

A Study of the Functional Education Component of Rural Development Project (RDP) -9 in Four District of Bangladesh.

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Without the eradication of illiteracy, a nation can not make proper progress. Julius Nyerere has stated that development is for man, by man and of man. Man is the main tool of development and education provides the instrument for liberation from ignorance and oppression. Education is a very important input in human resource development and it has a basic importance in the planned development of a nation.

By the mid seventies , the countries of the 'Third World' have started thinking of development not only in terms of per capita income, but also in terms of improvement of the quality of life. The new definition of development concerns the human development and an equitable distribution of the benefits of development to all the sections of the society. The newer concept of development incorporates social advancement, equality and freedom of all the members of the society. The philosophy of Functional Education (FE) programme fits in the new concept of development. FE programme has been designed primarily to liquidate illiteracy and to increase the levels of awareness and functionality of the illiterates of the country. This programme, a component of the larger development project undertaken in Bangladesh known as RDP-9, has the potential of affecting an economic and social transformation and establishing a new social order as envisaged in the constitution of Bangladesh.

RDP-9 is a rural infrastructure development and poverty alleviation endeavour of the BRDB. This is limited to 20 thanas of the four districts , namely, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Rangpur. These districts are located in the

northern part of Bangladesh which is extremely vulnerable to natural calamities and its ensuing poverty. FE programme has been in operation in these four districts with a view to improve the level of literacy of RDP-9 group members. It aims at enabling individuals to read and write short sentences and work out simple numerical computations encountered in their day to day lives. FE programme also has its one aim as to help the adult learners to improve their standard of living through participation in various development programmes.

Rationale of the study.

FE is not limited to literacy nor is it education for the poor only. It should not be seen as a compensatory social policy to alleviate poverty, but on the other hand, it needs to be recognized as a tool for human development and self reliance. FE is envisaged as an indispensable input in all sectors of development, particularly in the rural areas where participation of the beneficiaries is crucial to the fulfilment of the development objective. It recognizes that illiteracy is a serious impediment to the individual's growth and country's socio-economic process. While removal of illiteracy is being emphasized as one of the essential constituents of FE, stress is also laid on programmes of functional up gradation and creation of awareness among the illiterates and poor regarding constraints to their development. FE, therefore, cannot be a mere literacy programme, but it has to be correlated with the social, health, hygiene and working conditions of the people.

RDP-9 has been operating a six month FE programme for their illiterate group members from October 20, 1996. RDP-9 used the learning materials developed by FIVDB, a well known NGO of Bangladesh. The programme widely covered the rural areas of Bangladesh, because of the higher illiteracy and poverty prevalent there. The present study, conducted in the rural areas of four districts in Bangladesh, has been undertaken with a view to find out the significance of FE programmes in the development of rural communities.

The development of rural people is very difficult without imparting education to them. FE influences the poverty ridden situation in two ways. Firstly,

education widens the mental horizons of the poor and thereby enhances their capacity to resist exploitation and achieve their rightful bargains in economic transactions. Secondly, education facilitates access to more remunerative employment opportunities. The stated objectives of RDP-9 and the operation of FE component of RDP-9 raise certain questions that need to be addressed to. They are:

- Are the FE programmes that are in operation well planned and properly run?
- How are the learning materials being utilised?
- How are the activities of the FE programme affected in the reading, writing and numeracy abilities of the rural people?
- What are the causes of the learners dropping out midway of the programme?
- Are the rural people aware of the various social issues concerning their health, hygiene, sanitation, family planning, dowry, minimum wages, resources for loan facilities, etc.?
- Have they developed their skills of reading writing, numeracy and decision making as a result of the FE programme?
- How far have they applied their acquired knowledge, skill and awareness from the FE programme in improving their quality of life?
- Are they sending their children/wards to formal schools?
- What are the measures to be adopted in order to make FE programmes effective in attaining their goals?

