Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusion
Three major stakeholders in the literacy initiatives — Participant-learners, Community/Society and the (agencies of the) State — dominate the discussions in earlier chapters, especially chapters 5 and 6.

(Agencies of the) State: In the context of the present study, agencies of the State denote the planners who designed and planned the National Literacy Mission and the apparatus they used. The implementing agencies and their hierarchy of officials are part of the State in the given context.

Community/Society: A group of people from the society who cooperated with the state in implementing the National Literacy Mission. Volunteers-teachers were the most important members of this group, followed by the opinion leaders of the society who realised the importance of the mission and encouraged it directly or indirectly.

Participant-learners: Individuals who participated in the National Literacy Mission as learners, attending literacy classes planned by the State and executed by the State agencies in association with the community.

The relationship among the players that emerges from the discussions in previous chapters could be graphically represented as follows:
Community, as can be seen, is at the centre stage even as the three players interact with each other. Double-ended arrows represent this constant interaction. Community shares a direct relationship with the State as well as the participant-learners and hence has a thick arrow as opposed to the weak arrow (represented with broken line) that denotes the relationship between the participant-learners and the State.

If for a moment, volunteer-teacher could be seen as a player within the society, the relationship could be represented as a tetrahedron as follows:

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While the participant learner is the subject player the community is his/her potential. Volunteer-teacher is the facilitator for the participant-learner to live up to the potential that the community offers. The supra structure that the State is, it influences the potential with its policies.

Going by the discussion in Chapter 6, unit 6.3.1.a, as also excerpts of group discussions that appear later in this chapter, it emerges that the participant learners and volunteer-teachers developed over a period of time a bond of trust between them. However, the dyadic relationship between the State and participant-learners, and the State and volunteer-teachers was marked with distrust. This could be represented as follows:

![Figure 3](image)

7.1. Morphology of participants' responses

An individual passively assimilates language in a society. It follows a system of signs in which the forms of the natural or human world are invested with analogical signification. These systems -- symbolics -- are systems of transcoding which signify an experience by means of another experience which thus imposes its own structure on the former.1

The text of the group discussion (see Annexure IIIA and Annexure IIIB) include subject (people), events, situations and the people's responses to the events and situations. These responses could be reduced to typical categories.
An analysis of the responses of the various participant-learners, volunteer-teachers, supervisors, underlines some recurrent themes. The dominant themes are much too obvious. As the speaking subject changes, his/her words change, but the essential text remains the same and certain threads run through it:

1. **Participant-learners** are aware of the changing environment.

2. **Participation** in the literacy programme raises their self-confidence and they are confident of making choices.

3. **Participant-learners** readily recall cultural activities they participated in during the duration of literacy classes.

4. It is difficult for the members of a large family, particularly if there are more girls/women in it to participate in literacy classes.

5. **Participant-learners** tend to relapse into illiteracy. This also gives rise to frustration.

6. **Level** of interest increases with the passage of time. Involvement in organising some aspects of the programme also increases their level of involvement.

7. **Some** participant-learners also see literacy classes as a place where they can discuss social issues as also personal problem and seek solution(s) to them.

8. **The concept** of education at the learner’s doorstep is quite effective.

9. **Participatory** nature of the classes leads to better interpersonal relations among participant-learners and between participant-learners and volunteer-teachers.

10. **Overall** experience of all those involved in the programme was good.
11. Several participant-learners, volunteer-teachers, supervisors, reported positive gains, but also conceded that much more could be attained if the programmes are run for longer duration. Participant-learners, in particular, felt that their participation in the programme would help them help their children's education. As such, the something done today is also good in the long term. Or the programme, apart from having some short term plus, has some long-term pluses, too.

12. Housewives showed a great deal of interest in the programme as compared to Vaaghris (vegetable vendors). Perhaps the latter were too busy fighting their daily battle of survival.

TNrd-3: “And... I found Vaaghris less interested in learning. They would be irregular in class, they would not be focused, pay less attention. Maybe this was because they had worked the whole day, selling vegetable either sitting in the market or moving around pulling their handcart.

“As against this housewives were more interested in classes. They would ask questions about the textbooks, about what was happening around them and they were the ones who would ask me questions if I were absent the previous day. "Kem nahi aaya? (why did you not come?)" they would ask and say that they waited for me.”

If the dominant themes are treated as the paradigm then the syntagm could be put together and its meaning could be represented in the following way:

7.1.1. Participant-learners are aware of the changing environment: The learners realise the world is changing fast. They are concerned that they will be left behind if they do not keep pace with the changing times. They see literacy as an important tool in "keeping pace with the world" or staying with the times:
LNa-2: “It is important (to be literate). In this modern world when time is changing so fast, the world is moving ahead, we should know to read and write. Otherwise we will be left behind.”

LNa-3: “When the people around you know to read and write you cannot afford to be ignorant. Here are so many things that they will know and they will steal a march over you. They will make progress and you will be left in your place, cooling your heels.”

7.2.2. Participation in the literacy programme raises their self-confidence; they are confident of making choices: Either the skills learnt during the literacy classes helped some learners or the discussion in the classes helped them. One of the learners was able to start his own business (grocery store). The experience gained in due course made him confident and today he is able to conduct his business “without being cheated by anyone.”

LNa-4: “Yes, I benefited, the village benefited. Now I know what to do to keep health and hygiene, whom to keep relation with, how to do business (even though I do not know to read).”

In another case, the learner made a choice on change in agriculture practices. He did so after seeing the benefits that his neighbour was reaping by adopting some changes. Today he is able to use new seeds and fertilisers “without being cheated by anyone (because he can read the brand and variety of seeds and fertilisers).” And he knows that more production is good for his family, society and the nation.

