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Information on National Provisioning of Non-Formal Education: India Report

By Amit Mitra

The Process of Information Compilation

- Most of the information on NFE in India is available on the internet and the relevant websites used to compile the information have been mentioned.
- Apart from the internet, a recent workshop on skill development for the informal sector (February 12-13th) yielded a lot of information as many key functionaries of the NFE sector attended.
- Given the volume and the confusing nature of the data available, a lot of the information provided have been somewhat overlapping; however, the template given has been adhered to as much as possible.

A. Country level information on NFE

1. *Conceptualisation of NFE in the country*

At the outset, it would be relevant to mention that although life-long learning has entered the academic discourse, the NFE sector in India still tends to equate education with basic literacy and numeracy while other skills are relegated to acquisition of technical skills as in a vocational education programme.

The basic conceptualisation of NFE is substantially influenced by the UN definitions.

Formal education in India refers to the hierarchically structured education system running from the kindergarten through the university, including institutions of technical and professional education and training.

'Informal education', also often termed as 'incidental education', is seen as the unorganized education acquired during the entire life span of an individual through interaction with other members of the society. Hence, informal education is in fact accepted as a life long process through which every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge, to a large extent conditioned by his/her environment.

▪ **NFE**

NFE is conceptualised as an organized educational activity, occurring in the traditional framework of formal education system. Formal education is highly structured and rigid. It is characterized by uniformity to a large extent. The major characteristic feature of NFE in India is its flexibility in terms of organization, timing and duration of teaching and learning, clientele groups, age group of learners, contents, methodology of instruction and evaluation procedure. It is this characteristic feature of NFE, which has made it a critical mode for reaching out to the hardest-to-reach group of children and youth, both in rural and urban India, in order to achieve the much desired goal of education for all [UNESCO E 9 initiative, www.unesco.org/education/e-9/initiative and K. Biswal, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, India; in ANTRIEP (bi-annual newsletter) Vol 6, No 2; July-December2001].

▪ **Defining Literacy in the Indian Context**

The National Literacy Mission (NLM), the most important state mechanism for imparting NFE, defines literacy as acquiring the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic and *the ability to apply them to one's day-to-day life*. Thus the goal of the NLM goes beyond the simple achievement of self-reliance in literacy and numeracy of functional literacy. The achievement of functional literacy implies:

- Self-reliance in the 3 Rs.
- Becoming aware of the causes of deprivation and moving towards amelioration of their condition by participating in the process of development
- Acquiring skills to improve their economics status and general well-being
- Imbibing values of national integration, conservation of environment, women's equality, and observance of small family norms.
- The acquisition of functional literacy results in empowerment and a definite improvement in the quality of life. It helps to ensure the participation of the masses in sharing the benefits of the information era (www.nlm.nic.in).

Poverty and equity comprise major distinctive elements of the conceptualisation.

The 3 Rs have been characterized in the NLM thus:

Reading

- Reading aloud, with normal accent, and at a speed of 30 words a minute, a simple passage on a topic of interest to the learner.
- Silent reading at 35 words a minute, of small paragraphs in simple language.
- Reading with understanding the road signs, posters, simple instructions and newspapers/broadsheets designed for neo-literates.
- Ability to follow simple written passages relating to one's working and living environment

Writing

- Copying, with understanding, 7 words a minute.
- Taking dictation at 5 words a minute.
- Writing with proper spacing and alignment.
- Writing independently, short letters and applications, and filling in forms of day-to-day use to the learner

Numeracy

- Reading and writing numerals 1-100.
- Doing simple calculations (without fraction) involving addition and subtraction up to 3 digits, and multiplication and division by 2 digits.
- Working knowledge of metric units weights, measures currency, distance, area and unit of time.
- Broad idea of proportion and interests (not involving fractions) and their use in practical situations.
(<http://www.nlm.nic.in>)

▪ **Life Skills Education**

The concept of life skills education as the focus of all educational programmes and processes has been adopted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India.

The Government seeks to follow an integrated approach to literacy. "This means, the Total literacy Campaign and the Post Literacy Programme will operate under one literacy Project. This approach would enable the enormous illiteracy problem to be tackled in a holistic manner. By treating the imparting of functional literacy as a continuum rather than as a one of benefit for the illiterate person, progress of literacy efforts would be made goal-directed. Literacy campaigns would continue to run in those areas where there are large pools of residual illiteracy. At the same time, for those who have crossed the basic learning phase, programmes of consolidation, remediation, vocational skills, *integration with life skills (emphasis added)* and such other aspects would be considered the basic unit" (www.education.nic.in).

