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United Nations Literacy Decade

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Presented at the UNESCO sub-regional Conference *Addressing Literacy Challenges in South, South West and Central Asia: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches*. (29 - 30 November 2007, New Delhi, India)

Programme name: Non-Formal and Continuing Education Programme

Implemented by: Ministry of Education, Bhutan

Basic facts

Country: Bhutan

Starting year: 1992

Outreach: about 15,000 to 18,000 learners per year

Target Population: school dropouts, adolescent and adults

Language of instruction: Dzongkha – the national language

Operating in: in 777 NFE centres and 22 Community Learning Centres

Facilitator/Beneficiary ratio: 1/20

Main Funding: Royal Government of Bhutan

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Brief Description

In line with the 1990 Jomtein Declaration on Education for All (EFA), the National Women's Association of Bhutan introduced the Non-formal Education (NFE) Programme in Bhutan in 1992 with the establishment of five pilot NFE centres in different districts. The programme was coordinated by the Dzongkha Development Commission in 1993 and 1994 and since mid-1994, it is being coordinated by the Ministry of Education.

Bhutan's Non-Formal and Continuing Education Programme operates at three levels: The *Basic Literacy Programme*, a one-year course, is targeted for complete illiterates and school dropouts below class III. The following *Post Literacy Programme* is a nine-month course conducted for the learners who complete the basic literacy course and for other neo-literates like anims, gomchens, gelongs (monks and nuns) in order to enhance their functional literacy skills. Finally, the *Self-Learning Programme* is a part of the continuing education programme and aims at providing lifelong learning opportunities.

Rationale

Bhutan's overall literacy rate is low. Almost half of the population of the country, with a majority of women, is either totally illiterate or with minimal functional literacy and numerical skills. Therefore, a large section of the population lack income generation skills and have no capacity to enhance the quality of their lives (mainly in rural areas). The Non-Formal Education and Continuing Education Programme intends to provide functional literacy and numeracy as well as continuing education to the Bhutanese illiterate population.

Objective

The objective of the NFE programme is mainly to provide basic functional literacy to the illiterate population at all levels. It is also aimed at empowering and improving the quality of life of the population by providing relevant life skills.

Conceptual Model and Methodology

The literacy programme has been made attractive to the learners by providing free learning materials, other related facilities and flexible study times. The literacy lessons are delivered using mainly the participatory method.

Reading corners have been set up where possible to allow the learners to continue their learning. The learners are also given opportunities to participate in vocational skill training activities.

The Basic Literacy Programme provides basic literacy skills combined with knowledge, information and skills related to health, sanitation, environment, agriculture, livestock, early child care and development (ECCD), STD/AIDS. The post literacy curriculum consists broadly of three modules – Functional Literacy, Life Skills, and Values Education. The Self-Learning-Programme has basically two major activities: reading corners and skills training. Reading corners are established wherever there are community learning centres (CLCs) and space available in the schools to support neo-literates in retaining literacy skills through ready access to reading materials and instructional support. Skills training such as tailoring or furniture-making are also provided through the CLCs.

Innovative features

The programmes are implemented based on the needs and interests of the learners/beneficiaries. Adult teaching methodologies are employed in the teaching and learning process. The programme reaches out to the un-reached and serves some of the most disadvantaged populations in the country. It provides a comprehensive set of skills from basic literacy to life skills, vocational skills and lifelong learning skills.