LNa-3: “No, I did not make any substantial change in my agriculture practice after attending the classes. Whatever changes I made, I made because of the change of my mind. I saw my neighbour benefiting by adopting another seed or fertiliser, I adopted them. It was good for me, for the nation.
7.1.3. Participant-learners readily recall cultural activities they participated in during the duration of literacy classes: There is a need for rethinking on positioning of these classes. Most of the respondents (learners) said they were fighting shy in the beginning, though they did attend the classes because others continued to attend the classes and the peer pressure continued to work. Perhaps positioning of these classes as "discussion session" or "discussion group" instead of "literacy class" can be thought of.

LNa-5: "We learnt how to read and write. We discussed each other's problems and tried to help each other by proposing solutions. We did some cultural activities, too. Participated in garba (dance) and music. We also did a couple of dramas to make others in the village aware of the importance of literacy and encourage them to join the classes. All this lasted for about two-three months."

LNa-6: "Yes, I was excited... excited at the prospect of learning something new, getting knowledge.
"I felt a little embarrassed in the beginning. But what to do? I had to overcome it, one had to overcome it if one wanted to come out and get something new.
"As for others, those who were interested came to classes, those who were not interested did not show any interest.
"Some said, 'Half our life was gone... what will I do with it (literacy) in the remaining half?'
"Some even felt it was a wastage of money and other resources. They did not really understand the importance of the concept. But those who attended the classes, sat through them, made some effort to learn a new skill, know the importance of literacy. I for one, benefited a lot and I know how important it is to be literate in today's world...."
"Well, the books were good perhaps for teaching letters and numerals. They had little use beyond that. What could they tell me on what to do to
get a loan? For tractor or some other thing that I needed. Nothing. One had to talk to fellow villagers for that. So the books were of little use to me. Perhaps it was useful for the teacher. He knew what to teach. It served as a guide for him.

"One should know to read and write. Real meaning of literacy goes beyond this simple meaning. One should also learn to understand one's problems and know where to go, whom to ask for solution."

TN-1: "The learners were embarrassed in the beginning. Their age (often 30 plus) was embarrassing for them to come to the class. In the beginning many said they had passed the learning stage: 'Paaka ghade kaantha chadde nahin (baked clay can't be moulded).'

"We used to tell them if you are dedicated, it can be done. 'Sil par padat nishan (soft clay pitchers leave a dent in solid stone)."

LNrd-2: "Yes, in the beginning I was a little scared. What will Ben think... that I don't know to read and write ... despite having gone to school. But once I went to the class, I saw women older than I also there. So my first inhibition was gone. Teacher, too, understood my problem. After all, I had gone to school only for two-three years and had left it seven-eight years ago."

LNa-7: "Attending the class after the day's work in the field was tiresome. It was difficult to keep fresh for the class, and you know if you are not fresh you can't concentrate and learn what is being taught.

"Besides, it was a little embarrassing in the beginning. It felt very awkward going to a literacy class at this advanced age. The teacher was younger than me. But one had to accept that he knew more than I knew. So after sometime I came to terms with my class."
7.1.4. It is difficult for the members of a large family, particularly if there are more girls/women in it to participate in literacy classes: Acquisition of literacy skills brought in some degree of independence, at least that is what they thought, and instilled a sense of confidence in some of the participant-learners. Some thought they could make a choice.

7.1.5. Participant-learners tend to relapse into illiteracy. This also gives rise to frustration: An effective way to mobilise larger number of people in literacy initiatives could be to involve them in the programme. One aspect of the entire exercise many a participant-learner recalled readily and often times was their participation in cultural activities prior to and during the initiatives. Cultural activities could be thought of as mobilising factor.

**LNd-4:** “Apart from classes we did rallies, garbas, etc....”

**L.Na-7:** I saw the dance, drama in the village. The "Yuvak Mandal" (Youth Association) and the Yuvati Mandal (Women/Girl's Association) they all visited me at home. They talked to us and I was convinced of the importance of literacy.

Yes, enjoyed a lot... learnt to read and write, and at the same time, we staged plays, did "Garba" (dance) to portray the ills prevalent in society.

Also, we went on picnic and small tour. All this was a great learning experience.

**SS-1:** “Personally I enjoy camp life. I was very enthusiastic about the whole exercise, so I joined the camp very enthusiastically.

I am also a housewife. I had an opportunity to get a break from the household chores.

“Living in a camp with young enthusiastic students, too, had its charm. We had a lot of cultural programmes to attract the learners and retain their interest in our campaign. These programmes were inbuilt in our campaign..."
inhibition for mother and daughter to attend the class together. One easy way out could be arranging separate sessions for them as their requirements are different.

7.1.8. The concept of education at the learner’s doorstep is quite effective: The initiative called for voluntary participation of teachers and supervisors. And it did get them in large numbers. Most of them joined the programme without any expectation, but the expectations of them, particularly the volunteer-teachers, were quite high. Many of them were school teachers and they were expected to teach in literacy classes after they had done their day’s regular job in their schools.

Participation in the initiative did not win them any incentive despite having to undergo a grueling regime. This kind of an arrangement has every chances of giving rise to frustration among the volunteer-teachers.

Many a participant-learners joined the programme expecting the new skill they were to acquire would lead to betterment of their condition. There is no study to support the claim that literacy could lead to betterment of life. No change in life, particularly in short course, could lead to frustration among the participant-learners, too.

A solution benefiting all could be continuous literacy classes in the form of post-literacy efforts. The teacher is paid an honorarium and at the same time, (s)he feels that his/her talent is being recognised and (s)he is being paid for efforts put in. Not just volunteer-teachers but the supervisors, too, felt the same.

TN-1: “I did the job assigned to the best of my ability. But it was a tough job. Going to school in the morning, spending the whole day there and then organizing the evening class. It was a tough job. You can't expect every teacher to be equally sincere.