The characterization of life skills is not available; but speaking to MHRD officials; it appears that they follow the standard international definitions in relation to NFE.

Some NGO NFE providers ordered the life skills differently for the Indian context in a 2001 UNESCO-supported study conducted by an Indian NGO, REMEDIA Trust, on life skills education within the NFE sector; with a view to address issues related to drug abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention.

According to the NGOs participating in the study, *self awareness* is the first necessary life skill. By using the Socratic Method, the students can be helped to debate the issue of an individual's place in a family, a social group, a community, and a country. The young people can be made aware of their rights and duties and their responsibilities to themselves and society. The need to preserve their physical and mental health has to be realized. The twin essence of self awareness is the life skill of *empathy*. Awareness of self should be counterbalanced by awareness of others, their different thinking, feelings, desires and wishes. This requires some imagination and fellow feeling. It is part of a process of socialization and self control. Indian culture emphasizes empathy with human beings, animals and the nature around us. This skill has to be cultivated carefully, especially among street and slum children as they often exhibit an aggressive stance in self protection.

Critical thinking and *creative thinking* is the next pair of life skills. Training in thinking is very rare in formal as well as non-formal classrooms in India; and today as the media sends out a constant stream of messages, it is important to begin critical listening and asking the right questions. Training young people to ask for cause-effect relationship and then for rational thinking is essential, if they are going to withstand pressure.

Decision making and *problem solving* comes somewhat easier to children who are on the streets rather than to children who are protected by the family. Since, in India, the group rather the individual are given importance, these skills may be fostered by debates where individual differences can emerge and can be defended by logical arguments.

Coping with emotions and stress first requires admitting emotions and stress. In the Indian society, emotions and stress are regarded as shameful and stoicism is encouraged. Therefore, the discipline of standing aloof from one's emotions, recognising them and coping with them is an exercise that has to be carefully taught so that the extreme positions of either denying emotions or totally giving in to emotions are avoided.

Effective communication and interpersonal relations skills are important to young people in order to maintain both their independence and their friendships. In India, friendship between young people of the same sex has been more highly regarded than elsewhere. Even in India, family bonds, though strong, need careful nurture. Drugs do not tempt whose family bonds are strong. Families offer the young protection from drugs and stress.

Two major life skills necessary are *spatial orientation and orientation in time*. The non-verbal spatial skill is needed to practice arts and crafts, which are part of the Indian way of

life. Most vocational programmes depend on spatial skills. Orientation to time helps the young to plan for their future. It has been discovered that the disadvantaged do not have this orientation, so they tend to live in the present and do not save or invest money they earn for their morrow.

If the young who come to the NFE centres begin to understand the time-line and the cause and effect relationship, they will begin to appreciate how their effort of today will bear fruit tomorrow. Many young people do not have a clear notion of how yesterday, today and tomorrow are linked. They have a vague notion of weekdays and months but if they are going to participate in the modern world of technology, they must have orientation to both space and time.

Considering the large number of out-of-school children, an important human resource in India, it is necessary to devise ways of giving them these life skills that will help them handle adult responsibilities without failure and stress; making them the strengths of their communities' (Life skills in Non-Formal Education: A Review' by Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi and UNESCO, New Delhi; 2001. [http:// www.ibe.unesco.org/AIDS](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/AIDS)).

It is, however, not known or reported how this set of characterisations are actualised in the Indian setting.

- **Lifelong Learning**

Lifelong learning is emphasised, at least in theoretical terms, in the Indian NFE context.

One of the most interesting set of proposals with respect to lifelong learning in India was advocated by Gandhi as Indian independence approached. He saw that Indian education was bookish and European in outlook - and totally inappropriate to the majority of people who were villagers. At the same time Gandhi was completely against the idea that there should be two types of education - urban and rural. He felt that there was a great need for city dwellers to have more contact with the land.

The programme that Gandhi proposed was that manual work should be the basis for three or four hours per day and that training of the mind should stem from this. The central craft that he recommended was that of spinning – firstly, because spinning wheels or *charka* were cheap, traditional and simple to use. Secondly, because it was a good example of 'bread labour' (it had a useful social function). Thirdly, because spinning then led to other activities, that could be performed with skill. He argued that mental powers of inquiry and research must find scope for development through craft. He also said that craft must be collective, with teacher and students joining in service to the community. Vinoba Bhave, one of Gandhi's followers, gave the following list of the essential areas of knowledge that all children should have: facility in speech, knowledge of great poems by heart, discussion of the ideas of Gandhian philosophy; the basic concepts of science and the laws of health, nutrition, hygiene, and cookery (Sadler 1974: 84-5) (See *Gandhi and informal education*). All this formed part of Gandhi's work around combating untouchability and cultivating common reconciliation and village rehabilitation (Woodcock 1972: 79). <http://www.infed.org/lifelonglearning/south.htm>