The present study is an attempt to understand and find answers to a few of these above raised questions pertaining to FE programmes organized in the four districts of Bangladesh, and also to find out the effectiveness of the learning materials developed by FIVDB for such purpose. The investigator also aimed to find out the extent to which the knowledge, skills and awareness developed amongst the learners are helping the rural people in their daily life and whether there is a perceptible improvement in the standard of their life. It is believed by the policy makers that the overall development of Bangladesh will take place only when the knowledge, skills and awareness of the common people is used productively. The reality of these need to be critically studied. It is with this view that the present study has been undertaken by the investigator.

Statement of the problem

The title of the investigation reads as “ **A Study of the Functional Education Component of Rural Development Project (RDP) - 9 in Four Districts of Bangladesh**”.

Specific Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the following areas of Functional Education programme run by RDP-9 in terms of:
 - operational strategy of FE programmes;
 - staff capacity for programme implementation;
 - management and monitoring of centres' activities;
 - training of personnel at different levels;
 - learning materials and their relevance in the national context;
 - teaching-learning process, and
 - selection of learners.
2. To examine the ability of learners on reading, writing, numeracy and general awareness.
3. To identify the major factors affecting the poor or satisfactory performance of the learners.
4. To investigate into the reasons for drop out.
5. To analyse the effects of FE programme on learners in their daily life.
6. To examine the views of the functionaries regarding FE programme.
7. To study the local people's attitudes towards the FE activities.

[The conducting of the **functional education programme** of the FE centres was the FE component of RDP-9. Therefore, in this study , the investigator has used the term 'FE **programme** 'to denote the educational activities organised in the centres. The term 'operational strategy' refers to the planning and implementation of the FE component of RDP-9. The focus in this study has been on the **structure** of that section of RDP-9 that was involved in the implementation of the FE Component. So, in the analysis, the term '**structure**' has been used while discussing the operational strategy.]

Design and Procedures of the Study

The present study is an evaluative research. In order to realise the stated objectives of the study, the investigator decided on adopting the survey method in general and for substantiating the data collected through survey, profiles were also developed. In chapter 3, the discussion is focused on the aspects of the design keeping in view the insights gained regarding the methodology from the review of literature presented in chapter 2.

Characteristics of the Study areas. RDP-9 has been implemented under the aegis of BRDB in 20 thanas of four districts namely, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Rangpur located in the northern part of Bangladesh and it is a part of Rajshahi division (province). Most of the people live in rural areas and agriculture is the main important source of livelihood. Most of the people are landless agricultural labourers and some are involved in petty trades and rearing cattle and raising poultry are their supplementary occupations. They are economically backward. Due to poverty and illiteracy, they are exploited by money lenders, middle men, contractors and low level functionaries of the state. The present study has been conducted in these four districts to find out the significance of FE programme in the development of such rural people.

Sample

The investigator adopted the random sampling technique for the selection of four thanas from which she selected 16 centres for the study. While selecting the centres, the investigator had to keep in mind that participant observation was one of the important techniques to be used for collecting both the quantitative as well as the qualitative data for the objectives determined. Out of a total 298 centres, the investigator selected 2 male centres and 2 female centre from each of the selected thanas. From each centre, all the learners comprised the learners' sample. Eight policy level personnel of RDP-9, shevok/shevikas involved in the teaching of the

learners in these selected centres, literacy experts, and members in the community were interviewed for collecting various sets of information about the programme.

Nature of Data

Keeping in view the objectives of the study necessary information collected represented both quantitative and qualitative information .They were as described here under:

- Details regarding the infrastructure, training and selection of instructors, curriculum, teaching and testing methodology adopted, supervision ,etc. were both quantitative and qualitative in nature.
- Perceptions, opinions and suggestions regarding the functioning of the programmes, involvement in activities of running FE centres were qualitative data .

The learners' views and opinions about the programme and its benefits, Shevok/shevikas's opinions regarding the training the underwent and the infrastructural facilities, literacy experts' views regarding the primers used , and views of the local people involved in the FE programme , comprised the qualitative data for the study.