“A nice way would be to spot a literate person from within the village, pay him an honorarium. He will be available round the clock because he will
be from the village. People can contact him at their mutual convenience. He will have easy and familiar access to the people, too.

"Or else, give the school teachers some incentive. The incentive could be monetary or professional (his promotion in the school could be earlier...)

**SS-1:** "The programme was good. The ideals were noble. The government even did the right propaganda in the beginning. There might have been some lacunae in the implementation of the programme. One of them, I feel, was the programme was thrust on the teachers. Of course, our case was a little different in that the Vidyapith has a tradition of voluntarism. But other institutions from where volunteer-teachers were drawn from do not have the same environment. The planners should take into account this fact when they plan another campaign in future.

"(...) depending on teachers is not being fair to them. They have their prime professional responsibility. Added to these are their personal responsibilities. Teaching in literacy classes becomes a burden. The moment they feel it is a burden, they stop taking interest. The learners suffer.

"If teachers are to be compulsorily involved give them some incentive. Make this additional work count towards their promotion, give them added increments, etc.

"But I still feel hiring local talents is the best bet."

**SS-2:** "I think the campaign should be an on-going affair. It should be continued until the time the learners become confident of their new skills. Besides, I think the campaign should draw on locals as volunteers.

"Educated youth, primary school teachers could be taken as volunteer-teachers. They could be given some incentive, like monetary rewards, part-time job in village panchayat (council) or career promotion as the case may be to keep them motivated, lessen school hours for them...."
“NGOs could be involved. The process has to go on and on. When I visited the village sometime ago, I found many of them had forgotten what they had learnt earlier.”

7.1.9. Participatory nature of the classes leads to better interpersonal relations among participant-learners and between participant-learners and volunteer-teachers: Interactions with participant-learners, voluntary-teachers and voluntary-supervisors brought out an interesting fact: Their level of interest varied from being curious to indifferent to being very keenly interested in the process. There were learners who in the beginning were only as good as onlookers of the initiative. And as time passed by and teachers involved them in their activities many of them became keen participants.

LNd4: “The teacher tried to help us make mattresses (godri as it is called in local language, it is made of used clothes, laid in layers and then stitched). These were all teacher's initiatives. Her sincerity inspired us and made also us sincere in classes.”

LNa-7: “I saw the dance, drama in the village. The ‘Yuvak Mandal’ (Youth Association) and the ‘Yuvati Mandal’ (Women/Girl's Association) they all visited me at home. They talked to us and I was convinced of the importance of literacy. “Yes, enjoyed a lot... learnt to read and write, and at the same time, we staged plays, did 'Garba' (dance) to portray the ills prevalent in society. “Also, we went on picnic and small tour. All this was a great learning experience.”

7.1.10. Overall experience of all those involved in the programme was good: The concept of “education on doorstep” works. At least in case of (LNd-4), who could attend classes despite having been delivered of a baby less than two weeks earlier as classes were held on her verandah.
LNrd-4: “Yes, I was able to attend classes regularly because they were held right on my verandah.”

7.1.11. Several participant-learners, volunteer-teachers, supervisors, reported positive gains, but also conceded that much could be attained if the programmes are run for longer period: Participant-learners, in particular, felt that their participation in the programme would help them help their children’s education. As such, the something done today is also good in the long term or the programme, apart from having some short term plus points, has some long-term pluses, too. The close interaction between participant-learners and volunteer-teachers led to stronger interpersonal relations. Teacher-student relation transformed itself into that of friends having concern for each other’s welfare. In one case volunteer-teachers used to bring snacks for participant-learner as she had an infant to take care of.

LNrd-4: “I did not have any problem. In fact, teachers used to bring snacks for me, probably they knew that it was really difficult for me to attend classes as I had an infant to take care of.”

SS-1: “I found the learner’s response positive. They were enthusiastic about the program and quite eager to learn.

“They found the program to be something different than their routine. We created a positive environment for the campaign. The people thought attention was being paid to them, they thought there were people to look into their problem, how they lived, the problems they encountered in their day-to-day life, at home, at work, in field or anywhere else.

“Over a period of time they opened up, too, and felt no embarrassment in discussing their problem.”

“(…) I made my students go to the assigned place for class even if there was a single learner present on a day. Those absent used to feel embarrassed the next day and tried not to miss their class the next day.
This also helped grow the learner-teacher bond. Their attachment grew. This attachment made the learners and volunteer teachers interact more and hence the farmers could learn more.

SS-2: "The learners were very enthusiastic. Their eagerness to learn was quite evident. If the volunteer-teachers were late, they would be eagerly awaiting them, and even inquire as to why were they late.

No, age did not appear to be an embarrassment for them.

"The main concern was "what after the camp." They'll learn what they could in two-four weeks. What after that? How'll they retain literacy? They offered their homes for the literacy camp. They offered it for post-literacy, too. They told us, "you are welcome whenever you started the second camp."

"It was pleasant, satisfying. We felt we were doing a good job. We thought, the students, too, should feel the same. We encouraged them by visiting them. The idea was to motivate them and strive for the better. The idea was to monitor them, but not to censure them or intimidate them."

TN-1: "A very positive outcome of this exercise was that I could go close to the villagers. You know I am not a resident of this village. Until then I had mostly interacted with children. Interaction with their parents and guardians was rare. Almost none.

"For the first time I interacted with the grown-ups of the village. Got to listen to their personal problem. Sometimes we discussed them with the group and found solutions, too. By knowing the individuals I also got to know the village better, its problems and potential."