The Gandhian approach had more of a philosophical mooring than a practical one. In the later decades, on a more pragmatic level, the NLM was launched to impart functional literacy to non-literates in the country in the age group of 15-35 years in a time bound manner. The NLM eventually aims at ensuring that the Total Literacy Campaigns (TLC) and their sequel, the Post-Literacy Programme (PLP), successfully move on to Continuing Education (CE), which provides a life-long learning and is responsible for the creation of a learning society (<http://www.pib.nic.in>).

Moreover, through the Open Universities and distance learning initiatives, mechanisms are in place to upgrade skills at regular intervals and develop new competencies. People's needs of lifelong learning are constantly expanding. The Open University System was initiated in the country to augment opportunities for higher education as an instrument of democratising education and also to make it a lifelong process. The first Open University in the country was established by the state government of Andhra Pradesh in 1982. In 1985, the central government established the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) (<http://www.education.nic.in/higedu>).

2. The Legal Foundations of NFE Policies

The Indian Constitution in its 86th Amendment Act, 2002 stipulates: *Right to Education*, "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine."

However, the most important official confirmation of the need for expanding adult education services in India came in the form of the National Policy Resolution of 1968. The first important initiative in adult education--the National Adult Education Program (NAEP) – was not established until 1978. It defined education as literacy, functionality, and conscientisation, and although its structures were eventually established, they did not always function effectively.

In 1980, the program was renamed (it was now simply called the AEP – Adult Education Programme) and expanded from a 10-month to a 3-year program with emphasis on health, family planning, and functional programmes. Unfortunately, the AEP was not extremely successful either. The main thrust of the new National Program of Adult Education (established in 1986) is like its predecessors in that its main thrust is efficiency rather than equity and its general mode is technocratic. www.eric.ed.gov/

The 1986 education policy envisages a national system which will take determined action to bring about universal primary education and promote the spread of adult literacy, thereby helping to reduce inequalities. The education system will be based on a national curricular framework which contains a common core as well as components specific to each region. The core will cut across subject areas and will be designed to promote such values as India's common cultural heritage, egalitarianism, democracy and secularism, equality of the sexes, protection of the environment, observance of the small family norm, and the scientific approach. Pace-setting schools called Navodaya Vidyalayas will provide quality education to particularly gifted children, irrespective of their families' means, and will promote excellence as well as equity and social justice. The 1986 policy also emphasizes the need to raise the level of investment in education from about 4 per cent of national income in 1986 to 6 per cent by 1990 and even higher thereafter (A new policy for education – India; UNESCO Courier, February 1989, by Anil Bordia).

It has to be noted that education in India is on the concurrent list, that is, it is the joint responsibility of both the Centre and the States. This leads to a considerable amount of confusion and indeed passing the buck in the actualisation of responsibilities in imparting education.

While India is a signatory to the EFA processes, in terms of legislations, the education processes are governed by Government Orders (GOs) passed from time to time. The framework does not seem to be justifiable in the sense that the state cannot be taken to court for non-implementation of the education policies.

3. Governance & Finance

The major implementing bodies of the NFE come under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). The MoLE (Ministry of Labour and Employment) is accountable for

some modular vocational training courses. Moreover, according to various officials, there are some 17 Ministries and Departments, which claim to provide NFE vocational training through various schemes and programmes. Information on this is not readily available.

- **Supervision**

In terms of supervision of NFE, the National Policy on Education, 1986, instructs the need for a substantial strengthening of the supervisory and administrative apparatus of NFE. Rather than depending on the urban-oriented bureaucratic model, emphasis is laid on taking up well designed projects of approximately 100 NFE centres, in a compact and contiguous area. Supervisors should be selected from the local community and if possible, an experienced and committed NFE Instructor. These persons should be intensively trained and wherever possible, there should be the involvement of an organisation of continuing education programme. Village Education Committees should be set up as envisaged in NPE/POA (National Policy on Education / Programme of Action) to involve the local community in the programme and also to make the NFE centre in-charge accountable to it. The broad aim of this scheme is to effectively involve voluntary agencies, public trusts, non-profit making companies, social activist groups and the rest, in the implementation of NFE programme (<http://www.edu.nic.in/policy/npe86-mod-92>).

