

UNIT 4 POLICY ON ADULT AND LIFELONG LEARNING: INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

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4.0 INTRODUCTION

After understanding the global, regional and national overview of literacy in Unit 3, it is now time to talk about the national and international perspectives about policy on adult and lifelong learning (for a simple explanation of the terms 'lifelong learning' see Units 1 and 5). As will become clearer, much of the action on adult learning has always been based on policy directives and for this reason, it is necessary to become familiar about issues entailing different policies in the international and national contexts. Unit 4 has two parts. Its first part deals with the international policy discourse while the second part provides a historical overview of the national perspective on adult education.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, it is expected that you will be able to:

- Discuss the shift in international policy perspective from fundamental education to adult literacy and learning;

- Describe the gradual transformation in national policy discourse from marginal status of adult education in national planning to integration of literacy, functionality and social awareness in adult learning programmes, and
- Articulate your own views on the current status of policy perspective on adult education in India.

4.2 THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Since the 1950s, there has been significant shift in the international policy discourse on adult education. It has been influenced by the changing perspectives put forth by the United Nations Education, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Discussion in this section gives an overview of international perspective on literacy and lifelong learning (UNESCO,2005:153-55).

4.2.1 Fundamental Education (1950s-1960s)

In the post-Second World War period, UNESCO recognised the acquisition of literacy as fundamental aspects of individual development and human rights and supported literacy as part of its efforts to promote basic education. It advocated fundamental education to eradicate illiteracy. The focus of fundamental education was primarily on imparting the basic literacy skills of reading and writing. Subsequently, interest in the worldwide campaign for universal literacy weakened due to the Cold War. Although the international community recognised the need to eradicate illiteracy and finding ways to promote acquisition of a basic set of autonomous literacy skills, only isolated national literacy campaigns were undertaken in developing countries.

4.2.2 Functional Literacy (1960s-1970s)

In the 1960s and 1970s, international organisations advocated human capital models of education that perceived education as one of the key inputs for economic development. Within this perspective, literacy was viewed as a necessary condition for economic growth and national development. UNESCO proposed the concept of functional literacy and emphasised interrelationships between literacy and economic development. The Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) was introduced in 1966 and implemented with financial and technical assistance of United Nations Development Organisation (UNDP) and other international agencies in eleven countries till 1973, to enhance efficiency and productivity of individual farmers. In 1978, UNESCO adopted a broader definition of functional literacy, which is still used today:

A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his (or her) group and community and also for enabling him (or her) to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his (or her) own and the community's development.

Subsequently, the broader concept of functional literacy has incorporated divergent human concerns and a range of people's functions encompassing the whole life. Lifelong education is implicit in the expanded concept of functional literacy.

4.2.3 Paulo Freire's Radical Approach to Literacy (1970s)

In the 1970s, UNESCO's conceptualisation of literacy and other international agencies was also influenced by Paulo Friere's radical approach to literacy. In this approach, acquisition of literacy skills of reading, writing and arithmetic were not seen as an end in itself, but as a means to create conditions for developing critical consciousness about one's social reality and take necessary action to challenge and change it. Freire's influence on UNESCO's conception of literacy was reflected in the Persepolis Declaration (1975) that acknowledged that literacy must go beyond the process of acquisition of basic literacy skills and underscored transformative potential of literacy. In practice, however, pseudo-Freirian approach was adopted in many literacy programmes in developing countries for imparting development oriented literacy skills and knowledge, while maintaining the status quo.

4.2.4 Broadening the Concept of Literacy (1980s-1990s)

During 1980s to early 1990s, international investment and interest in promoting adult literacy programmes declined substantially. With growing pressures of the World Bank's economic reforms on the education sector, investment in primary education was favoured at the cost of adult education. UNICEF and UNESCO voiced concerns against such trend throughout the 1980s and put the focus on literacy and education for all. Over the 1980s and 1990s, the definitions of literacy were broadened in response to the growing demands created by new technologies and other information media in the developed countries for increased levels of knowledge, skills and understandings. The concept of literacy was broadened to encompass not merely the ability to read, write and count, but also a broad set of information processing competencies and multiplicity of skills. The International Literacy Year (1990) and the World Declaration on Education for All, adopted in Jomtien, Thailand placed the challenge of literacy within the broader context of meeting the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults. Furthermore, the Hamburg Declaration (1997) also endorsed literacy as essential for lifelong learning and as a catalyst for active community engagement.

