CHAPTER IX
CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS
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Both formal and adult educational systems had been in vogue in India since ancient times. Then the British came, they introduced a system of education which would teach the indigenous population their languages and also at the same time emphasise to them the importance of science as a means to break down their superstitious beliefs. The intention was to perpetuate their rule in India by creating a class of ruling elite completely differentiated from the larger populace. However, this system deprived the masses of basic literacy instructions.

After independence, education was viewed as the main instrument of social and economic transformation. The founding fathers of the Indian Republic were deeply committed to education of the masses. The Constitution of India in Article 45 of the Directive Principles, Commands the State "to provide within a period of ten years......free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. However, the
main thrust was through formal system of education. Accordingly, educational policies and strategies were geared to fulfil the educational needs and aspirations of the masses.

The experience gained during the first two Five Year Plans necessitated some reforms in the educational sector, as the number of illiterates kept on increasing. Consequently, the Education Commission was set up (1964) to advise the Government on various aspects of educational problems. The recommendations of the Commission formed the basis for National Policy on Education in 1968. The Policy considered the liquidation of mass illiteracy as an essential ingredient for quickening the pace of national development. A mass literacy campaign failed to bring about desired results, as 1971 census indicated significant increase in the number of illiterates.

The Government considered that the existing system of formal education was not commensurate to the task ahead. Hence, the entire gamut of
the educational system needed a fresh look. After extensive consultations and thought provoking discussions with various educational experts all over the country, the Government came with a policy statement on Adult Education in 1978. The Policy included Adult Education in the Minimum Needs Programme in the Sixth Five Year Plan which envisaged 100 per cent coverage of adult illiterates by 1990. It was for the first time that the Government decided to launch a well-planned programme for such a large segment of population. However, the intentions could not materialise effectively and a fresh thinking was initiated. A number of National level debates and seminars were organised, suggestions and comments were invited. On the basis of this feedback National Policy on Education (1986) was framed.

For its effective implementation a "Programme of Action" was formulated. Apart from making people read and write, the policy linked Adult Education with national goals such as poverty alleviation, national integration, environment
conservation and observance of small family norms etc. etc.

In pursuance of the 'Policy' administrative infrastructure was created at the National State and District levels. At the district level administrative unit is the 'Project' headed by the Project Officer. It is at this level where the process of implementation starts.

The Project has around 300 Adult Education Centres, divided into 10 clusters, placing around 30 centres per cluster. There are 30-40 learners in each centre, totalling about 9000 in a Project. While opening the centres weightage is given to backward classes, women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, slum dwellers, migrant labourers etc. These centres are then segregated on the basis of sex. There is a male instructor for a male centre and female for a female centre.

Our study shows that 90 per cent of the centres were located in the rural areas and 10 per cent in the urban, keeping in view that literacy rate among the rural population is very
low as compared to the urban. Sex-wise distribution of the centres shows that 80 per cent centres were for women in the district of Ambala. In the district of Jind sex-wise distribution of centres was 40 per cent for females and 60 per cent for males. This does not match with the literacy rate of the two sexes. The females literacy rate in rural Jind is 8.03 per cent as compared to 39.71 per cent for males. Community-wise distribution of the centres shows that 50 per cent (N: 150) centres in the district of Ambala were opened for Scheduled Castes and the remaining 50 per cent (N: 150) for mixed communities and backward classes. However, in the district of Jind 50 per cent (N: 150) centres were opened for Jats, 30 per cent (N: 90) for Scheduled Castes and 20 per cent (N: 60) for backward and other communities. This was done despite the fact that literacy rate among the Scheduled Castes in the rural areas of Jind stood at 22.61 per cent (20.40 males and 2.21 for females).
Venue of the Centres:

The Centre is required to be set up in a rent free building such as Community Centre, School or Panchayat Ghars (houses) and the like. It was observed that such buildings were not available in all the villages, with the result that 40 per cent (N: 4) centres functioned in the instructor's houses in the district of Ambala and 100 per cent in the district of Jind. This feature is corroborated by the evaluation studies carried out in other states as well. The location of the centres in the instructor's houses causes inconvenience to the instructors and the learners.

Timings of the Classes:

For the convenience of the learners, the centres are run during day time for females (11.30 A.M. to 1 P.M.) and at night for males (7.30 P.M. to 9 P.M.). Distribution of day and night centres for supervision poses some problems. In the district of Ambala 80 per cent centres
are for females and supervision is carried out during day time. However, in the district of Jind where 60 per cent centres are run during night, supervision is more difficult particularly when supervisor happens to be a woman and the centres are located in different villages. If a supervisor visits 2 to 3 centres per day the next visit to the same centre was not possible earlier than 10-12 days. For any supervision to be effective it was too long a gap indeed.

Supervision by Project Officer:

The Project Officer's supervision is of vital importance. He has been assigned 300 centres covered by his Project for supervision and control. He has so much office work at the headquarters (meeting the media people, distribution of honorarium to the instructors, arranging training etc.) that it is physically impossible for him to go out for supervision on every working day. Assuming that there are about 24 working in a month, the Project Officer can at the most visit 4-5 centres every day. In this way, his
next visit to the same centre was not possible earlier than 4-5 months. It is too wide a gap to make supervision effective.