Tools used in the study

1. Interview schedule for the learners.
2. Questionnaire for Shevok/shevikas.
3. Questionnaire of literacy personnel
4. An open ended questionnaire for the literacy experts.
5. Interview schedule for the local people.
6. Functional Education Achievement Test (FEAT) for the learners.
7. Evaluation test prepared by the investigator to assess the achievement of the learners.
8. An open ended questionnaire for assessing the social awareness of the learners.
9. Observation form for participant observation.

All these tools were prepared in Bengali language in order to facilitate the subjects to respond to the queries and facilitate the data collection from the different FE centres in the four districts of Bangladesh.

The investigator personally explained the need, importance and the purpose of the study to the PD of RDP-9 and he introduced the investigator to the Managers, FE trainers and other personnel of their office so as to allow her to collect the necessary information. The investigator visited the office and their field areas in order to identify the relevant documents for the study before visiting the FE centres. She spent 30 days in Rangpur district, and 7 days in Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari for observing the FE centres as they were functioning. In this manner, the investigator personally collected the general information of the centre, teaching learning process, use of teaching aids, timings of the centre, attendance of the learners and the shevok/shevikas, visits of the centre management committee members, etc. As a participant observer, the investigator administered five evaluation tests prepared by her at different periods within the six month period of the centre, in order to record the performance of the learners.

The investigator personally observed and interacted with the FE learners, shevok/shevikas, literacy personnel and local people to collect their perceptions. The verbal interactions were supplemented by the use of audio recordings made on the tape recordings, and photographs taken while the classes were in sessions. After nine months of the closure of the centres, the investigator visited the homes of 40 female and 20 male learners for a period of 10 to 15 days, in order to observe the retention of their learning and also to find the extent to which FE programme had made an impact on their daily life. Another reason behind such visits was to gather more information about their opinions and views through informal conversation. This helped the investigator to prepare the profiles of the learners. Prolonged interviews with each of the 36 learners for about 2 to three hours in seven consecutive visits yielded necessary information for developing case profiles.

Procedures of Data Analysis

The study being a descriptive survey of a development programme, the data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The data collected from the

questionnaires and FEAT has been rendered to frequency tallies and percentages have been worked out for them.

Data collected through observations, interviews have been described qualitatively and cross checked by corroborating with the quantified data, in order to evaluate the learners' needs, performance, improved quality of life, and over all activities of FE programme of RDP-9. More over most of the analysis of data has been done during the data collection period itself. Collecting information from field observations, sorting the information into categories, formulating the information into meaningful pictures and case profiles, were done simultaneously and on the spot which has rendered the data reliable and authentic. Observational data, views of literacy experts regarding the Primers, curriculum, teaching learning processes, etc. were content analysed.

The reporting of findings are presented in the following pages. They are presented under different headings representing the objectives of the study. The first objective was to examine the different areas of the FE programme run by RDP-9. Here, the first discussion pertains to the findings regarding the Operational Structure of the FE Component of RDP-9.

Findings pertaining to the Operational Structure.

The structure of RDP-9 has been already presented in the first chapter. The details about the actual existing structure that was responsible for the implementation of FE component has been collected by the investigator through the personal visits and discussions with the different officials in the set up.

RDP-9 is a poverty alleviation programme aimed at improving the quality of life and economic conditions of the rural poor in the four districts of Bangladesh. Funded jointly by the Government of Bangladesh and the Commission of the European Communities(EC), the RDP-9 actually went into operation in 1989. Now

it is operating in 20 thanas of the four districts, and it has 40,000 members distributed in 2,200 groups. The Programme Implementation Unit (PIU) has functional autonomy for implementation of the work plan and the budget has been approved by BRDB and EC. The office headquarters of RDP-9 consists of seven sections that are:

1. Administration and Personnel
2. Finance and Accounts
3. Planning & Monitoring
4. Training and Communication
5. Economic Development, [IGA (CREDIT) INFRASTRUCTURE]
6. Women in Development, and
7. Social Development.