4.2.5 Growing Emphasis on Adult Literacy and Learning (2000-present)

Involvement of the international community in literacy since 2000 has revolved around two goals articulated in the Dakar Framework of Action:

“ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes, and achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults”.

Following the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000), there has been renewed interest among international planners in improving literacy levels. Many international organisations (for example, ILO, World Bank, OECD, UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNDP) have acknowledged the challenge that illiteracy poses for development. While renewed interest and commitment to literacy has emerged, there are marked differences in understanding about literacy across organisations. The United Nations Literacy decade (2003-2012), launched in 2002, perceives literacy as essential life-skills for every child, youth and adult to participate in

the societies and economies of the twenty-first century and as an essential step in basic education (UNESCO.2003). In the recent years, the World Bank has advocated Adult and Nonformal Education (ANFE) that focuses on not merely literacy but all the possible learning needs of children and adults (Easton.et. al., 2003).

Education is one of the key goals in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 dedicated to reducing poverty. Despite renewed interest in adult literacy and learning, it is important to underscore that adult literacy and education is not explicitly included in the MDGs. Focus on adult education is implicit in the Goal 3 related to promoting gender equality and empowering women.

In summary, international perspective of literacy has broadened considerably since the mid-twentieth century. It has moved away from fundamental education with limited focus on basic literacy skills to functional literacy for economic development to critical literacy of Freire for social and political change. Over the years, broader understanding of literacy has emerged, encompassing multiple literacies, literacy practices and lifelong learning.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit under “Answers to Check Your Progress”.

1) What are the key shifts in the international policy discourse on adult literacy and lifelong learning?

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4.3 THE NATIONAL POLICY PERSPECTIVE: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In India, the educational policy provides a broad framework for education planning, and gives direction for overall educational development in the country. Adult education in India is planned within the broader context of the general educational policy (Patel,2000). The central government plays a leading role in policy formulation and planning to direct overall educational development in the country, while individual states are responsible for the expansion and growth of education in their respective areas on the basis of specific directions and guidelines provided by the central government. This section highlights divergent approaches to adult education since independence.

4.3.1 Marginality of Adult Education in Development Planning (1947-77)

Despite massive illiteracy and low level of education in the workforce, the central government after independence in 1947 neither took any constitutional responsibility for educating the adult illiterate population nor emphasised adult education within the general educational policy. The major thrust of the general educational policy in the first three decades of planned development was on the expansion of the pyramidal system of formal education. It was implicitly assumed that expansion of the general educational system, particularly elementary education, would solve the problem of illiteracy in the adult population. Hence, adult education was relegated to an unimportant position, both in terms of the educational policy and finances.

During the first three decades of planned development (1947-77), adult education programmes with limited coverage and funds characterised the state's approach to educating the vast population of adult illiterates. Each programme followed a different strategy and approach to adult education (see Box below).

Major Programmes of Adult Education during 1947-77

Social Education Programme: The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) rejected the term "adult education" as narrowly confined to literacy work and proposed social education as a comprehensive approach to educating adult illiterates. The major thrust of Social Education Programme was to make illiterate citizens conscious of their rights and responsibilities for building a democratic nation, while incorporating the components of health, recreation, and economic life. Imparting basic literacy skills was not assigned priority in the social education program.

Farmers' Functional Literacy Project: In the early 1960s, the focus of adult education shifted from citizenship training to skill-training for development. The Farmers' Functional Literacy Project (FFLP), known as Kisan Saksharata Yojana, was launched as a centrally-sponsored scheme in the Fourth Plan (1969-74) in three districts as an experimental project under the Experimental World Literacy Project of UNESCO. The FFLP was one of the three components of the Farmers' Training and Functional Literacy Project (FTFLP), which aimed at upgrading human resources to improve agricultural productivity of the farmers. The focus of the FFLP was on upgrading the occupational skills of farmers and inculcating among them modern attitudes, values, and behaviours to attain self-sufficiency in food production. It advocated the concept of functional literacy and emphasised imparting basic literacy skills along with practical and technical agricultural knowledge.

