also contribute to the reduction of rural unemployment.

- (d) *Ex-servicemen and other retired personnel*: This category of persons can play an important role in urban as well as rural areas. Retired personnel do need financial supplementation of their income, equally important they also need an occupation to keep themselves busy. Although there are certain obvious limitations regarding their capacity to organise programmes which would be in conformity with the conceptual position stated in the Policy Statement, they have the advantage of their experience and the respect in which they are generally held in the community.
- (e) *Field level Government and other functionaries*: It might be possible to involve functionaries such as the village health worker, gram sevika, bal sevika, VLW, functionaries of Cooperative Societies and Village Panchayats etc.
- (f) *Voluntary social workers*: Particularly among the urban areas, there are large number of persons who are willing to make their contribution to community development. The energies of such persons should be tapped and special arrangements made for their involvement.

The implementation agencies

The Government will naturally have to gear up to shoulder its responsibility in NAEP. On the basis of review, the existing

programmes run by Government agencies shall have to be re-cast. It seems desirable that rather than spreading the programme thin in all parts of all the districts in the country, in the beginning effort should be concentrated in compact areas. The size and the programmes of the Ministry of Education shall be substantially enlarged with a view to widening the involvement of various agencies. However, a mass movement which would extend to such a large segment of population cannot be organised by one Ministry or department. Every effort must be made to involve other Ministries and departments with a view to sharing the responsibility for organisation of adult education programmes. The other Ministeries/departments would be encouraged to organise such programmes, with a component of functional literacy, as well as to supplement the learning activity being undertaken through the educational authority. It would be necessary for those Ministries/departments to set apart within their sectoral budgets funds for such adult education programmes. Whether the programme forms part of a Central scheme, or is administered through any other agency, the State Government will have to play a most important role. For all practical purposes it can be said that the implementation responsibility will rest squarely with the State Governments. Besides, the State Governments will have to reappraise the adult education programmes they have been running in the past and steps will have to be taken to appropriately modify and strengthen them. While the primary responsibility of coordination and implementation will rest with the State Governments, the Central Government should be concerned not only with policy formulation and issue of general guidelines but should also oversee that the programmes are implemented by the State Governments in accordance with the Policy Statement.

The programme which gives importance to flexibility and diversity in organisation as well as its content can be best implemented through voluntary agencies. At present the involvement of voluntary agencies is somewhat limited and systema-

tie attempts shall have to be made (a) to involve all voluntary agencies working at present in the field of adult education or having the potentiality to do so, and (b) to create circumstances for emergence of new agencies, particularly in areas where such agencies are few. It is also necessary to recognise the partnership role of voluntary agencies and it would be desirable to consult them in decision making at all levels, particularly in matters which might affect the work of those agencies, as well as the procedures for making grant shall have to be reviewed.

Whether or not NAEP becomes a mass movement will be determined by the extent to which youth and students can be motivated to commit themselves to this programme. It might be comparatively simple to review the functioning of the Nehru Yuvak Kendras and to concentrate their effort on adult education. Similarly, youth men and women who have completed their formal education and who feel stirred to participate in this programme would be natural partners in this endeavour. The critical group is the students in universities and other institutions of higher education. For too long the universities have theoretically espoused about desirability of contact with the community. The NAEP provides a challenging situation for the universities and colleges to overcome their seclusion and to enter the mainstream of mass education. What is needed is that adult education should cease to be the concern of only one department, but should involve all members of faculty and of course, the students. Indications are already discernible that the university system is preparing itself for this massive involvement and to make necessary reorganisations in its priorities.

The employers, whether in private sector or public, must play an important role in the spread of adult education among their employees. It might be appropriate, in due course, to make organisation of adult education programmes obligatory for all employers. Meanwhile, through organisations of trade and industry and other employing agencies an effective begin-

ning could be made. The Government should provide leadership by setting apart funds for this purpose in the public sector undertakings as well as in construction works. The resultant reduction in the hours of work and marginally higher expenditure would be adequately rewarded by improvement in the quality of performance of the workers and by their positive participation in the developmental activity. Education of the workers in the organised sector can be greatly facilitated if the trade unions are actively involved in this Programme.

The local bodies, such as municipalities and *panchayati raj* institutions, have been playing an important role in the field of formal education as well as social education. These agencies, which have civic and developmental functions, have the advantage of being in touch with the people—their everyday problems as well as their needs—and, therefore, they should be expected to participate in the task of implementation of NAEP.

Planning, administration and supervision

This is the first time that the Government have decided to launch a well-planned programme of adult education for such a large segment of the illiterate population. Planning for such a programme and its implementation will require support by a large variety of persons including social workers, perspective planners, management experts, systems analysts, inter-disciplinary teams of academics and, of course, adult educators. Exercise in planning have to take place not only in the Central and State Governments but also in local bodies, voluntary agencies, universities, professional organisations of teachers etc. The Government, however, have to play a leading role in involvement of the various individuals, institutions and organisations. It is also necessary to set up appropriate agencies for coordination and catalisation at the State and district levels. The State Governments might examine the possibility of setting up State Boards of Adult Education and similar Boards could be set up at the district level.

