

# **EVALUATION STUDY ON IMPACT OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION**

## **1. The Study**

The Non-Formal Education (NFE) Scheme was introduced during the Sixth Plan in Educationally backward States as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) to meet the educational needs of children who were unable to enroll themselves in formal schools due to poverty/illiteracy of parents and other Socio-Cultural factors. The scheme aimed at opening of the NFE Centre with 20-25 eligible children (10 in hilly/tribal desert areas) at a place and time, convenient to children under the charge of a locally selected instructor, for about two hours a day. The duration of primary level course and middle level course was kept two years and three years respectively and the teaching , learning materials was supplied free of cost to all the learners. The instructors of NFE were given training by District Resource Units in District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETS).

At the instance of Planning Commission, the Programme Evaluation Organisation undertook the study to evaluate the physical and financial performance effectiveness of the implementation and delivery system and the impact of the NFE scheme.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of the study were as under :

- i) to assess the performance of NFE in terms of its coverage, enrollment, literacy rate, retention of the out-of-school children in order to achieve the goal of universalisation of elementary education,
- ii) to examine the organisational set-up, adequacy of the monitoring mechanism and implementation methods in different States so as to assess their impact on performance of the programme,
- iii) to assess the impact of the programme in terms of the satisfaction of learners and parents about the quality of education and mobility of NFE students to the Formal school,

- iv) to identify factors contributing to or affecting the performance of the scheme, and
- v) To examine the effectiveness of Voluntary Organisations in the implementation of NFE programme.

### **3. Sample Size/Criteria for Sample Selection**

In all 6 States, 18 Districts, 108 NFE Centres, 1944 eligible children/learners, 108 instructors, 72 supervisors, 221 knowledgeable persons and 18 voluntary organisations were selected for the study.

### **4. Reference Period**

The reference period of the study was four years of Eighth Five Year Plan i.e. from 1992-93 to 1995-96.

### **5. Main Findings**

1. The Project Officer was responsible for educating, orienting and organising training for instructors and supervisors. The last link in the chain was Village Education Committee which was required to select suitable location for Centres, identify potential instructors, persuade parents to send their children to the Centre.
2. The NFE programme was implemented by Ministry of Human Resource Development, which was having an effective strength of 18 staff members to look after the entire work load including the processing of the project proposals for sanction, providing grants and monitoring/evaluating of 2,41,399 centres in 16 States/UTs and 48,878 centres of 740 voluntary agencies.
3. The number of centres had developed in size and coverage over the years from 1.26 lakh ( in 1986) to 2.41 lakh (in 1996) in the state sector alone. In addition, there were NGO run centres. The highest growth rate (66%) was observed in Rajasthan followed by Bihar (31%), Orissa (28%), Andhra Pradesh (10%), Madhya Pradesh (3%) and Uttar Pradesh(1%).
4. The enrolment in NFE centres as a percentage of out-of-school children was the highest in Madhya Pradesh (51%) followed by Rajasthan (35.8%), Orissa (33%), Andhra Pradesh (24%), Uttar Pradesh (21%) and Bihar (12.4%). It was observed

that in general the NFE centres were concentrated primarily in areas where a formal school was not available within a reasonable distance (as in tribal areas) and where the literacy rate was low.

5. The actual allocation during the Eighth Five Year Plan period for a primary level centre varied between Rs.4305.00 in Orissa and Rs.7927.00 in Madhya Pradesh. Both the Centre and State Governments were not releasing their share of allocation in time.
6. The flow of funds to NFE Centres in the State Sector was erratic and much less than what was required to run the system. Different rates of utilisation of funds by the State Governments were observed in 1993-94, as the utilisation rate of central funds was as low as 19% in Bihar, and the highest in Uttar Pradesh at 67%.
7. In the 108 Sample Centres, acute shortage of Teaching-learning Materials (TLM) was observed. The rural centres were not supplied with petromax light and classes had to be run only during day time.
8. A large number of girl centres were having male instructors and large proportion of them were below 30 years of age. In view of the general weakness of the NFE infrastructure and the fact that the NFE learners were over-aged because NFE system could not attract adequate number of out-of-school girls. The attendance and enrolment in girl centres was found to be very low in the sample centres.
9. The supervision and monitoring of NFE centres was found to be very weak. It was also observed that 72% of the centres remained closed for more than ten days in a month.
10. It was found at the State level that the number of NFE centres was too small to make any perceptible impact on the enrolment rate of the out-of-school children of those who enrolled in NFE Centres 20 to 30% drop out within the year. The proportion of learners who successfully completed the NFE primary level course was very low, and during 1994-96, varied between a low of 12% in Rajasthan to a high of 44.4% in Uttar Pradesh. The success rate of Madhya Pradesh was also satisfactory (36.4%).
11. The NFE system had not made any significant contribution to the realisation of the goal of UEE.

## **5. Major Suggestions**

1. To devise an appropriate strategy for achieving UEE , it is important to identify the factors that prevent access to education. The quality of school infrastructure (like teacher-student ratio, proportion of female teachers, separate schools for boys and girls at upper primary level, qualifications and training of teachers, etc.) on the one hand, and cost-benefit of education on the other hand are the most important determinants of success.
2. The poor and illiterate parents should be made aware of the value of education through awareness generation programme. Secondly, the government should borne the entire private cost of education for the poor children.
3. The cost of running an NFE centre must be worked out realistically. For this purpose, the qualified and trained instructors should be employed. Their honorarium should be commensurate with their responsibility, and regularity in payments to them must be ensured.
4. If the NFE system is expected to contribute to the realisation of the goal of universal elementary education, it should be linked with the formal education system through enabling state policies.
5. As per the provision of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment, the PRIs are required to play an important role in the management of school education. Wherever the PRIs are in place, the management of NFE centres alongwith financial resources may be handed over to these institutions.
6. Instead of direct flow of funds from MHRD to NGOs, funds should be routed through the State Government.
7. There is need for reassessment of the role that NFE could play in the realisation of the goal of removing illiteracy. In fact, NFE should aim at delivering literacy, numeracy and awareness to those out-of-school children who cannot be brought to the Formal Education System even at negligible private cost of education.