

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in Primary Schools

Why in news?

With India's 132nd rank out of 191 countries in the Human Development Index 2021, there is a need to focus on the nation's education, especially the foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools.

What efforts were taken over the years?

- **International efforts** - The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All at the Jomtien Conference affirmed the right of all people to education.
- **NEP 2020** - [The National Education Policy \(NEP\), 2020](#) states that a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy will be set up for attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools.
- It also aims to identify state-wise targets and goals to be achieved by 2025.
- **Role of civil societies**- There are many innovations in the civil society space, such as by Gyan Shala, Saksham, the Central Square Foundation, Room to Read, and Akshara.

Efforts to Promote Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

Shiksha Karmi Project
(1987)

- To tackle teacher absenteeism in remote villages in Rajasthan
- Involves active involvement of the local communities

Bihar Education Project
(1990s)

- To give a fillip to the universalisation of primary education
- It developed a 10-day residential in-service training for teachers, called the Ujala module

Lok Jumbish or Peoples
Movement for Education
for All (1992)

- Launched in Rajasthan to provide a thrust to innovations
- Laid emphasis on civil society partnership and demonstrated successes, especially in tribal districts

*Unni Krishnan v. State
Of Andhra
Pradesh* (1993)

- Made the right to education for children up to age 14 as central and fundamental

District Primary
Education Programme
(1994)

- To transform the quality of primary education

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
(2001)

- Universalisation of elementary education

What are the challenges?

- Communities view understaffed and ruined schools only as election booths.
- Improvement in school infrastructure, uniforms, toilet access, water and textbook availability, classroom processes remain a challenge.
- Lack of direct funds to schools, teacher vacancies, allocation of non-teaching tasks to teachers, etc. are other issues.
- A systemic way of recruiting good teachers and establishing teacher development institutions is still absent.
- Poor governance affects the effectiveness of face-to-face or digital teacher development initiatives like [Nishtha](#), Pratham's Read India campaign, etc.

What is the need of the hour?

- **Community connects** - To achieve the objective of foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools, we need to focus on community connects and parental involvement.
- The Panchayati Raj, Rural and Urban Development Ministries can work on community connect and make learning outcomes a responsibility of local governments.
- **Decentralisation of funds** - Providing decentralised funds to schools with the community overseeing such funds may aid in achieving the NEP objective.
- **Use of technology** - The Sampark Foundation uses audio battery-operated sound boxes and innovative teaching learning materials.
- It has launched a TV, which helps teachers use lesson plans, content and activity videos and worksheets to make classes more interactive.

Quick facts

The Education for All Programme

- Launched in 1990 with contributions from various foundations, international and non-governmental organizations, mass media and five intergovernmental agencies including the
 - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
 - United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
 - United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
 - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
 - World Bank
- The International Consultative Forum on Education for All was established as an interagency body to guide and monitor follow-up actions to the World Conference in Jomtien.
- The forum with its secretariat is located at UNESCO headquarters in **Paris**.

References

1. [The Hindu | Where no child is left behind](#)
2. [United Nations | Outcomes on Education](#)