7.1.12. Housewives showed more interest in the programme as compared to Vaaghris (vegetable vendors): Perhaps the latter were too busy fighting their daily battle of survival. Without challenging the veracity of claims, it could safely be said that those who attended the classes were convinced of the importance of being literate. They
either said they would like to attend the classes if they were to be organised again, or said they insisted that their children went to school. Almost all of them said that the experience was good.

LNrd-3: “It is important. I can say because I was illiterate, became literate and have become illiterate again. I realised how benefits of being literate that is why I sent my daughter (LNrd 2), to the class. I will join classes if they were organised again.”

One of the pieces of information sought through quantitative data does reflect the percentage of learners relapsing into illiteracy. The following tables reflect this:

As stated in earlier pages, the idea of the quantitative survey was not to assess the impact of the National Literacy Mission. This exercise has been done at a number of places by a number of agencies. The summary of Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 (below), and 7.4 (in the following pages) does read like an assessment of the National Literacy Mission, but essentially these data were sought to have an understanding of the impact the mission left. These data when posited with the qualitative data cited in the previous chapter and the transcription of the small group discussion helped the research student draw inferences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.1</th>
<th>How was the questionnaire filled?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By the learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16 (26.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41 (68.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APL</td>
<td>38 (58.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPL</td>
<td>19 (36.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This question gave an idea of how many learners could retain the literacy skill about a decade after attending literacy classes. As is evident from the

Table 7.2

Number of learners who could do simple mathematics (addition / subtraction, etc)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Easily</th>
<th>With assistance</th>
<th>Could not do</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>05 (8.3)</td>
<td>47 (78.3)</td>
<td>08 (13.3)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12 (20)</td>
<td>30 (50)</td>
<td>18 (30)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APL</td>
<td>13 (10.8)</td>
<td>46 (61.6)</td>
<td>09 (13.2)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPL</td>
<td>04 (3.3)</td>
<td>31 (59.6)</td>
<td>17 (32.6)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3

Number of people who could read a paragraph from a newspaper and write its summary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Easily</th>
<th>With assistance</th>
<th>Could not do</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>06 (10)</td>
<td>36 (60)</td>
<td>18 (30)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18 (30)</td>
<td>30 (50)</td>
<td>12 (12)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APL</td>
<td>21 (30.8)</td>
<td>40 (58.8)</td>
<td>07 (10.2)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPL</td>
<td>03 (5.7)</td>
<td>26 (50)</td>
<td>23 (44.2)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It then explains what "functional literacy" implies: achieving self-reliance in literacy and numeracy; becoming aware of the causes of their deprivation and moving towards amelioration of their condition through organisation, and participation in the process of development; acquiring skills to improve the economic status and general well being;
imbibing the values of national integration, conservation of the environment, women's equality, observance of small family norms, etc.\textsuperscript{6}

Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 (above), and 7.4 (in the following pages) give the responses of the participant-learners. As is evident from Table 7.1, only 57 of the 120 samples or 47.5 per cent could fill the questionnaire themselves. The rest had either forgotten the skills learnt or needed the assistance of the research student to read and/or write. While only 16 of the 60 male participant-learners or 26.6 per cent could fill the questionnaire on their own. Women fared much better: 41 of the 60 or 68.3 per cent filled the questionnaire themselves. The distinction is quite evident.

The distinction between those living above poverty line and those living below poverty line, too, was quite evident. While 38 or 58.8 per cent of those living above poverty line could fill in the questionnaire themselves, only half of this percentage living below poverty line could fill in the questionnaire.

Only 17 (14.1 per cent) could do simple mathematics easily, 24 (20 per cent) could read a paragraph from a newspaper and write its summary and 25 (28.8 per cent) could read hoardings, bus routes, direction, etc, label on a bottle of medicine, instruction for use of seed and fertilisers, precautionary measure suggested to stop a disease from spreading, direction shown on highways /road junctions.

It is obvious that a large number of respondents had relapsed into illiteracy. In each of these aspects of literacy, ie, (a) doing simple mathematics, (b) reading and writing the summary of a paragraph from a newspaper, reading hoardings, bus routes, direction, etc, label on a bottle of medicine, instruction for use of seed and fertilisers, precautionary measure suggested to stop a disease from spreading, direction shown on highways /road junctions, the percentage of persons who had relapsed into illiteracy was higher than those who had retained it.

This is alarming.
Against the 17 or 14.1 per cent participant-learners who could do mathematics easily, the research student found 26 (21.6 per cent) who could not do so and 77 (64.1 per cent) who needed assistance to do so. Similarly, 24 (20 per cent) could read easily but 30 (25 per cent) could not do so and 66 (55 per cent) needed assistance.

**Table 7.5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Easily</th>
<th>With assistance</th>
<th>Could not do</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>06 (10)</td>
<td>36 (30)</td>
<td>18 (15)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>19 (31.6)</td>
<td>29 (48.3)</td>
<td>12 (20)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APL</strong></td>
<td>19 (27.9)</td>
<td>40 (58.8)</td>
<td>09 (13.2)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BPL</strong></td>
<td>06 (11.5)</td>
<td>25 (48)</td>
<td>21 (40.3)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yet the importance of literacy was not lost on the learners. The impact of the initial campaign notwithstanding, they saw being literate as being with times.

**LNrd-4:** “Can one undermine the importance of literacy? It is important, very important if one wants to stay with times and live in this world of cut-throat competition. That is why I mad my children go to primary school. Since I can't afford to pay their fees in regular school, I have insisted that they attend the non-formal education classes....

**LNa-2:** “It is for them to decide. If they are sincere they should continue the programme, but it is a matter of their commitment.”

**LNa-4:** “It is important indeed. None can deny this. How can you deny its importance?
"The programme was good. It was meaningful. It was good for the village, for my home and for the country. It will be good if they have another programme like this."

SS-1: “Whatever the evaluators feel, I am satisfied we contributed to society. I am satisfied my students too did a good job. They were entrusted with some responsibility and they fulfilled it.