The present study is concerned with the section No.4 which deals with the **Training and Communication (T&C)**, which is related with FE component. All the same, the FE component is an integral part of the total project and all the different activities of the RDP-9 are planned to function in an integrated manner. Hence there is a constant interaction between the different sections of the RDP-9 set up. Improving the level of literacy of RDP-9 group members is the main objective of the FE component. For this purpose the project introduced a six month long FE course for their illiterate group members in the 20 thanas, from 27th October, 1996. The T & C section of RDP-9 is also responsible for assessment and development of the staff, management, monitoring and evaluation with the support from its grass root level staff. The FE trainer is the key person of the FE component. The trainer has prepared almost all the relevant documents, designed the field operation plans and the budget for the selection of centres, learners and shevok/shevikas, etc. and maintains liaison with PIU for the FE progress.

In the beginning SDO and group leaders established a Centre Management Committee for each learning centre for the purpose of smooth functioning and this committee acted as a catalytic agent for the motivating the learners to enrol in the FE centres. RDP-9 provides Tk.1000:00 for each centre construction but it was found to be not sufficient for the construction of the centre. It was expected that the

group members contribute to the deficit amount for the construction. But it was found that the group members failed to contribute this deficit amount. This was because most of the learners who were group members were landless labourers and were living below subsistence level. The teaching learning materials and the honorarium for the shevok/shevikas were provided by RDP-9.

It was observed that only in two centres the committee members regularly visited, and motivated the learners. Here the secretary and the members provided the centre with the assistance the centres needed. On the other hand, in 14 centres it was observed by the investigator over a period of 148 classes, none of the members of the committee, or the secretary ever visited to ensure that the shevok/shevikas and the learners were regularly attending, nor did they take any effort to motivate the learners, observe their progress, and try to understand the problems faced by them.

Supervision by the literacy personnel

The supervision of literacy personnel at thana level and headquarters level was very poor as the supervisor's registers indicate. The register also indicates that the literacy personnel have not properly given their instruction to the shevok/shevikas because these have not been properly entered in the registers. The purpose of their visit is to help the shevok/shevikas in overcoming the problems that they face during the FE programme. And this has not been done regularly and promptly which has affected the smooth functioning of the classes.

On an average, the centres were supervised around twice a month, yet the supervisors could not guide the shevok/shevikas to perform better. It appears that a more systematic supervision is needed for the effective functioning of the FE centres.

A committee was set up for the selection of shevok/shevikas, TC, DTC, SDO. The group leaders were also on this committee which shows that the RDP-9 gave due importance to the local people's participation in this endeavour.

Four monitors were under the direct supervision of the FE trainers and these provided regular feedback about the functioning of the programme, problems faced, constraints ,etc. to the management at regular intervals and to the different levels.

FE centre has been instructed to maintain a register for the visits of the monthly visits of the TC, fortnightly visits of DTC and the weekly visits of the SDO/EDO at each of the thana. It has been observed that the literacy personnel have given importance to the matters of learners' attendance, progress of the learners , as well as the appropriate use of prescribed methods by the shevok/shevikas.

A total of 963 employees (**Table-9**) were engaged in the FE activities of which 661 were on permanent basis and 302 were employed on temporary basis. Three male and one female TC, 20 male DTCs and 20 female DTCs, 75 male and 75 female SDOs and EDOs were in charge at the field level. Four monitors were appointed on temporary basis for 4 thanas.

Selection of Shevoks/Shevikas

The minimum qualifications for the shevoks/shevikas was determined to be class VIII. Their required level of education was brought down because of non availability of qualified persons willing to work in rural areas. The data reveals that 66 per cent of shevoks/shevikas had working in these four districts had cleared the S.S.C examination. They were comparatively young and enthusiastic to be associated in the FE programme. But they were less able to capture the attention of the learners because of their lacking in presentation skills. It was found that 92.68 per cent of the shevok/shevikas had no previous experience to conduct the classes before they joined the RDP-9. It was also reported by nearly 55 Literacy Personnel that they were not satisfied with the teaching abilities of the Shevok/shevikas. These literacy personnel stated that these shevok/shevikas were paid an honorarium which was meagre and this was not sufficient for the shevok/shevikas to travel to the FE centre.