- **Finance**

The main source of finance of the NFE projects is the state. The National Literacy Mission allocates budget for the NFE in the 10th Plan in Table 1:

Table 1: Financial Projections: Tenth Plan (2002-2007)

FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS: TENTH PLAN (2002-2007)						[Rs. in 10 millions]
SCHEME	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Literacy Campaings and Operation Restoration	60.00	50.00	50.00	40.00	22.00	222.00
Continuing Education for Neo-literates	333.00	373.50	294.50	314.50	214.50	1530.00
Jan Shikshan Sansthan	35.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	45.00	200.00
National Literacy Mission Authority	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	10.00
*Population Education in AE	2.50	--	--	--	--	--
Directorate of Adult Edn.	19.50	22.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	102.00
National Institute of Adult Education	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Support to Non-Governmental Organisations	21.00	24.00	25.00	26.00	27.00	123.00
TOTAL	474.00	509.00	431.50	442.50	330.50	2188.00

* Budget provision for 2002-2003 made in DAE budget and from 2003-2004 to 2006-2007, it has been made under the scheme of Support to Non-Governmental Organisations

The schematic break-up is of the 10th Plan outlay for adult education is given in Table 2:
(**Source** for both Tables 1 & 2 is the National Literacy Mission website;
<http://www.nlm.nic.in>;

Table 2: Schematic break up of 10th plan outlay for adult education fixed by the planning commission

SCHEMATIC BREAK UP OF 10TH PLAN OUTLAY FOR ADULT EDUCATION FIXED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION			[Rs. in 10 millions]
S.NO.	SCHEMES	Tenth Plan Outlay	Allocation for NE Region during 10th Plan
1.	Literacy Campaigns and Operation Restoration	95.00	9.50
2.	Continuing Education	826.00	95.60
3.	Jan Shikshan Sansthan	130.00	13.00
4.	National Literacy Mission Authority	10.00	0.00
5.	Directorate of Adult Education	70.00	5.00
6.	Population Education in Adult Education	8.00	0.80
7.	National Institute of Adult Education	1.00	0.00
8.	Support to Non-Governmental Organisations	110.00	1.10
TOTAL		1250.00	125.00

Note:

The above financial outlays are of the 10th Five Year Plans. Information on how much has actually been spent out of the allotted amounts is not readily available. Similarly data comparing the expenditure on formal and non-formal education is not available readily. According to officials in the education sector, the total allocation on the education sector as a whole is less than 3 percent of the GDP. The allocation for NFE comprises a small proportion of the total education budget, despite the imposition of an education cess on income tax for the last few years. Recently, the compulsory education bill was held up on the plea of insufficient funds. A lot of talk is on regarding the need for public-private partnerships to meet this financial crunch.

4. Management

▪ Monitoring

Monitoring of literacy campaigns is one of the important activities of the Directorate of Adult Education.

In order to ensure reliability as well as steady flow of information in literacy campaigns, the State Directorate of Adult Education (SDAEs) have been asked to monitor literacy campaigns. The Directorate has taken steps to strengthen the monitoring system by involving State Directorates in regular monitoring of the progress of literacy campaigns in each of the districts. Detailed guidelines were evolved and issued by the Directorate for strengthening of monitoring system under these guidelines. SDAEs are required to hold monthly meeting in which the presence of Secretary, Zilla Saksharata Samitis, Director, SRC and other resources persons has been made mandatory. The State Directorates are now required to consolidate the district reports at the state level and forward the same to the Central Directorate of Adult Education, which is to examine critically these reports and submit feedback to the State Directorate.

The Status Reports of Literacy and Post Literacy Campaigns are brought out at the end of each quarter.

▪ Evaluation

With a view to ensuring effective implementation of the literacy campaigns the NLM has now introduced more meaningful and rigorous evaluation system.

Each literacy campaign is now required to take up concurrent evaluation of the ongoing programme through an outside agency nominated by the State Directorates of Adult Education. The State Directorates have been asked to empanel agencies for undertaking concurrent evaluation. Concurrent evaluation aims at quick mid-term appraisal of a project to assess the strengths and weaknesses of an ongoing programme and to identify correctives for improvement of the programme.

Guidelines on Concurrent Evaluation are evolved and circulated to all literacy campaign districts and State Directorates (education.nic.in/cd50years).

The NLM had planned for a comprehensive and systematic M&E, anticipating data flows from learners groups on the ground on to the district headquarters, to the states and then to the Centre. Internal monthly monitoring was also expected to be complemented with formal internal evaluations when required. External spot checks were also part of the monitoring plans. The hope was to collect policy oriented feedback that could be collated for use at 6-month intervals. Concurrent Monitoring as well as Quick Appraisals were to be conducted at all the various levels and locations of the overall system. Data in the Monitoring system was to be used to develop program evaluations in all the aspects of formative evaluation, evaluation of instruction, and outcome evaluation.