“Even they were happy to see the outcome. They, too, felt that they contributed to society. They were thrilled to see their slogans written all over the village. They used to point out to their colleagues the slogans they had written....

“The programme was good. The ideals were noble. The government even did the right propaganda in the beginning. There might have been some lacunae in the implementation of the programme. One of them, I feel, was the programme was thrust on the teachers. Of course, our case was a little different as the Vidyapith has a tradition of voluntarism. But other institutions from where volunteer-teachers were drawn from do not have the same environment. The planners should take into account this fact when they plan another campaign in future.

“Yet, if you compare the NLM with other government programmes, this programme did have a much better result.”

Most of the participant-learners, volunteer-teachers and supervisors appeared enthusiastic about the initiative. Most of them wanted the programme to be repeated or to be continued in some form, perhaps as post-literacy initiative.

They all contributed their mite to this mission in their own way and to the best of their ability. The initiative is an on-going process, as the term National Literacy “Mission” (emphasis added) suggests. If the programme is to be repeated in newer areas to make more persons literate or the same areas as part of post-literacy initiative, we can draw a
pertinent lesson from the discussions above: selection of the institution, volunteers, supervisors with commitment pays off better. This emerges from comparison of volunteer-teachers and supervisors from an institution like Gujarat Vidyapith with their counterparts from other organisations.

Gujarat Vidyapith subscribes to the ideology of its founder – Mohandas Gandhi – and most of the staff members and students who enrolled in the programme as volunteer-teachers and supervisors saw it as an extension of voluntarism. The institute itself worked as an implementing agency. The commitment of its volunteer-teachers and supervisors was markedly higher than that of their counterparts from other organisations.

Also, the volunteer-teachers and supervisors from non-government organisations appeared more professional, positive and committed to the initiative than those from schools and colleges. Volunteer-teachers and supervisors being paid for the job could be one of the reasons. And indeed most of the volunteer-teachers and supervisors suggested selection of local people as volunteer-teachers and payment of fees, either monetary or in some other form like preferences in government jobs or promotion in the job, as a way to make the programme function in a better way.

LNa-6: "Oh! The programme was good. No two opinions about it. Perhaps it should be repeated.... (Complete statement cited earlier.)

SS-1: "(...) Our students and teachers are generally more sensitized than their counterparts in other colleges and universities. We joined the campaign so readily...."

"(...) There is a limit to the time and energy a volunteer-teacher can give. S/he has his/her own prime responsibility. Failing in this prime responsibility won't take him/her and the country far.

"A nice way out will be to train a local youth, to carry out the campaign on a sustained basis. That person can be given some incentive, too."
“Depending on teachers is not being fair to them. They have their prime professional responsibility. Added to these are their personal responsibilities. Teaching in literacy classes becomes a burden. The moment they feel it is a burden, they stop taking interest. The learners suffer.

“If teachers are to be compulsorily involved give them some incentive. Make this additional work count towards their promotion, give them added increment, etc.

“But I still feel hiring local talent is the best bet.”

SS-2: “I think the campaign should ... be continued until the time the learners become confident of their new skills. Besides, I think the campaign should draw on locals as volunteers.... ((Complete statement cited earlier.)

TNa-1: “I did the job assigned to the best of my ability. But it was a tough job. Going to school in the morning, spending the whole day there and then organizing the evening class. It was a tough job. You can't expect every teacher to be equally sincere.

“A nice way would be to spot a literate person from within the village, pay him an honorarium. He will be available round the clock because he will be from the village. People can contact him at their mutual convenience. He will have easy and familiar access to the people, too.

7.2. Programme Communication

## How academic is the division between movements and organisations! Movements do not achieve results if they do not create a network or alliance of organisations, and, organisations, do not grow and have impact if they are not part of a movement... movements strive to create organisations and organisations strive to
create movements. This effect creates the inevitable tensions that move the society ahead.\textsuperscript{7}

Based on the discussion above it can be said that literacy initiative should be a broader endeavor that goes beyond teaching phonics. It has to address the larger issues the participant-learners are facing and these include:

\textbf{Economic:} Employment, horticulture, cottage industry and allied rural enterprises,  
\textbf{Environment},  
\textbf{Education},  
\textbf{Sports and adventure},  
\textbf{Healthcare},  
\textbf{Spirituality},  
\textbf{Human values},  
\textbf{Innovations, etc.}

\textbf{7.2.1. Different communication approach needed:} A different communication approach is needed to address the larger issues. One of the objectives of this study, as mentioned in the introduction to this study, is to suggest a communication model that could support such an initiative.

The development communication initiatives in the past have shown that communication has a role, though limited, to play in the development process.\textsuperscript{8}

Amid the unleashing of the potential of the television viewership and the market it offers, state-owned and controlled Doordarshan and All India Radio have remained as the media with the widest reach. Doordarshan and All India Radio have undergone tremendous change in the last couple of years. Prashar Bharati, as they have been rechristened, has attained some degree of autonomy, but they have remained under a leash – one has seen the way Tehelka Tapes\textsuperscript{9}, whatever the ethics, in making of the tapes, have been kept out of Doordarshan and All India Radio though all private channels went to the town with them.
Besides, as discussed earlier in Chapter 3 (unit 3.5.1.e.), the audio-visual media no longer are wedded to the purpose they were launched in India. A large number of private satellite channels have cluttered the Indian air waves in the last decade or so. They are offering a variety of programme mix, from entertainment to information with the new genre of ‘infotainment’ thrown in. But with commercialisation being the mantra and focus on the financial bottom line, it would be naïve to expect these private channels to live up to their potential of becoming the potent vehicle for dissemination of the needed relevant information input in the development process.