Lack of Delegated Authority to Project Officer:

Another major problem was the lack of authority delegated to the Project Officer in the sphere of operation. The Project Officers stated that though they knew the various problems and had solutions thereto, yet they were helpless, for they were not authorised to effect any modifications in the Project Administration. Supposing they wanted to cut down the number of night centres and appoint male supervisors or reduce the number of centres allotted to the various supervisors or effect any such change in the interest of efficiency and efficacy of the Programmes, they cannot do it at all

Learners:

The majority of learners (80 per cent) in our sample were women. They have joined the programme to get rid of the stigma of illiteracy.
The majority of them (43.5 per cent) belonged to Scheduled Castes, 22 per cent to backward castes and 34.5 per cent to lower caste groups. They were involved in multi-occupational activities such as agriculture, house-hold and animal husbandry. Their main occupation is also their main source of livelihood. The exacting demands of their occupation do not allow them to send their children to schools. As regards their annual income 94 per cent earned less than ten thousand a year. However, 6 per cent of the learners had their family income above this, from various sources.

Attendance in the Centre:

It was only women learners who attended the classes regularly. Their percentage of attendance was 42 in Ambala and 31 in Jind. The majority of the learners (40 per cent) were attending classes occasionally in both the districts. No male learner was attending the class regularly in any of the districts. This reflects the casual attitude of the learners towards the Programme. Such an indifferent attitude can be attributed
to the various reasons. General feeling of the respondents was that there was nothing to learn other than the 3R's, no proper building and seating arrangement existed, and no proper learning material was supplied etc. etc. Our observation is that some of the learners enrolled themselves to give support to the instructor as he needed a particular number of learners to start the centre. These learners do not attend the classes or attend when called by the instructors on the eve of the visit of officials.

There were 32.5 per cent learners who dropped out from the Programme from both the districts. They stopped attending classes after some time, or did not attend them at all after their enrolment. They too stated different reasons for this as: not getting time due to domestic work, no proper seating arrangement, there is nothing to learn in the centre etc. etc. Our study indicates that many reasons were flimsy and baseless. In fact, little cajoling would have made them regular learners.
Level of Literacy:

The major objective of the Programme was to spread literacy with a view to enable the learners to read and write with understanding. Our study discovered that 34 per cent (N: 69) were able to read and write among the males and the females in both the districts taken together. There was no male learner who could read and write other than the prisoners in the Central Jail Ambala. However, their percentage was 18.3 in the district of Jind. The percentage who could write numerals was negligible in both the districts.

The policy guidelines lay down that the learners are not only to be made literate but they are also to be kept literate through Post-literacy and followup Programmes. But, it was observed that inspite of the Programme having been run for more than 5 years in some of the centres, nowhere, the post-literacy and follow up activities were initiated. The administrative functionaries revealed that no allocation of funds was ever made towards it.
Perceptions of the Learners:

The respondents enrolled, non-enrolled and drop-outs were asked to offer general comments on the Programme. A majority (21 per cent) of them were of the view that 10 months exposure to literacy instructions was not sufficient to develop and retain the knowledge gained by it. One fifth were of the view that this Programme could be more useful provided it was properly planned and some influential persons were involved in getting it implemented. Ten per cent of the learners laid stress on proper learning materials as per the requirements of the diversified needs of the learners. They contended that the material presently available was related to the learning of 3 R's only. As many as 4 per cent of the respondents were too cynical about the programme. They considered it a planned fraud on the people and had nothing to do with their welfare. It was simply a huge wastage of public money without yielding any fruitful result, they argued.
Instructors:

Instructor is a person who impart literacy instructions to the adult learners. He/she is the bottom-most and yet the most important functionary of the organisation. He is a part-time worker and appointed by the Project Officer. He is paid an honorarium of Rupees 100 per mensem. According to the policy of adult education he should be qualified upto matriculation. In case of non-availability of person with requisite qualification he/she could be one with lower qualification. Our study reveals that 75 per cent of the instructors had studied upto the middle standard or were matriculates. However, 20 per cent of them were either graduates or had studied beyond matriculation level. But there was none among this category in the district of Jind. Though well qualified persons were available but they did not come forward to take this assignment, mainly due to low honorarium.

The policy guidelines also explicit that the instructor should belong to the community
of learner themselves. If no suitable person from the same caste group is available/willing to undertake the assignment then he/she can be taken from other caste groups as well. Our study depicts that 95 per cent of the instructors belonged to higher caste groups even though 50 per cent centres were for Scheduled Castes in the district of Ambala. There was only one instructor who hailed from the ranks of Harijans in the district of Jind where 30 per cent centres were for this community.

This shows that little care was taken at the time of selection of the instructors from these communities even though the centres were exclusively meant for them. This can be attributed to their lower status in the village, lack of linkages with government officials or that the educated persons were not available amongst them.