Scheme of Non-formal Education for Youth (15-25 years): The Fifth Plan (1974-79) advocated non-formal education for several categories of learners—unschooled children, youth, and adults at all levels of education. It also launched the Non-formal Education Programme for young adults who had missed schooling to provide them second chance for learning. The primary goal of the programme was to provide them functionally relevant education in order to prepare them as producers as well as responsible citizens. The underlying assumption was that acquisition of appropriate skills and knowledge about the welfare-oriented development programmes would increase their participation in this development and help improve their economic conditions. In practice, the programme remained a traditional literacy programme and its overall implementation was poor.

4.3.2 Towards the Nationwide Programme of Adult Education (1977-84)

It was with the shift in the direction of general educational policy in 1977 from higher levels of education to basic education, that eradication of illiteracy came to the forefront of development planning (Planning Commission, 1978:219-29). A draft policy statement on adult education was issued for the first time by the government in 1979, which was operationalised in the form of a nationwide programme of adult education, known as the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) (Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, 1979). The NAEP aimed at covering an estimated 100 million illiterates in the age group of 15-35 over a period of six years (1978-84). The conceptual framework of NAEP integrated literacy, functionality and social awareness. Adult education projects were implemented nationwide under the NAEP by voluntary agencies, educational institutions (universities and colleges), local bodies (for example, panchayats and municipalities) and the central and state governments. Launching of the NAEP led to creation of administrative and organisational structures for adult education at the national, state and district levels.

However, the promise of the NAEP was not fulfilled (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1980). Though the NAEP was intended to be a mass programme of adult education, it never assumed the mass character as envisaged in the policy statement. The coverage and intensity of projects under the NAEP remained rather limited. In practice, the NAEP remained a traditional centre based, honorarium based and hierarchical programme of adult education, which was funded and controlled by the government. With the fall of the Janata government in late 1979, the NAEP continued with minor modifications as Adult Education Programme (AEP) without making a significant dent in eradicating illiteracy.

4.3.3 The Shifting Approach of Adult Education

The National Policy on Education (NPE), introduced in 1986 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1986a and 1986b) and revised in 1992 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1992a and 1992b), has been a major landmark in the history of adult literacy education as it articulated for the first time the national commitment to addressing the problem of eradication of adult illiteracy in a time-bound manner with planned, concerted and coordinated efforts. The policy also provided impetus to development of a mass approach to eradication of literacy with mass mobilisation and support of divergent sections of society. The NPE (1986) contributed to widening the scope of adult education in order to provide flexible learning opportunities to out-of-school youth and adults. Specifically, it advocated the following:

- a) Expansion of non-formal, flexible and need-based vocational education programmes for neo-literates, youth who have completed primary education, school drop-outs, and adults;
- b) Provision of non-formal vocational education and training for workers of the unorganised sector through the existing institutions and agencies. For example, community polytechnics, *shramik vidyapeeths* (polyvalent adult education centre), rural institutes, Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Training for Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM) of the District Rural Development Agency.

- c) Promotion of continuing education as an indispensable tool not only for human resource development, but also for the creation of a learning society. Besides advocating distance and open learning for higher levels of formal education, the policy recommended continuing education for neo-literates and school drop-outs through Jana Shikshan Nilayams, and proposed need-based non-formal vocational education programmes and training for divergent groups (workers, youth, farmers, etc.) to upgrade their knowledge and skills to improve their productivity and their skills.

4.3.4 The Campaign Approach to Literacy

It was in pursuance of the mandate of the NPE (1986) that the National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched in 1988 as a societal and technological mission with the objective of imparting functional literacy to 80 million adult illiterates in the age group 15-25 years by 1995 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1988). (Note: For details on the NLM refer to its website – <http://www.nlm.nic.in>.) The NLM assigned priority to eradication of illiteracy among women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other disadvantaged groups through mass mobilisation and support of the wider sections of society.

The launching of National Literacy Mission in 1988, and the subsequent emergence of Total Literacy Campaigns in different parts of India, led to the emergence of the concept of developmental literacy which included the components of self reliance in basic literacy and numeracy, social awareness, acquisition of relevant skills and imbibing the values of national integration, conservation of environment and gender equity.