With the official media remaining under a leash, they would promote only state agenda that in the absence of an adequate advocacy for development programmes, become the agenda of the ruling party and the ruling elite. Anything that is not in conformity with the ideas/agenda of the ruling elite cannot find their favour and likely to be dropped/discarded as it happened in the case of literacy campaign in Pondicherry.10

Official patronage to development communication initiatives would be welcome, but lack of this should not mean an end to development initiatives. “Non-formal media” or “people’s media” can fill the void. “People’s media” in this context is nothing but “group media” in which the distinction between media producer and media users tend to get obliterated. Put in simpler words, participants take on the role of producing media artifacts, as has been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

As group discussions, excerpts of which are presented below bring out, learners become diligent producers of text, almost recasting what is presented as the “seed text” and sometimes even producing a new text. The excerpt produced below from group discussion-2 is an example:
**GDNrd 1:** “But I do wonder if people will be more concerned with their immediate need – food and shelter or better economic conditions in the long run due to small family. “Unless their basic needs are fulfilled, unless they have enough to eat, they won’t come to classes and even if they come they will be irregular.”

Or, this excerpt (from the same group discussion):

**GDNrd 2:** “This makes me think one more thing: What if someone is attracted to literacy classes, learns to read and write and then wants to join a school. If there is a school and he or she can afford schooling good enough, but what if he or she cannot afford schooling or there is no school in the vicinity?:”

**GDNrd 4:** “Approach the government:”

**GDNrd 5:** “Do you think it is so easy to make the government official move? Have you ever been to Gandhinagar?:”

...  
...  
...  

**GDNrd 2:** “Well, I agree. None can undermine the importance of literacy. But I also think, if everyone is educated and everyone takes up service in towns and cities, then who will stay back in villages... who will engage in agriculture...?:”

**GDNrd 3:** “Well, there is a solution to it. Number one, people have different skills and different inclinations. Not everyone will go for so much education that can get them a job in the city. Besides, let it be very clear from the beginning that the literacy classes are meant to help them
become literate... be able to read and write... not make them “sahebs” (government officials).

“Also, why can’t the literacy classes have such lessons that are useful to them? Why can’t the text books have lessons on agriculture and fishing? ... something they can make use of in their life?”

Sometimes, new possibilities, too, are thrown up:

**GDNrd 1:** “Should I say something? I think one of the reasons for having large families is our craving for a male child because we have to propagate our lineage and this could be done only if we have a male child.

“I think, people often wait for a baby boy to be born and many times the size of the family goes on increasing.

“I think, we can tell people that instead of waiting for a son to be born who could extend their lineage, they can also go in for adoption.... They can adopt a baby boy either from within their family or even from an orphanage”

Similarly, Group discussion 1, too, throws up certain socio-economical issues people have to confront.

**GDNa1:** “(...) WAS last because no longer does he do it. And how can he do in any case. Does puppetry pay? Dhanji is surviving because his sons are into grocery business:”

...

...

...

**GDNa3:** “Present? Hmm ... Present is bad and the future is bleak, if we don’t change our ways.”

**GDNa6:** “Why is it bleak? And which ways are you talking about?”
"I am talking about our out population problem... We have to sort it out. Population is increasing like mad. At this rate we'll have riots for food in a few years. Droughts, floods are all playing havoc with crops and we have more and more mouths to feed...: GDNa3.

GDNa1: "But is this only our problem? The entire country is facing this problem."
...
...
...
GDNa3: "Our ministers? The less we talk about them the better. How many times do you see them in a year? Once elected, it is bye-bye until the next election. Well, it is true not all politicians are alike. There are some (politicians who are) serious social workers. They can take the lead and I tell you their advice will carry some weight:"

GDNa1: "You are right. But they depend on them. How many people can they talk to? Why not we do it ourselves. We know the problem and we know the solution."
...
...
... "Well, children are not (a problem), how can they be a problem, but a large number of children are (a problem), their proper rearing becomes a problem and they suffer, the family suffers and they add to the rising population."

GDNa4: "Are not people needed to work ... in farms ... in offices? Who are these men and women? They are yesterday's children and they will be today's children. Children are not a burden, they also contribute to the
family’s income, they are not burden... if you look closely, they are investment:

“Investment when have something to invest in them. When would you have this ‘something?’ Only when there are fewer number of people to share what you have:”

... ...

GDNa3: “At the moment yes. But can’t we ask our MLA (member of legislative assembly), to open a hospital in our village? Our village is a huge village. The panchayat sits here... we are seven-eight thousand people....”

GDNa1: “This much the government will have to do if it wants to control population. For such a huge task, the government will have to do something.... If not open hospital, at least expand the (primary) health centre. I mean, we simply can’t depend on family planning camps. Firstly, they are held only once in a while and people can’t wait for them to be organised...by the time they are organised he will have had two more children... Secondly, you can’t rely on such camps. How many cases of infection/ bad operations have been reported ...:”

GDNa3: “Then what should we do?.”

GDNa4: “Why not meet our MLA (legislator)? Let him talk to the government. He has to get our work done. We are not a small number, we are seven-eight thousand.”

As it emerges in discussions in Chapter 6, Unit 6.3.1, delivery system in the literacy initiatives needs urgent attention. Some ideas have emerged from the discussions. These are
(a) drawing more volunteer-teachers from institutions such as Gujarat Vidyapith that have some ideological commitment to social work and uplift of the less privileged;
(b) it would be a good idea to rope in volunteer-teachers from the same village/community as they live in. They are much more accessible to the learners than the volunteer-teachers who are drawn from other places and go back after conducting initial classes;
(c) these volunteer-teachers could be paid an honorarium;
(d) these volunteer-teachers could be given some incentives to keep them motivated and these could be government job or preference in getting a job or some additional points at an interview for a job;
(e) incentives could be higher for volunteer-teachers who first motivate more participant-learners to join literacy classes and then keep them motivated to be regular in the classes.