The existing administrative structures at the Central, State and field levels are altogether insufficient for NAEP. A careful examination has already been initiated to suggest the type of administrative structures which would be most appropriate for the task. Only broad indications can be given for the present:

Central Government: The set-up in the Ministry would be appropriately strengthened keeping in view the responsibility to be assigned to the Adult Education Division. The Directorate of Adult Education will have to substantially enlarge its activities and necessary wherewithal shall have to be provided for it to be able to play the expected role.

State level: Immediate steps are necessary to set up State level administrative and planning machinery with an independent Director, or an Additional Director with the Director of Education at the helm. Necessary supporting staff shall also have to be provided to the State level organisation. Each State Government would be advised to examine the need for a separate division to deal with adult education in the Education Department of the State Secretariat.

District and block level: The districts selected for the programme may have to have an additional District Education Officer with necessary supporting staff. Similar set-up may have to be provided at the block level. Emphasis shall have to be laid on adequacy of staff for each project, for administration and supervision, as well as for providing the necessary technical support.

Voluntary agencies: Necessary support shall have to be provided to national and State level voluntary agencies, State Resource Centres etc. to set up necessary machinery to enable them to make their contribution to NAEP.

A programme of this magnitude must provide adequate arrangements for supervision and guidance. The supervisor should not be an inspector in the traditional meaning of the word but a specially selected professional with an aptitude to facilitate the work of the incharge of the adult education centre. The voluntary agencies would naturally wish to have their own supervisory arrangements. In the areas where the programme is administered by the Government agency, it shall have to be examined whether it would be desirable to have a separate supervisory system for adult education or to combine it with the elementary school supervisor. This matter should be examined in detail by the Central as well as the State Governments.

One of the major deficiencies being faced by Government as well as voluntary agencies is the absence of professional cadres of adult educators. Existing facilities in universities for preparation of such personnel are extremely limited and there is a case for their expansion. Training programmes of varying varieties for professional development shall also have to be organised by Government, universities and voluntary agencies. In addition to training, it would also be necessary to examine the pay structure of the professional workers involved in adult education programme. As far as possible, it would be desirable to ensure that persons coopted into adult education system continue to grow and progress within the system rather than being pushed out of it.

Financing the NAEP

The past experience has shown that owing to pressures of various types it becomes necessary for the State Governments to divert funds provided for adult education either to other programmes of education or to other sectors of development. It is, therefore, necessary to devise an arrangement under which funds earmarked for adult education cannot be so diverted. At the same time, it has to be fully appreciated that the responsi-

bility for planning and implementation of the programme in a state must rest with the State Governments, with the Central Government being assigned the responsibility for wider involvement of voluntary agencies, try-out of innovative programmes etc.

In addition to the mechanics of funding, it is necessary to emphasise adequacy. A Group of Experts drawn from the Planning Commission and the Ministry has come to the conclusion that the per learner cost would be Rs. 55/-, excluding the expenditure on Central and State level administrative structures, evaluation and monitoring and research and innovation. The Group has calculated this cost with reference to the number of persons enrolled and not those who will successfully complete the programme. The number of those who will do so may be about two-third the number of persons enrolled. It would be safe to assume that the per learner cost could not be less than Rs. 70/-. The expenditure on Central and State administrations, evaluation and research etc. would be approximately 10 per cent of the total arrived at on the basis of aggregate of per learner cost. Adequate funds on the basis of these calculations will have to be provided.

In addition to the expenditure involved in organisation of adult education programmes, provision shall have to be made, from the very beginning, for follow up and continuing education of neo-literates and persons who have acquired literacy in the formal system of education. Detailed calculations in respect of such programmes have not been made but it would be reasonable to provide an amount of approximately 20 per cent of the total expenditure for this purpose.

International cooperation

The frontiers of poverty and illiteracy extend far beyond national boundaries. The experiences and insights gained by one country ought to be shared with other countries by mutual exchange and continuing communication. Naturally, we cannot

but be conscious of our own financial and human resources, which are not too limited when something so vital for the nation's destiny is at stake. In formulating NAEP and in its implementation cooperation should be pledged to UNESCO and other instrumentalities of international cooperation based on mutual respect and equality. However, audacious the objectives of NAEP be, we must begin humbly with a spirit to learn from those who have been harbingers in this field and from those who have developed special capabilities.

ADULT EDUCATION

A Policy Statement

Exclusion of a vast majority of the people from the process of education is a most disturbing aspect of educational and social planning. This has been uppermost in the consideration of the present Government ever since it assumed office in March, 1977. While determined efforts must be made to universalise elementary education upto the age of 14 years, educational facilities must be extended to adult population to remedy their educational deprivation and to enable them to develop their potentiality. Indeed, universalisation of elementary education and of adult literacy are mutually inter-dependent.

