

Role of the Directorate of Adult Education in Monitoring of SRCs and JSSs Under Saakshar Bharat

Anita Priyadarshini, PhD

Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi

anitapriyadarshini@ignou.ac.in

Introduction

Monitoring is a key component of any successful organization. Every organization sets up its own system and process to ensure effective monitoring. Monitoring is an important tool for measuring performance improving the efficiency of the organization. It is a management tool that enables policy makers and implementers to assess whether the goals for which the organization was set up are being achieved efficiently. In the area of adult education, there has been considerable emphasis upon monitoring and evaluation. The Directorate of Adult Education (DAE) was set up to promote adult learning and served as the National Resource Centre and spearheaded the formidable task of monitoring of the literacy campaigns. The DAE was given the responsibility of collecting progress reports related to the literacy and post literacy campaigns on a monthly basis. DAE also collected feedback and progress reports through appraisals and field visits. These included District Evaluation Reports submitted by Evaluation agencies and field visits made on regular basis by DAE officials. Status Reports were brought out on a regular basis.

With the launching of the Saakshar Bharat Mission on 8th September, 2009, the role of DAE was modified to meet the needs of the time bound Saakshar Bharat scheme. The Saakshar Bharat document stated that the advances in the world of technology would be extensively used to monitor progress of the literacy programme (Saakshar Bharat, MHRD, 2009). It was felt that use of the use of internet would facilitate communication between the constituents of Saakshar Bharat.

Monitoring of SRCs and JSSs – An Overview

DAE played a major role in monitoring of the literacy and continuing education programmes during the period of NLM. However during this phase of Saakshar Bharat, the major tasks of monitoring were carried out by the Technical Support Group(TSG) of EdCil. In the National Literacy Mission(NLM) phase, i.e. up to 2009, DAE served as the National Resource Centre and used to monitor the targets set by the Government for achievement of literacy. (DAE,2009) The methods for monitoring included the Monthly Progress Reports developed by districts which were sent to the SLMAs and then to DAE All States and Union Territories were also required to send reports to the DAE. These state reports were detailed

reports which took into account the status of the literacy projects in terms of number of projects sanctioned and their progress. Further there were regular exchange of data through Monthly Review Meeting of the Chief Secretaries with the District Collectors. The success of the adult education programme has been its strong academic and technical foundation, of which two major field agencies were the State Resource Centre (SRC) and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs).

The State Resource Centre (SRC) were the state level body that provided academic and technical support to the literacy programmes in the state. The activities of material production, training, media support, environment building, research, evaluation, innovative projects were conducted by SRCs. The DAE collaborated with SRCs to conduct national trainings, develop standards, and formulate guidelines of different components to promote literacy. Further there were many innovative programmes such as the Population Education project which were carried out by SRCs with the UNFPA and were monitored by DAE. The SRCs were also required to work in close collaboration with the State Literacy Mission Authorities and with districts to plan the literacy programmes.

The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs) scheme was set up in 1967 with the idea of providing vocational training to neo literates. The JSSs run training programmes designed by DAE, and other agencies and award certificates to enable neo literates to obtain jobs. The JSSs work in close collaboration with district literacy agencies. The SRCs and JSS are housed in reputed NGOs and academic institutions.

Monitoring of State Resource Centres

The DAE monitored some of the activities of the SRCs, while TSG of Saakshar Bharat monitored the other activities. During the period of Saakshar Bharat, the DAE was responsible for monitoring of all aspects of the programmes including innovative activities carried out by SRCs.

One such activity assigned to SRCs during the Saakshar Bharat phase was the Camp Based Literacy Programme (CBLP). In this programme, SRC were required to organize Residential Camps for providing instructional teaching to the learners and assisting them in completing basic literacy courses (MHRD,2012) These Camps were organized, specially for adolescents and young adults in the age group of 15-25 years, who might have already completed primary education (Standard IV/V) but later relapsed to illiteracy for want of follow up. DAE was involved in the monitoring of these Camps which were sanctioned to the SRCs. A total of 228 camps were sanctioned to SRCs of different states (DAE 2014).