Motivation level of volunteer-teachers, their supervisors, and participant-learners, as has been pointed out, tends to drop over a period of time, thus affecting the efficiency of the delivery system. The use of various means of communication helps sustain the motivation of all players in the system. It is worth noting that communication was used in the initial phase of the National Literacy Mission to motivate volunteer-teachers and participant-learners. Usefulness of communication, sadly, was overlooked in the later phases.

Ideas that have emerged from the discussions above suggest that delivery system would work at the optimum level of efficiency if the initiative is made community-centric. This could be done by involving various institutions and readily available resources. A model has been attempted below.

As is clear, at the core of the initiative are certain community-centric units, sustained and maintained by the members of the community itself. These units do require state-support in varying degrees. Community members sit together and identify some broader areas in which these units have to work. Community members also identify the specific initiatives that have to be taken in each broader area. Graphically depicted, the scheme suggested looks somewhat like this:
Vaccination Camps

Individual and Community Initiatives
Bicycle Expedition
Swimming Competition
Healthcare Centre

Educational Centre
Practical Skills
Organising local Sports and Games, Trimming, embroidery, mirror work, screen printing, candle making, beauty parlour

Centre for Innovation of Diffusion
Rural Industry (Agriculture, animal husbandry, social forestry, managing exploiting forest produce)
Use of Non-formal Media
Library and Information Service

Vocational Training Centre
Micro Enterprise (Sewing, embroidery, mirror work, screen printing, candle making, beauty parlour)
Training to become Midwife
Training to Make Traditional Utensils

Discussion Group
Economic (Dignity of labour, small savings)
Environment (Land and water conservation, sustainable exploitation of natural resources)
Social (Celebration of national days, promotion of inter-religious interactions, community service)

Basic Literacy—Functional Literacy—Post-literacy Initiatives (Improving reading, writing, numeracy skills)

Cultural and Recreation Centre

Health camps—Vaccination Camps

Healthy Child Competitions
Individual and Community Initiatives
The literacy initiative needs to be given the shape of an organised movement with well-defined units working in tandem. Each properly functioning unit contributes to strengthening of the initiative and as the initiative becomes stronger individual units, too, gain in strength. As Bhatt\textsuperscript{12} explains, the division between movements and organizations is academic. To achieve results, movements have to create a network or alliance of organisations. Organisations, in turn, grow and have impact if they are part of a movement. Movements and organisations sustain each other and help society move ahead.

The various units depicted in the illustration above are by no means exhaustive. Some units could have some more activities added or some activities could be deleted from some of these units as the circumstances demand. The various units complement each other, help in making initiatives broad-based and at the same time take deep roots in the community.

An “exchange centre” is at the core of the programme in which the community is to be involved. Discussion groups will assemble at the centre that essentially will have a education centre, a library and reading hall, an information centre, a cultural and recreation centre, a healthcare center, and vocational training centre.

While the education centre will facilitate the formal literacy training classes and night classes, library and reading hall will help the learners, neo-literates and semi-literate to hone their acquired skill and develop it further to a level from where relapsing into illiteracy will not take place. Besides, the library and reading hall may also attract other sections of the community some of which might get involved in the programme at some stage.

Information centre will play a vital role not just for the learners, neo-literate and semi-literate, but the entire community. Such centres are already playing an important role in the empowerment of cattle-breeders and women in several parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan. People come to these information centres seeking information on new
agriculture practices, the latest on the cooperative movement, health bulletins on welfare of their cattle and their own. At several centres they even learn to operate computers, thus moving a step up on the skills level.

Vocational training centre has to equip the neo-literate and semi-literate with skills that train them in vocations commensurate with their literacy level or complement their profession thus supplementing their income and bringing about a qualitative change in the living standard.

Cultural and recreation centre is what will get them a break from the routine and mundane activities and bring the community members together.

All these “centres” involve individuals’ hobbies, give fillip to skills and income, help promote equity and improve the quality of life.

Some of the areas and activities that could help attain these have been presented in the outer ring of the model.

7.3. Lateral thinking

Policies in keeping with changing times and decades of literacy initiatives have had some impact on the literacy scenario of the country. Yet by the State’s own admission, as has been cited in Chapter 4, a lot needs to be achieved in the spread of literacy.

Concerned at the slow pace of the spread of literacy, Kothari, et al\textsuperscript{13} have done some lateral thinking and come out with an innovation that have shown remarkable results. In the same study they have shown how a simple innovation like “Same Language Subtitling” (SLS) is helping neo-literate and semi-literate to reinforce their literacy skills.
**Same Language Subtitling:** This effort is not being done at the same scale as the literacy programme/s is being / were carried out, but it certainly has the experts and all concerned sit up and take note of its impact so far as also the promises it holds.

Same Language Subtitling (SLS) on television for literacy skills development is an innovative way of introducing reading practice in everyday television entertainment. It involves subtitling the lyrics of all the film songs and music-videos shown nationally in the same language as the audio. This enhances entertainment. Besides, there is also evidence from a controlled experiment with school children that SLS can contribute to reading skills improvement.

(...) SLS was implemented on ‘Chitrageet,’ an existing Gujarati film song program on State television. Impact of SLS on the reading skills of the early literate was assessed quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings support for the contribution of SLS to mass reading skill improvement. The idea is argued to be extremely economical, sustainable, popular, and effective in creating lifelong literacy transactions in everyday entertainment.¹⁴

Innovation helps keep the interest of the people involved at a high level, for they are always looking up to try new ideas. More innovations could be thought of involving both government and private agencies. Three of these innovations have been discussed below. These innovations proposed by this research student have the potential of contributing to the quantity and quality of literacy in a given community. Of course, this premise could be tested at a different time and on a different forum. These innovations are inspired by the discussions with participant-learners and volunteer-teachers and supervisors.