The NLM also introduced a technocratic pedagogic approach, known as Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL) to address the problems of slow pace and poor quality of learning among adult learners (see Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1993). In TLCs, curriculum and pedagogy were guided by the IPCL approach that gave priority to learner-centred teaching-learning process. It was assumed that higher quality pedagogic inputs would improve the pace of learning and enable learners to acquire the expected level of literacy in about 200 hours during 8-12 months as per the NLM norms. Zilla Saksharata Samiti (ZSS) was entrusted with the responsibility of internal evaluation of learning outcomes as per the NLM procedure and norms with the help of functionaries and volunteers. The IPCL curriculum was operationalised in three literacy primers. Besides imparting minimal basic literacy skills and functional knowledge and skills, the content of IPCL primers covered 'core values', prescribed by the NLM, to create social awareness about various development issues. In practice, however, the focus of TLCs remained on transmitting basic literacy skills through the conventional approach.

Until 1989, the NLM continued with the centre-based approach of the earlier adult education programmes. The major breakthrough came in 1990 with the success of the literacy campaign in Ernakulam district, spearheaded by Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), a voluntary organisation based on the people's science movement in Kerala. The NLM adopted the campaign approach and introduced Total Literacy Campaign (TLCs), area-specific and time-bound literacy campaigns with total coverage for the given age group, as a viable strategy for promoting literacy on a mass scale. The key and unique features of TLC strategy were:

- environment-building and mass mobilisation through *kala jathas* (cultural caravans), folk media, radio and television, personal contact, conventions, rallies, etc. to generate social demand for literacy and involve wider sections of society in promoting literacy;
- large-scale involvement of volunteers for literacy work, and
- planning, monitoring and implementation of TLCs at the district level through decentralised administrative and organisational structure of Zilla Saksharata Samiti.

The underlying assumption of the TLC approach was that intensive literacy campaigns would eradicate illiteracy across the country irrespective of the structural context of underdevelopment, deprivation and the history of social movements.

Although NLM policy document envisaged nationwide expansion of post-literacy and continuing education through new institutional structures, better utilisation of the existing infrastructures and open and distance learning, post literacy and continuing education for neo-literates was neglected as the major focus of NLM strategy remained on mass literacy campaigns till the mid-1990s. In practice, the focus of TLCs remained on imparting rudimentary literacy skills and not functional skills and knowledge (Ministry of Human Resource Development 1994).

4.3.5 From Literacy to Post-literacy and Continuing Education

With most districts covered under TLC in the late 1990s, the focus of NLM in the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) shifted towards post-literacy and continuing education. In 1999, the NLM modified its approach to attain the goal of 'total literacy', i.e. sustainable threshold literacy rate of 75% by 2007 and expansion of continuing education programmes to cover all districts by 2007. The revised approach of NLM is reported in EFA 2000 Assessment and Dakar Declarations as a reference point. The Tenth Plan also endorsed and adopted the changes made in the NLM strategy (Planning Commission 2002). The revamped policy of NLM continues to focus on imparting functional literacy to non-literates (women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes) in the 15-35 age group, but also includes other age groups interested in literacy and other programmes.

Based on the premise that the TLCs succeeded in making a large adult population literate, NLM has shifted its attention to tackling the problem of residual illiteracy.

The focus of NLM's strategy has changed from mobilisation approach to managerial approach for implementation of literacy campaigns. Volunteers are no longer the backbone of literacy campaigns as emphasis has shifted to paid workers (*preraks*) with low wages. With loss of people's movement characteristics in literacy campaigns, TLCs have become routine and target oriented programmes.

It has adopted an integrated approach, amalgamating all the features of earlier TLC/post-literacy phases under one project, called 'Literacy Campaigns in Operation Restoration'. This new approach envisages integration of basic literacy teaching-learning with post-literacy activities to ensure a smooth transition from TLC to post-literacy on a learning continuum (see Daswani, 2002). It assumes that such an approach would achieve continuity, efficiency and convergence and

minimise necessary time lag between the two. The Post literacy programme is also treated as a preparatory phase for launching continuing education that aims at creating a learning society. In other words, NLM has de-linked post-literacy from continuing education and linked it closely with TLC. Continuing education programme is envisaged to link literacy with actual life situations by imparting relevant technical and vocational skills.