In addition to in-house monitoring and evaluations, large-scope evaluations of TLC's were mandated that were to be paid for by the central government. At least three evaluations had to be conducted in each TLC: (1) a quick appraisals at the beginning; (2) a mid-term evaluation; and (3) an end-term evaluation. The list of questions that evaluations should find answers to were also established. The state governments had to contract these evaluations with outside experts - in university departments, specialized institutes, or NGO's who have acquired a reputation for doing good evaluation work, and were on the approved list. Normative frames for methodology, for testing achievement, for definition of success are also provided.

In addition, an official of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of Education and literacy) of the rank of a Deputy Secretary (Teacher Education) has been assigned to oversee all the matters pertaining to the scheme of Teacher Education and of monitoring the TE scheme in the country as a whole (www.edu.nic.in).

By 2002, some 14 years after its launch, the NLM, using goal-oriented, area-specific and time-bound strategies, had covered 574 of the nation's 598 districts. As many as 302 districts were already offering continuing education programs. Total enrolment had touched 125 million adults, with some 12 million volunteers leading learners groups. As many as 71.45 million had become literate (<http://www.unesdoc.unesco.org>).

- **Research and Training**

The National Institute of Education Planning and Administration (NIEPA), under the MHRD is the government body conducting research and training in the NFE sector. The Institute comprises of the Department of school and Non-Formal Education, whose prime focus is on the critical issues of school education, non-formal and adult literacy providing strong empirical base in order to contribute more meaningful inputs for developing and improving education. The Department maintains close linkages with government, non-government and international agencies with the objective of restructuring educational system at sub-national, national and international levels (www.education.nic.in).

Apart from NIEPA, civil society organisations like ASPBAE and Nirantar are actively involved in training and research in the NFE sector.

- **Departments of NFE at the National Universities**

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has played a key role in shaping the character of University Adult Education in India since the launching of the National Adult Education Programme in 1978. During the last two decades, the UGC has not only formulated a number of guidelines on adult continuing education programmes, but has also provided one hundred per cent funding support to universities to implement the programmes. Today as many as 93 universities have set up Adult Education Departments and they have implemented a variety of programmes (www.ugc.ac.in).

- **National framework for the training of NFBE educators and trainers**

The history of adult education in India shows that due emphasis and importance has been given to training strategies, programmes and policies. With the launching of the NLM, Project Formulation Guidelines were issued. These guidelines were supposed to be implemented in operationalising the Literacy and Adult Education Programme throughout the country

At the *National Level* Training Programmes are designed by the NLM, Directorate of AE, and Management institutions. At the *State Level* the Programmes are designed and organized by the State Resource Centres (SRCs), State Literacy Mission Authorities (SLMA) and other educational institutions. At the *District Level* the training programmes are designed and organized by SRCs, the District Institutions for Educational Training (DIET), The Zilla Saksharata Samities (ZSS), Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) and the NGOs, while at the *Community Level* the training programme is run by the ZSS, the JSS, NGOs, the Block Resource Centres (BRC) and the Literacy Resource Centres (LRC).

To conduct training programmes at different levels a pyramidal approach is adapted, with the Core Group, the Resource Persons, Master Trainers and lastly the Implementers.

The training of core group and key resource persons is conducted by SRC. The Resource persons train the master trainers and the master trainers train the Implementers.

The funds are provided to district agencies by National Literacy Mission (NLM) through the State Literacy Mission Authority (SLMA).

The training Programme available for NFE facilitators have facility for Pre Service (basic role and responsibilities), In service (when new issues are introduced to programme) and Short Course which is need based.

The programmes are organized in the following methods: the SRC training group travels to the districts for training, the Core group conducts District Resource Persons (RP) training, the RPs go to Block for Master Trainers (MT) training, and the MTs go to the Panchayats for Volunteers (VTs) training. For occasional courses, they go up to the district / block or to the State level also.

The main contents of the training programme are to explain the participants the Concept of Continuing Education programme and its importance; the establishment of CE Centres (CEC) and Nodal CECs; the management of CEC and Nodal CEC; the programmes organized at these CECs; the roles and duties of a facilitator and the strengthening of the CEC and launching innovative programmes and skill development programmes

The participants of the training programmes are selected at District/Block/Panchayat level by the ZSS (District Literacy Committees) while for the Core group and the other special training; SRC gives the criteria for selection of trainees.

The SRC assesses the usefulness and impact of the training programmes through its Research and Development Cell. The State also assesses by monitoring and external evaluation.