2. The Government have resolved to wage a clearly-conceived, well-planned and relentless struggle against illiteracy to enable the masses to play an active role in social and cultural change. Literacy ought to be recognised as an integral part of an individual's personality. The present thinking on adult education is based on the assumptions (a) that illiteracy is a serious impediment to an individual's growth and to country's socio-economic progress; (b) that education is not co-terminus with schooling but takes place in most work and life situations; (c) that learning, working and living are inseparable and each acquires a meaning only when correlated with the others; (d) that the means by which people are involved in the process of development are at least as important as the ends; and (e) that the illiterate and the poor can rise to their own liberation through literacy, dialogue and action.

3. Adult education should emphasise imparting of literacy skills to persons belonging to the economically and socially de-

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prived sections of society. However, such persons often lack motivation for sustained participation in literacy and follow-up programmes. In this context, stress should be laid on learning rather than teaching, on use of the spoken language in literacy programmes and on harnessing of the mass media. Motivation also depends on an awareness among the participants that they can transform their destinies and that the adult education programmes will lead to advancement of their functional capability for the realisation of this objective. Moreover, a literacy programme unrelated to the working and living conditions of the learners, to the challenges of the environment and the developmental needs of the country cannot secure an active participation of the learners; nor can it be an instrument of development and progress. Adult education, therefore, while emphasising acquisition of literacy skills should also be

- *relevant* to the environment and learners' needs;
- *flexible* regarding duration, time, location, instructional arrangements etc;
- *diversified* in regard to curriculum, teaching and learning materials and methods; and
- *systematic* in all aspects of organisation.

4. Highest priority in adult education needs to be given to the illiterate persons. In the post-independence period, the achievements in the field of literacy have been far from satisfactory. In 1947, the rate of literacy was 14 per cent, which rose to 34.45 per cent (excluding the age-group 0-4) in 1971. Yet, owing to population increase and half-heartedness of the past effort, the number of illiterate persons has risen from 247 million in 1951 to 307 million in 1971. According to the Census of 1971 the total number of illiterate persons above 14 years of age is 209.5 million, of which 97.1 million are in the age-group 15—35, which is likely to be about 100 million at present. A massive programme should be launched to cover this vast segment of population in 15—35 age-group as far as possible within five years of its launching. This implies or-

ganisation of special programmes for women and for persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The regions which have a concentration of illiteracy will also require special attention.

5. While the conceptual position stated in paragraph 2 and 3 needs emphasis, the need to view the programme as a mass movement must also be underlined. From the organisational point of view it is of utmost importance that elaborate preparations are made before launching a massive programme. Identification and motivation of the instructors, preparation of curriculum and teaching/learning materials and training have been the main areas of deficiency in adult education programmes in the past. A satisfactory level of preparedness in these areas must be reached before the programme is to be launched. Besides, adult education must cease to be a concern only of the educational authority. It should be an indispensable input in all sectors of development, particularly where participation of the beneficiaries is crucial to the fulfilment of development objectives. A pre-requisite of an adult education movement is that all agencies, Governmental, voluntary, private and public sector industry, institutions of formal education etc. should lend strength to it. Voluntary agencies have a special role to play and necessary steps shall have to be taken to secure their full involvement. Instructional work shall have to be done by the teachers, students and unemployed men and women. It would be of great advantage if unemployed or under-employed youth having the potentiality to organise adult education programmes are provided necessary training and then entrusted with the responsibility for organising such programmes. To ensure effectiveness and systematic analysis of the problems, the programmes should have built-in mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation as well as for applied research. Finally, importance must be laid on follow-up measures such as production and distribution of reading materials, organised learning and group action.

6. Adequate financial and administrative support will be essential for organisation of the massive programme. Provision shall have to be made for a programme comprising literacy as well as environmental and social education, extending to approximately 300—350 hours or about 9 months, and also taking into account other costs. The required resources shall have to be provided by the Government, local bodies, voluntary agencies, trade and industry etc. A realistic assessment should be made of the size and capability of the administrative and professional apparatus which would be necessary for the programme and necessary steps taken to create it.

7. In addition to organising a massive programme for adult illiterates, it is necessary to provide special programmes for special groups based on their special needs. For example, programmes are needed for

- urban workers to improve their skills, to prepare them for securing their rightful claims and for participation in management;
- Government functionaries such as office clerks, field extension workers and police and armed forces personnel to upgrade their competence;
- employees of commercial establishments such as banks and insurance companies to improve their performance;
- housewives to inculcate a better understanding of family life problems and women's status in society.

Programmes for these and several other categories of persons could be organised through class-room participation, correspondence courses or mass media, or by a combination of all these.

8. It is of the greatest importance that implementation of adult education programmes is decentralised. It would also

be necessary to establish agencies of coordination and catalisation. A National Board of Adult Education has been established for this purpose by the Central Government and similar Boards should be established at the State levels. Suitable agencies should also be created at the field level for coordination and for involvement of the various agencies in the programme.