Furthermore, NLM has changed its approach to promote decentralisation. Specifically, it has promoted decentralisation of financial and administrative powers to the State Literacy Mission Authorities for sanctioning literacy-related and continuing education projects. It continues to involve non-government organisations (NGOs) in environment building for TLCs, but assigns them a major role in implementation of continuing education projects. NLM has strengthened State Resource Centres (SRCs) to increase their involvement in continuing education programme. It has also enlarged the activities of Jan Shiksha Sansthan so that they could function as repositories of vocational/technical skills in urban and rural areas not only for youth and workers with low level of education, but also for neoliterate youth and adults.

4.3.6 Marginality of Adult Education in Legislation

The Constitution of India recognises the significance of education for social transformation. During the last decade, two major changes have taken place in the Indian Constitution, which have far reaching implications for education. The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act (2002) makes free and compulsory education a justifiable fundamental right for all children in the age group 6-14 years. It guarantees eight years of elementary education to each and every child in the country. However, the focus of Constitutional amendments in education is primarily on elementary education of children (6-14 years), and not on adult education and lifelong learning for youth/adults. The underlying assumption is that universal elementary education among children (6-14 years) will automatically tackle the problem of adult illiteracy. Hardly any efforts are made to justify adult literacy being a part of the Constitutional provisions and guarantees. The right of the vast population of non-literate youth and adults for basic literacy education and learning has remained invisible in the government policy.

On the other hand, enactment of the 72nd and 73rd Constitutional Amendments has paved the way to decentralisation of educational governance at the local level. The new legislation will have far reaching consequences for the provision of adult/non-formal education for women as well as the roles and responsibilities of central government, state government and local bodies in governance of non-formal education, and adult education.

4.3.7 Conclusion

Despite widespread illiteracy and limited formal education among the adult population, adult education remained a marginal sub-sector of the general educational policy until the late 1970s. The government's policy towards adult education was characterised by the sporadic programmatic efforts with limited coverage. The first nationwide programme for adult education, known as the National Adult Education Programme, was introduced in 1978. However, the promise of the NAEP was not fulfilled. Though it was intended to be a mass programme of adult education, it never assumed the mass character as envisaged

in the policy statement and did not contribute to tackling the problem of widespread illiteracy. It was the National Policy on Education -1986 that widened the scope of adult education, and brought adult literacy to the forefront of educational planning.

The mandate of the NPE (1986) was operationalised through the National Literacy Mission (NLM), which was launched in 1988. The NLM adopted the mass literacy campaign model as the key strategy for eradicating illiteracy on a mass scale. Initially, the NLM did not pay adequate attention to devising appropriate strategies for linking literacy with post-literacy and continuing education.

In the late 1990s, the revamped policy of NLM introduced a significant shift in the direction of adult education. While continuing with the target-oriented approach, the NLM adopted an integrated approach, encompassing literacy, post-literacy, and continuing education. Overall, the focus has shifted to removal of 'residual illiteracy', and from mobilisation approach to managerial approach in implementation of literacy campaigns. Continuing education is viewed as a key strategy for creating a learning society. On the other hand, the revised policy advocates devolution of financial and administrative powers from NLM to SLMA, and decentralisation of management of various programmes at the district level, and the expanded role of NGOs and community in programme implementation for efficient delivery of various programmes of adult education. The government has not yet paid adequate attention to promoting literacy and meeting divergent learning needs of the vast population of non-literate and neo-literate youth and adults on a sustained basis.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit under "Answers to Check Your Progress".

2) Describe major changes in the policy direction of adult education in India since independence.

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4.4 LET US SUM UP

In summary, there have been significant shifts in international and national policy discourse on literacy. The international perspective of literacy has changed from defining literacy as technical and discrete skills to functional skills for economic growth to human capabilities for social-cultural and political change. Over the years, broader understandings of literacy have emerged, encompassing 'conscientisation', multiple literacies, literacy practices and lifelong learning. There is now growing recognition about the social context in which literacy is acquired, developed and sustained. Literacy is not merely perceived as a skill but as socially and culturally determined practices.