B. Information about major types of NFBE activities

There are many, many providers of NFE programmes in India. Apart from the NGO initiatives, including the famous ones like the BGVS and Nirantar, there are Central Government and State Government Initiatives too. It really would not be an exaggeration to say that almost every ministry except the Defence, Home and External Affairs runs some kind of programme or the other. This is apart from the TLC initiative under the NLM.

The medium of instruction is the State vernacular that is in the dominant language of the state. Thus in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar or Jharkhand, it is Hindi and field observations show that this creates problems for, say, the ethnic indigenous groups like the tribals. Also, the official language of the state is the standard colloquial one and often not followed by the speakers of particular dialects.

The teaching-learning methods of the programmes are generally hard to come by. For most programmes, (the exception being the TLCs of the 1990s) there are hardly any comprehensive evaluation reports available in the public domain on these aspects. Sometimes it is even difficult to pin-point who runs a particular programme. The NIOS and the NCVT (National Council of Vocational Training) schemes are run by the government approved centres (ITIs) as well as NGOs like Don Bosco.

The picture gets more complicated as one tries to compile an indicative list of programmes that are supposed to provide basic literacy plus, that is try to impart life skills and/or economic development (income-augmenting) skills. The bigger picture that has to be kept

in mind is that of the low literacy rates (65.4 percent overall, 75.4 percent male and 54.1 percent female in 2001) as well as the elementary school (class 1-5) dropout rate (31.4 percent in 2003-4) in India. Also, insofar as skill training (that is imparting literacies apart from basic literacy and numeracy) is concerned, it has to be kept in mind that "the actual number of persons expected to enter the labour force is about 12.3 million persons per annum...the number of those entering with some degree of formal training is about 1.5 millions" (Mittra, A p.159, "Decent Work in the Informal Sector: South India" in Madhu Singh (ed) 2005, Meeting Basic Needs in the Informal Sector, Springer, The Netherlands). The numbers of those who are possibly provided for, the government and NGO initiatives put together just don't match the high demand.

Against this background, the rest of this section gives a glimpse of some of the major NFE initiatives in the country.

NFE Programmes

1. One of the major government initiatives, **the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC)** run by the National Literacy Mission (NLM), was started in 1988-89, initially as an experiment. It was area specific, time bound, volunteer based, outcome oriented and had a mass programme character. The core activities of the programme were literacy and numeracy. The targeted age group was illiterates in the age of 15 to 35. After the campaign was over, the neo-literates moved on to Post-literacy Programmes (PLP) and Continuing Education (CE). The minimum duration of the TLC was 6 months with PLP and CE was 3 months. The programme was imparted in the vernacular and the trainers were local volunteers. In the initial phases, literacy was the only competency focused on.

However, In the light of EFA goals and targets set up in the Dakar Framework for Action and clearly aligned to social and gender equity thrusts, the NLM, under the aegis of MHRD in 2003, felt the necessity to effect a certain re-focusing of its strategies pursued since 1999. The EFA-NPA's (National Plan of Action) new "thrust areas" in literacy include achievement of 75 percent literacy level by 2007, a multi-pronged strategy to address regional, social and gender disparities in literacy, refocusing literacy, post-literacy and CE programmes to increase and strengthen women's participation, to bridge gender gap in literacy, encouraging PL and CE districts to pay special attention on mobilization and organization of women into neo-literate and self-help groups (SHGs), special attention to socially disadvantaged groups like Schedule Castes / Scheduled Tribes and women.

2. Another government-run programme for UEE, with a view to Alternative Schooling and alternative education to a section of drop-outs, is the **Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA)**, started in 2001. The important features of SSA are Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) that seeks to base itself on strong community involvement and micro planning exercises. The EGS & AIE generally cover children in the age group of 6-14 years; however, for children with disabilities, it covers children up to the age of 18 years, complying with the provisions of Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection or Rights and full Participation) Act, 1995.

The SSA has laid down various strategies for adolescent girls too. They are similar to interventions adopted under the Mahila Samakhya programme and several other NGO run programmes in different states. These include Jagjagi centres, short duration motivational and literacy centres which are residential in nature, from where the girls could go on to attend longer duration residential camps. The focus of these motivational/preparatory centres, apart from inducting the girls into the formal system is also impart to life oriented and gender sensitive education. The

learners apart from reading and writing get information regarding legal aid, health care, environment and women issues. The SSA also offers bridge Courses, remedial courses, Back-to-School Camps with a focus on mainstreaming out of school children into regular schools.

3. **Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)**, originally known as the Shramik Vidyapeeth, was first established in the country in Worli, Mumbai in 1967.