The majority of the instructors (85 per cent) were in the age group 15-26 years. Incidentally the learners too came from the same age group. However, it was satisfying to note that instructors
of all age groups were able to exercise control on adult learners.

All the instructors were actively engaged in different professions (house-holding/agriculture and animal husbandary) and Adult Education was their side activity. They have taken this assignment to supplement their income. However, two instructors from Ambala took this assignment as a social service. As regards the training and experience, all of them had received training two or three times and had been taking classes for the past 4-8 years.

Most of the instructors (85 per cent) were deployed in their own villages/colonies. However, 15 per cent (all females) in the district of Ambala were deputed in villages/colonies other than their own. They had to travel a distance of 2 - 3 kilometers for meeting the classes. Despite these constraints they attended their work regularly.
Supervisors:

The job of supervising the working of Adult Education Centres was entrusted to the supervisors. They were appointed on ad-hoc basis and every Project was assisted by 10 supervisors. Each one of them was allotted 30- centres and required to supervise 4-5 centres every day (including night centres). Our study observes that supervision of night centres was a difficult proposition for the female incumbents as the centres were scattered in various villages. The supervisors in Ambala were in a comfortable position to pay visit as they were living in/near the cluster itself. Moreover, the majority of the centres in this district (80 per cent) functioned in day time. However, in the district of Jind majority of the centres (60 per cent) functioned at night and supervisors were living at a distance place from their clusters, they faced great difficulty in supervising the centres. The incumbents were neither given any conveyance allowance nor official conveyance to visit these centres. However, 60 per cent female supervisors stated that they were
visiting the centres with their husbands.

The researcher during the course of his survey visited some centres along with the female supervisors and observed that none of the male centres was functioning. A significant disclosure from the residents revealed that functioning of those centres had come to a stand still long back or very few attended it occasionally.

Our study depicts that the instructors were showing presence in the attendance registers inspite of the fact that no male learners attended the classes. These very persons were being reflected to have successfully completed their literacy course. This spurious data fed by the Project Staff does not reflect the state of literacy in the State and the country as a whole. It is something that demands serious consideration if we intend to remove the illiteracy.

Project Officer:

The Project level administration is headed
by the Project Officer. Of the two Projects in our study, one (district of Ambala) was headed by male and that of Jind by female. The entire implementation of the Adult Education Programme rests with the Project Officer. He conducts survey of the Project area and identifies various illiterate pockets, selects instructors and rent free accommodation for the centres. He allocates centres to each supervisor for supervising the work of 30 instructors. The Project Officer performs his day-to-day functions at the headquarters, however, his major area of operation is to inspect the functioning of the different centres in the field and to provide on-the-spot guidance to the functionaries. He was given a jeep and driver for visiting the centres.

Our study shows that the large size of the Project having 300 centres spread over large area, created the problem of communication, control and supervision. Further, lack of delegated authority to introduce any reform in the existing administrative structure and procedures prevented the Project Officer from taking any initiative. In
fact, he is put in a very embarrassing situation under the present system where the instructors are paid a paltry honorarium of Rupees 100 per month.

The other problems included the selection of rent free accommodation, non-involvement of other officials, supervision of night centres by female supervisors, collection and distribution of teaching/learning materials and frequent transfer of Project Officers etc. etc.

Non-Participants:

The Programme of Adult Education is meant for the illiterate masses, whose number is 324 million in India and 2 million in the state of Haryana. However, if we look at their participation, a majority of them do not participate in it. If illiteracy is stigma and creates hurdles in their day-to-day life they would come forward willingly. Our study depicts that the present Programme is not relevant to their needs and aspirations and therefore, does not attract these
people. No doubt a majority of non-enrolled respondents realise the importance of literacy but due to socio-economic problems they were not in a position to participate.

Keeping in view these difficulties it is suggested that Adult Education Programme will not be a success until it adapts itself to the level of an average working man. Thus, the policy makers have to look at each aspect of the Programme in its totality rather than as an isolated activity. At the same time situational, institutional and dispositional barriers have to be removed. The instructor has to be paid well and the number of centres has to be reduced to manageable limits. Similarly, people participation can be enhanced by the involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions and voluntary organisations and other important functionaries at the Block and District levels. The learning material has to be made more attractive and suitable to the needs of the learners. Moreover, the idioms and the examples in the learning material must correspond to the occupational and social parameters of the masses.
As long as the learners do not develop a willing acceptance towards literacy, no force can bring them to class room. Therefore, much spadework needs to be done before the centres take a concrete shape. This includes motivation through the electronic media, visuals (posters etc) and the village elders who themselves have to be convinced of the utility of literacy.

The organisational set up too needs to be made more flexible. It must be kept in mind that the personnel working in the field are the best judges of the situation. The feedback sent by them must be monitored and remedial measures taken to plug the loopholes, the field staff must be allowed to make adjustment for the efficient functioning of the system. Rigidity only creates inefficiency and un-necessary hurdles. Means need to be made subservient to the main aim i.e. mass literacy. These changes will go a long way in making the Programme a success.