In India, despite massive illiteracy and low level of education among the adult population, promoting adult literacy and learning has remained a low priority in the educational policy. Nevertheless, divergent approaches to adult education have emerged since the 1950s. Adult literacy did not receive adequate attention in the first three decades of planned development in India. Until the late 1970s, the government's policy on adult education was characterised by sporadic programmatic efforts through pilot projects, which were linked with the government's development strategy. It was with the shift in the direction of general educational policy in 1977 from higher levels of education to basic education, that adult education received some attention in the educational policy. NAEP, the first nationwide programme of adult education, proposed to integrate literacy, functionality and social awareness. However, it did not succeed in making a dent in promoting adult literacy as it remained a traditional, honorarium-based, hierarchical and government-funded and controlled programme.

It was the NPE (1986) that provided impetus to development of a mass approach to eradication of literacy with mass mobilisation and wider support of divergent sections of society. The NLM, introduced as a technological and societal mission, adopted the campaign approach to eradicate illiteracy on a large scale, but did not pay adequate attention to post-literacy and continuing education. Since the late 1990s, there is a noticeable shift in NLM's policy towards integrated approach to amalgamating literacy, post-literacy and continuing education phases, devolution of financial and administrative powers from national to state and local levels, and strengthening and revamping of existing institutions. Nonetheless, marginality of adult education has continued in legislation, and development planning. It is critical that adult literacy and learning is placed at the heart of the agenda of basic education for all.

4.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) There are significant shifts in the international discourse on adult literacy and lifelong learning, influenced by the United Nations Education, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), since the 1950s. Table 1 gives an overview of the changing international perspective.

Table 4.1: Overview of International Perspective on Literacy and Lifelong Learning.

Key Trends	Policy Perspective
Fundamental education (1950s-60s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy acquisition as essential aspect of individual development and human rights. • Fundamental Education for imparting basic literacy skills (reading and writing).
Functional Literacy (1960s-70s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human capital model of education. • Literacy as a necessary condition for economic growth and national development. • Functional literacy for enhancing productivity. • Lifelong learning implicit in the expanded concept of functional literacy that incorporated divergent human concerns and functions encompassing the whole life.
Radical Approach to Literacy (1970s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influenced by Paulo Freire's approach to literacy. • Acquisition of basic literacy skills not as an end in itself but as a means to create the conditions for developing critical consciousness about one's social reality and for taking necessary action to challenge and change it. • Emphasis on transformative potential of literacy.
Broadening the Concept of Literacy (1980s-1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broader concept of literacy encompassing basic literacy skills along with a broad set of information processing competencies and multiple literacies. • Literacy as part of the broader agenda of Education for All for meeting basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults. • Endorsement of literacy as indispensable skill for lifelong learning and community engagement.
Growing Emphasis on Adult Literacy and Learning (2000-present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of the challenge that illiteracy poses for social and economic development. • Literacy as essential life skills for all in the 21st century. • Literacy as an integral part of basic education that focuses on learning needs all.

In summary, there has been a significant shift in the international perspective on adult education. Adult literacy and learning is not perceived as an end in itself for economic development, but as a means to develop human capabilities for bringing socio-cultural and political change.

2) The policy approach to adult education could be divided into four distinct phases as follows:

1) Marginality of Adult Education (1947-77): During the first three decades of planned development (1947-77), educating the vast majority of adult illiterates was neglected in the educational policy. It was assumed that expansion of elementary education would address the problem of illiteracy. Marginality of adult education was evident in development planning and legislation despite massive illiteracy after independence in 1947. The government's policy in this period was characterised by sporadic programmatic efforts through pilot projects, which were linked with the development approach of the government. There were three major programmes; each followed a different approach to promoting adult education: Social Education Programme linked with the Community Development Programme, Farmers' Functional Literacy Project initiated in 1967-68, and the Scheme of Non-formal Education for Youth (15-25) from weaker sections, launched in 1975-76.