JSS or the Institute of People's Education was initially launched as a polyvalent or multi-faceted adult education programme aimed at improving the vocational skill and quality of life of workers and their family members. The programme was evolved to respond to the educational and vocational training needs of numerous groups of adult and young people living in urban and industrial areas and for persons who had been migrating from rural to urban settings. Now with the emergence of millions of neo-literates through the total literacy campaigns and the transformation that has taken place in the economic and social set up over the years, the role and scope of these polyvalent educational institutes have widened manifold.

In the changed scenario, the focus of JSS is now shifting from industrial workers in urban areas to the numerous neo-literates and un-skilled and unemployed youth throughout the country. The Sansthans act as district level resource support agencies especially in regard to organization of vocational training and skill development programmes for the neo-literates and other target groups of the continuing education scheme. Originally the JSS scheme was restricted to urban, semi-urban and industrial areas. Now, the area of operation has been extended to the entire districts including rural areas. As per the revised guidelines issued by the Government of India, at least 25 percent of the beneficiaries of the Jan Shikshan Sansthan should be neo-literates.

The JSSs offer around 255 different types of vocational courses - from candle and agarbatti making, sewing and embroidery to computer courses.

Earlier, the JSSs were set up under the aegis of non-government organizations, State Governments and Universities. On the other hand, JSS Delhi is directly under the Government of India. However, as per the revised guidelines issued by the Government of India, the Jan Shikshan Sansthans will function only under the NGOs. Efforts are on way to transfer all the Jan Shikshan Sansthans to run under the aegis of the State Governments to the NGO sector.

In the year 2004-5, there were 157 institutions with the training capacity of 0.35 million, with 0.15 million trained so far.

4. Established in 1989 as National Open School (NOS) by MHRD, Government of India, the **National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)** was renamed in July 2002 and is the largest Open Schooling System in the World Providing Alternative Schooling System.

The NIOS has 1805 academic study centres and 917 Vocational study centres throughout the country with 249 Centres for Open Basic Education. The enrolment for the last 5 years has been 1.4 million students.

The NIOS offers open vocational education, package courses, six months and one year vocational courses, life enrichment courses, stand-alone vocational subjects, as well as vocational subjects in combination with academic subjects.

The broad vocational areas comprise subjects ranging from agriculture, Computer Science and IT, Engineering and Technology, Teacher Training to Business and Commerce as well as Health and Para-Medical courses.

The NIOS curriculum can be largely placed in the categories of equivalency or alternative schooling, life skill training, as well as training in income generation programmes.

The NIOS uses the existing infrastructure of Partner Institutions, like the Governmental Institutions, Industrial Training Institutions (ITIs), the NGOs, and Private Institutions called Accredited Vocational Institutes (AVIs).

Potential Beneficiaries of this scheme are the rural poor and urban slum dwellers, the socially and economically deprived, the disabled or differently abled, unemployed youth and adults, employed and partially employed workers, formal school dropouts, women and girls, migratory population, hill and desert dwellers, life long learners, hobby skill learners and open schooling for all learners.

Some of the courses, like Computer Science and IT, Engineering and Technology Computer Science and IT and Engineering and Technology run by the NIOS are taught in English.

The educators / trainers of the NIOS-run courses are personnel trained in the concerned subjects from accredited institutions.

5. Skill Development based on **Modular Employable Skills (MES)** – Very few opportunities for skill development are available for the out of school youth and existing workers, especially in the informal sector. Most of the existing skill development programmes are long term in nature. Considering their educational, social and economical background, it was concluded that the poor and less educated persons can not afford long term training programmes due to higher entry qualifications and opportunity cost.

Consequently, a new framework for Skill Development for the informal sector has been evolved by the DGET (Directorate General of Employment and Training – Ministry of Labour and Employment) to address the above mentioned problems. MES would benefit different target groups like workers seeking certification of their skills acquired informally; workers and ITI graduates seeking skill upgradation, early school drop-outs and the unemployed.

The curricula has been developed ranging from agriculture to food processing and banking and accounting.

The curriculum is approved by the NCVT (National Council of Vocational Training) and the time taken to gain the qualification will vary according to the pathway taken and will be kept very flexible for persons with different backgrounds and experience.

6. The government of India runs **various NFE schemes** for adults in the realm of **income generation**. There are about 17 governmental departments and ministries offering training in various areas. Some of the schemes are:

DWCRA: Introduced in 1982-83, as a sub-scheme of the Integrated Rural Development programme, DWCRA aims at developing income-generating skills and promoting activities among poor women in rural areas, subsequently improving

their social and economic status. The basic unit under this scheme is a group of 10-15 poor women (though the size may be smaller in different areas).