Another means of monitoring was the regular meetings held with SRC officials. These meetings provided an opportunity for the DAE officials to share their issues with the SRC officials. Thus the Quarterly Review meetings ensured that the government was able to review the tasks of literacy in the field. In addition to this, there were many review

committees, set up by National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA), such as Review Committee for SRCs, Review Committee for Literacy Awards which were engaged in the task of reviewing policies, methodologies, institutional frameworks .

Another means monitoring of SRCs by the DAE was through the process of their own external evaluation. The DAE prepared the Guidelines for SRC Evaluation in 2012. As per this document, it was stated that “For effective monitoring of the performance of SRCs, it is necessary to periodically evaluate their performance”. (DAE, 2012) Hence there was a close relationship between monitoring and evaluation of these field bodies. The DAE was also responsible for the pre and post conduct of the evaluation of the SRCs. During these SRC evaluations, all the comments and inputs upon the evaluation reports submitted by the Evaluation Agency were studied by DAE. The evaluation of these SRCs was entrusted to empanelled evaluation agencies which included Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, Indian Institute of Rural Development Jaipur, Department of Adult Education, SV University Tirupati, Department of Continuing and Adult Education SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai, Management Development Institute, MDI, Gurgaon, Centre for Development Communication and Studies, Jaipur, Madras School of Social Work, Centre for Media Studies, New Delhi Chennai, Indore School of Social Works, Indore, AN Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna, Council for Social Development, New Delhi, GB Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad, AMC Research Group, New Delhi (DAE, 2015)

An effort was also made to monitor the agencies through the SRC portal. This portal gave details of SRC, their staff, financial details, publications, infrastructure etc in the public domain on the MHRD website under its portal for “Scheme of Support to Voluntary Agencies for Adult Education & Skill Development”.

Monitoring of Jan Shikshan Sansthan

The monitoring of JSSs was done by DAE and through external evaluations. The task of the included development of monitoring tools. The development of the monitoring process was done in a participatory manner with representatives of evaluating agencies and representative from JSSs working out the parameters for conducting impact evaluation of Jan Shikshan Sansthan. The DAE has conducted 164 evaluation of JSSs between 2006 and 2013. (DAE, 2015)

The monitoring process had a strong component of periodic review. DAE regularly conducted review of JSSs which included Annual Review meetings to find out the progress of the programmes and to monitor the effectiveness of the JSSs. In addition, half yearly review meetings were organized to critically review the individual JSS progress on coverage of target group, training cost, modalities for adoption of curriculum of National Council of Vocational Training (NCVT) and other professional agencies. JSSs were also monitored periodically to assess progress of individual JSS with regard to target proposed and

achievement made. The income and expenditure of each JSS was also reviewed. In order to improve the working of the JSS, in 2011 it was decided to constitute a Committee for Restructuring of JSSs. The Committee suggested some reforms in the programmes as well as in the level and age group of JSS beneficiaries. The Committee also made recommendations upon administrative issues for improving the functioning of the JSSs. Performance audit for some JSSs was also conducted through agencies identified by DAE. The review of the JSS programmes is also done by DAE through the innovative JSS portal .

Innovative Practices used in Monitoring

There were also some innovative features that made the monitoring system stronger . Amongst these was the use of ICTs for monitoring. One such initiative under Saakshar Bharat was the development of a computerized web based planning and monitoring information system. This enabled DAE to conduct online monitoring. This system was designed by National Informatics Centre (NIC) as a web based application to institutionalize and strengthen adult education (NIC,2011) This system was implemented for field agencies and was accessible through a public portal. The uniqueness of the system was that it served not only as a monitoring tool for the government, its constituent agency but also a tool for citizen feedback and correction through public participation and social audit. A web based management system ensured that the financial allocation of each SRC and JSS was utilized optimally and that the finances were used to achieve the goals for which the Saakshar Bharat Scheme was set up.