2) Emergence of the Nationwide Programme of Adult Education (1978-84): With the shift in the direction of general educational policy in 1977 from the higher levels of education to basic education, eradication of illiteracy received some attention in development planning. NAEP, the first nationwide programme of adult education, was introduced to educate 100 million illiterates in the age group 15-35 years over a period of six years. It brought three important changes in the government's approach to adult education. First, NAEP broadened the conceptual framework of adult education to integrate literacy, functional literacy and social awareness. Second, it paved the way for participation of voluntary agencies, educational institutions (universities and colleges), and local bodies (for example, *panchayats* and municipalities) in implementation of the programme under the central and state governments. Third, NAEP established for the first time administrative and organisational structures at the national, state and district levels for implementation of the nationwide programme of adult education. In practice, however, NAEP remained a traditional centre-based, honorarium-based and hierarchical programme of adult education without making a significant dent in eradicating illiteracy.

3) The Campaign Approach to Literacy (1988-1998): It was the National Policy on Education- 1986 (revised in 1992) that widened the scope of adult education to address the problem of widespread illiteracy and promote continuing education to create a learning society. It also provided impetus to developing a campaign approach to eradication of literacy with mass mobilisation and support of divergent sections of society. In pursuance of the mandate of the NPE (1986), the National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched as a societal and technological mission to promote literacy among socio-economically disadvantaged sections of society through mass mobilisation and support of the wider sections of society. Table 2 highlights the salient features of NLM's campaign approach to literacy.

Table 4.2: Major Elements of the NLM's Campaign Approach to Literacy

Target Groups	Adult Illiterates (15-35 years) – priority to women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.
Conceptualisation of Literacy	Development Literacy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reliance in basic literacy (reading and writing) and numeracy; • Social awareness; • Acquisition of relevant functional skills; and • Imbibing the values of national integration, conservation of environment and gender.
Curriculum and Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL) for improving pace and quality of learning. • Emphasis on learner-centred teaching-learning process. • Three literacy primers based on IPCL approach for imparting basic literacy skills, functional knowledge and skills, and awareness about social and developmental issues.
Implementation Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-bound, areas-specific, mass campaigns – Total Literacy Campaigns - with total coverage for the given age group; • Environment-building and mass mobilisation to generate social demand for literacy and involve wider sections of society in promoting literacy; • Large-scale involvement of volunteers for literacy work; and • Planning, monitoring and implementation of TLCs at the district level through decentralised administrative and organisational structure of Zilla Saksharata Samiti.

As the major thrust of the NLM's policy remained on expansion of TLCs across the country, adequate attention was not paid to devising appropriate strategy for provision of post literacy and continuing education for neo-literates.

4) The Integrated Approach of NLM (1999-present): With coverage of a large number of districts under TLCs in the 1990s, the government assumed that TLCs succeeded in making a large population literate. The NLM's approach was modified to pursue the goal of attaining higher level of literacy (75%) and expansion of continuing education programme. The shift in the policy approach is evident in the following areas:

- The primary target group continued to be non-literates in the age group of 15-35 years from socio-economically disadvantaged groups, but the other age groups interested in literacy and other programmes are also included.

- The NLM has proposed an integrated approach to promote literacy, post-literacy and continuing education. In the new approach, basic literacy teaching and learning is integrated with post-literacy under 'Literacy Campaigns in Operation Restoration' project to ensure a transition from TLC to post-literacy. Continuing education programme is envisaged to link literacy with lifelong learning.
- For implementation of literacy campaigns, the NLM has adopted the managerial approach, based on paid functionaries and not volunteers. The NLM continues to emphasise the role of NGOs in environment-building for TLC, but envisage greater involvement of NGOs in implementation of continuing education projects.
- There is devolution and decentralisation of financial and administrative powers from the NLM to State Literacy Mission Authorities for sanctioning of various programmes. Zilla Saksharata Samities are expected to mobilise various government departments and agencies, panchayats and NGOs for implementation of the projects.
- Strengthening of and revamping of existing institutions, such as the State Resource Centres (SRCs) and Jan Shikshan Sansthan to increase their involvement in providing technical support to the continuing education programme.

Despite recognising literacy as a key indicator for social and economic development, marginality of adult education has continued in legislation, and development planning. It is critical that adult literacy and learning is placed at the heart of the agenda of basic education for all.

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