The programme is implemented by the District Rural Development Agencies. Any economic activity suited to groups of women in line with their skills, aptitudes and local conditions can be taken up under the scheme. NGOs are also involved in the implementation of the programme and are supported by the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), an organisation set up under the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment to coordinate the development work of voluntary agencies in India. However, due to poor backward and forward linkages, lack of spontaneous financial support and selection of non-viable activities, several groups of beneficiaries are no longer supported.

TRYSEM: Established in 1979, the Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment is aimed at developing technical and entrepreneurial skills among rural youth from families below the poverty line aged from 18 to 35 years, to enable them to take up income-generating activities. Training given under this scheme is based on the needs of the area, and is provided at such training centres as the ITIs, community polytechnics, extension training centres, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, khadi and village industry boards, state institutes of rural development or institutions run by voluntary agencies. Training under this scheme is normally for six months, during which the trainees receive a stipend. Besides, financial assistance is also provided to the training institutions and master craftsmen. However the TRYSEM has a weak link with the overall strategy of self-employment. The training is generally not related to the capacity or aptitudes of the trainees and unrelated to the demand for a particular skill.

Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana: Launched in October 1993, the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) aims at providing wage employment and self-employment to educated unemployed youths aged between 18 and 35. The scheme envisages compulsory training for entrepreneurs for a period of 15 to 20 working days for the industrial sector after a loan is approved. The scheme is targeted to provide assistance to 220,000 educated youths during the year 1999-2000. An evaluation of this programme (IAMR, 2000) revealed that it generates employment for about 2.4 persons per unit. The employment generation potential is found to be more in the case of industrial units (3.5 persons) than in the service (2.2 persons) and trade (1.9 persons) sectors. Training has been useful for an overwhelming majority of the beneficiaries (81 per cent). Many more youth seek assistance under the PMRY. However, almost half of the total applications are rejected by the taskforce committees of the District Industry Centres (DICs). The most important reason behind these rejections is inadequate technical skills. Therefore, the need for more training facilities is being increasingly felt by the youth before setting out on their ventures. Also there is a lack of publicity campaigns on the various aspects of PMRY like eligibility, fund availability, skills required and markets. As a result, there is little awareness among the youth about the scheme.

Apart from the schemes mentioned above, there are various other schemes which offer informal apprenticeship as well as on-the-job training by various ministries. They are:

- Vocational Training in Krishi Vigyan Kendras – Farm Science Centre.
- Vocational Training in Khadi and Village Industries
- Swarn Jayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojna
- Stree Shakti
- Swarn Jayanti Sahari Rojgar Yojna
- Testing and certification of skills of workers engaged in the Informal sector (DGET) and many more.

Information on these schemes and programmes are hard to come by as there is no comprehensive/systematic documentation centrally available.

Apart from the purely government set up and run NFE schemes, there are some initiatives run by the NGOs. Foremost among them is the BGVS.

The impetus to initiate a mass action for renewal was propelled from such an understanding. A voluntary agency, **Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS)** was formed to initiate a mass action for renewal, out of many voluntary groups working under the loose umbrella of the 'People's Science Network' (PSN).

BGVS considers literacy as a possible starting point for social transformation, and a means for a crusade against conditions that maintain illiteracy, a crusade against communalism, a crusade against dependence and oppression. The central slogan of BGVS has been "science and literacy for national integration and self-reliance". Through this, it seeks to capture the "emotional" support of the people.

The BGVS's involvement with the TLCs, which took off in various districts, was varied. Its role ranged from motivation to project formulation and initiation, actively and in a participatory fashion, depending on the requirements of the particular situation.

Looking at how a broad democratic movement, with the participation of the state machinery, can reach out to millions of people and overcome traditional hurdles, BGVS, in collaboration with various PSN groups, has been exploring further areas of development and possibilities for intervention. It is intervening in areas such as universalisation of elementary education, science popularisation, participatory watershed development programmes, rural enterprise programmes, library and cultural movements, health, environment protection and sustainable models of development.

Nirantar, a resource centre for gender and education, was set up in 1993. Over the past decade Nirantar has worked towards fulfilling its mandate of empowering women through education – by enabling access to information, promoting literacy and engendering education processes. They do this through direct field interventions, training and capacity building, creating educational resources and research and advocacy. Nirantar is actively involved with the women's movement and other democratic rights movements and bring concerns central to those movements into their educational work.

It must be pointed out that there are innumerable NGOs providing NFE using government as well as their own models all over the country. Till date there exists no comprehensive mapping of these initiatives.