**7.3.1. Innovation 1:** Some learners, we saw in the previous chapter, expressed their desire to attend a literacy programme if it were launched again, at least one learner expressed her disappointment with her inability to retain literacy skills and consequently relapsing into illiteracy.
Neo-literates present a challenge for the society. The challenge is to help them cross the threshold of sustainable literacy. This also presents an opportunity for dailies, weeklies and other periodicals to contribute to the cause of literacy and reap its benefit. Every neo-literate is a potential periodical reader, buyer and advertiser. To use a business jargon, it is a win-win situation for the periodical and the society.

Periodicals could reserve a small space, say, a quarter of a page or half a page depending on the size and frequency of the publication, for the neo-literates. Headlines and news items and feature write-ups could be printed in bigger and bolder type-face for the benefit of the neo-literate as shown in Illustration 1. The paper could gain in popularity among the neo-literate and the families that have neo-literate. Chances are that they may like the periodical and become its regular readers as they move towards the threshold of sustainable literacy and cross it. Individuals would sharpen their skills and periodicals could gain in spread and circulation.

The economics of the operation could be worked out. Either such issues could be priced at the regular cover price or could be strategically priced as The Times of India did to promote its employment supplement “Ascent” through invitation pricing (keeping the cover price low on the day the supplement to be popularised is published and recovering the cost on the day when the periodical sells more).

7.2.2. Innovation 2: The above mentioned innovation could be developed further. The periodical can create a team of volunteers or hire a group of people who would cut the portion of the periodical meant for neo-literates. They would then paste the clippings at such places such as bus stands, stand post, village / district council offices, etc which typically register more footfalls. Often people come to these places and spend some time waiting for the bus, water supply to begin or official to arrive and listen to their grievances / needs and clear their files. The neo-literate among the visitors might as well choose to sharpen their reading skill by going through the pasted newsprint containing write-ups in larger and bolder typeface.
While the periodicals would have to work out the economics of this operation, they could offset part of the cost by converting the portion devoted to the literacy programme into a “home advertisement.” They could print their own name and logo or icon either on top of or below the write-ups. Most of the periodicals advertise themselves in urban neighbourhoods and suburban areas and villages by sticking posters and billboards. These newsprint clippings with the name and or logo would serve the same purpose.

7.3.3. Innovation 3: This involves leveraging the reach of the traditional radio and the fast emerging popular FM radio, particular in urban and semi-urban areas.

While the periodicals print the write-ups for the neo-literates in a suitable place and manner, they could tie up with the local radio stations to broadcast the same write-ups at a certain hour of the day as is done in “news at a slow pace” by All India Radio / Akashwani (now christened Prasar Bharati). The broadcast will help the neo-literate read the text before them and correct themselves if and when they go wrong.

Again, the modalities of the operation will have to be worked out: text will have to be prepared by people sensitized to the needs of the neo-literate as also the requirements of a broadcaster; the text will have to be made available to the broadcaster; suitable broadcast timings will have to be found out, etc.

The fact that periodicals with mass circulation normally prepare their text for a heterogeneous audience and use popular language and words will only help the cause of spreading literacy among the neo-literate. The publications could even print some popular film songs that FM radio these days keep on blaring.
To conclude the discussion, the struggle for total literacy has to be fought at various levels. First and foremost, primary education has to be made universal. This has already been made in India, but the drop-out rate mars the effort. Hence there has to be humane mechanism to ensure drop-out rate is minimised if it cannot be eliminated. So apart form universal enrolment, the state and the community has to work on awareness and poverty alleviation programmes. Infrastructure has to be created, and this involves ensuring school building and teachers. For those who missed out on going to school in their early years, informal adult education has to be promoted. And, as and when necessary, literacy classes have to be organised. Delivery system has to be looked into, and this involves supply of books and participatory pedagogy among groups.

Communication among the members of groups (lateral communication), if encouraged, begins with a discussion on seemingly innocuous lessons in the primer. It soon goes beyond the phonics, so to say, of the lessons to issues of their concern: geographical and financial access to school, functioning (or for that matter non-functioning) of the government, migration to urban areas and their reasons, curriculum for informal classes /schooling, gender issues, size of a family, droughts and floods as national problems, failure of crops, behaviour and responsibilities of elected representatives, investment in human beings, importance of numbers in democracy, health awareness, building pressure on elected representatives to work, and so on.

What essentially begins as communication among fellow community members takes the form of “turning up:” approaching the elected representatives and making her/him take up their issues with higher-ups, ie, planners and ministers. As stated earlier in this chapter, ascertaining and setting right the priorities of the community, making literacy initiatives community-centric (as shown in the illustration above) with plenty of lateral communication and adequate loops of upward communication are needed to make literacy initiatives move beyond phonics and into praxis. And hence better results
Footnotes

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

7. Bhatt, Ela (1997): The Early Years after Indian Independence: Women’s Perspectives, symposium organised by Indian Association of Women’s Studies, Centre for Women’s Development Studies, and Women’s Studies Research Centre, MS University of Baroda, Vadodara.


9. Tehelka Tapes, as they have come to be described, exposed the corruption in the political system of our country. Tehelka, an organisation formed by some enterprising
journalists used hidden camera in sting operations to expose corruptions in defence dealings in the government. The tapes were shown on almost all private cable and satellite channels, though the official broadcaster Doordarshan (Prashar Bharati) did not air the tapes.


Rao, Nitya (1993): "Total Literacy Campaigns: A Field Report," Economic and Political Weekly (XXVIII, No 19), and