Another unique monitoring tool was the development of the Agency Portal. Both SRC and JSS were assigned an agency portal. The JSS Portal was developed by DAE with the help of NIC and was designed with a comprehensive and systematic monitoring tools that covered various aspects of the programme. This portal enabled uniform data to be collected and analyzed so that regular feedback and appraisal could be carried out. These monitoring formats on different aspects of the programme were developed for each component and duly filled up and sent by all the JSS working at the field level. These portals served as monitoring tools which could be viewed by officials of the DAE, Ministry, Saakshar Bharat officials, and even citizens. The interactive portals were a sound means by which officials of DAE could regularly provide feedback on the different aspects such as financial outlays, expenditure, staff and administrative matters.

The use of technology for monitoring helped in overcoming bottlenecks and solving problems in a speedy manner under Saakshar Bharat. Another innovative means was the regular use of tele-conferencing and video-conferencing mode to gather information as well as impart information to the field. DAE also used this facility in which two-way audio and one-way video facility was used for interaction between the field persons and agencies located at a distance. The video-conferences were held using the equipment of NIC as well as of other established institutions like IGNOU. The video-conferencing worked as an effective means for monitoring and creating a quick response and more efficient system.

One of the programmes in which video-conferencing was used frequently was the learner assessment conducted by Saakshar Bharat with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). As a part of the monitoring of the Basic Literacy Programme, the officials of DAE and NIOS held regular video conferencing with the field agencies to monitor the preparation of the assessment. This allowed the DAE officials to interact with the SRCs and SLMAs and obtain information such as details about registration of the learners, status of the question & answer books and their distribution, status of assessment centers, invigilators, arrangement of monitoring and supervision and many other such issues. The usefulness of the video-conferencing was that it was allowed interaction between monitoring officials and field functionaries at a lesser cost and in real time.

Another valuable aspect was the third party visits to the field to get an independent view and to obtain fresh insights to improve the quality of the programme. Officials from professional institutions such as adult education associations, management institutes, technical institutes, technology centres, banks, international agencies, Universities, corporate bodies as well as NGOs were encouraged to visit districts and give their independent opinion. The DAE also conducted monitoring through field visits by members of various committee and officials. The purposes of such visits was to obtain direct information from learners as well as field functionaries about the programme and its functioning. The field visits provided an opportunity for feedback to take remedial action wherever necessary.

Conclusion

There were some high points of the monitoring of SRCS and JSS by DAE under the Saakshar Bharat. One of them was the use of technology. Technology by itself has many advantages such as those of speed, transparency, manageability, which make it an efficient tool of monitoring. The process of manual handling of data was transformed with the use of technology. The use of technology for monitoring was effective as flow of data could be easily monitored. The Portal for JSS and the portal for SRC was set up by National Informatics Centre. These portals facilitated the web based monitoring system for different aspect of the programme such as physical aspects, financial outlays, staff details.

Another aspect of monitoring which worked well was that of regular review. Quarterly and Annual Review meetings of SRCs and JSS were held regularly. These review meetings were attended by government's officials as well as by members of civil society. The review meetings with SLMA Directors, SRC Directors, JSS Directors, NLM officials and University, NGO invitees gave an opportunity for discussion and correction of the bottlenecks during mid-course.

The monitoring of the field situation carried out by physical visits by the officials of NLMA, DAE to various districts for also an important factor that helped in monitoring. These visits included interaction with learners, supervision of the infrastructure as well as getting

information about the local problems. These reports became a significant part of the monitoring process and helped in the overall reporting of the DAE.

However there were some challenges also. The Directorate of Adult Education was set up as the national resource agency for adult education in the country. Over the years, the DAE played an apex role in policy formation, programme planning, and programme review and programme implementation in the country. During the period of the literacy campaigns and the continuing education phase, the DAE played a leading role in monitoring of the programme. However, over a period of time as the Saakhar Bharat scheme began coming to an end, the role of SRCs, JSSs and other resource agencies in the adult education programmes also diminished. Accordingly the DAE also lost its key role due to severe staff crunch and lack of resources. However despite such a setback, it is seen that the role of the Directorate of Adult Education (DAE) has been central to the development of literacy and continuing education programme in India. The national resource agency for adult education, DAE, has played a leadership role through its monitoring mechanism to ensure that the State Resource Centres and the Jan Shikshan Sansthan were able to fulfill the goals visualized for under of Saakshar Bharat programme.

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