Moreover, the number of shevoks centres who were appointed for a period of six months for the male centres was 113 and 185 shevikas were appointed on a temporary basis for female centres. This data shows that the persons who were in fact instrumental in imparting the literacy, numeracy skills in the illiterate learners, were those who were not permanent officials in the project, but on the other hand had a very transient role to play in the programme. This explains why some of the local people expressed dissatisfaction with the centres in terms of the irregularities of the instructors. Since they were on temporary basis, the project office could not replace them during their absence even if it was on genuine reasons. And this caused a lot of inconvenience for the adult learners who were eager to learn.

As it was observed from **Table-8**, there were 4 TCs, 4 Monitors, one male DTC in Nilphamari and 3 female DTCs in Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat and Rangpur who were to supervise the functioning of the 16 centres that were selected for the study. Five male and 7 female SDOs and 8 shevoks and 8 shevikas were responsible for conducting the FE activities at the field level.

Training of the FE personnel

Data collected by the investigator shows that the T&C arranged a 13 days residential training for the Trainers of the monitors and DTCs at the Pirgong Training Centre of RDP-9 in Rangpur which was conducted by FIVDB trainers. They also prepared a training curriculum which consists of learning materials, guidelines regarding methods, duration and other activities of the FE course. The training curricula did not include any guidelines with regard to the skills and knowledge needed for FE centres' management. The contents of this training was mainly on FE concepts, quality of trainers, training techniques, and literacy instruction process. There was no instruction about the supervision of the centre, class management and evaluation techniques to assess the learners' reading, writing and numeracy skills. So, this curriculum was found to be inadequate for the effective functioning of FE centres.

A three day refresher training was arranged by RDP-9 for Monitors and DTCs midway during the FE programme for the purpose of motivating them as well helping them to improve their performance and skills in their respective jobs. The investigator observed that during the training the nature of discussions held was at a very elementary level. The trainers emphasized only on the book-based teaching method, but did not properly train the personnel for monitoring and supervisory functions which are very important for the monitors and supervisors. Out of a total of 20 DTCs, 18 of them reported to the investigator that they were administrative persons at the thana level, and that they had no knowledge about teaching and class management. The thirteen day training that they had received was not adequate for them to grasp the roles that they had to perform , and so they were not able to guide the shevok/shevikas in improving their teaching skills.

The monitors were dissatisfied with the duration of the training and the contents of the training that they had undergone. The training did not provide them with sufficient knowledge about evaluation of the learners' achievement. Neither were they provided with any standardised monitoring or evaluation proforma for evaluating the FE classes.

A ten day basic training course was arranged at the thana office for the volunteer teachers by DTCs on how to conduct the FE classes and to extend technical support to the teachers. This training course included discussion on concept of education, development, literacy, presentations of FE materials, literacy instruction, methods and approaches, lesson monitoring, maintaining of records and monthly reporting.

Every month, one day refresher's course was arranged at thana office for shevok/shevikas in order to motivate them and help them to improve their skills of teaching. From the field survey, it is found that 20 shevoks and 21 shevikas could not remember any of the training components that they had learnt. This was a major indicator of the effectiveness of the training and also explained the shortcomings in the shevok/shevikas in the conducting of the FE classes. These shevok/shevikas also complained that no practical class demonstration was organised for them during the

training period. Hence, the shevok/shevikas had to evolve their own ways and methods of teaching. Moreover, the guidelines also, as reported earlier, curtailed their innovativeness. They also told the investigator in their personal interviews, that their trainers were not pedagogic experts who possessed knowledge about the process of education and their complexities, and so, the training the shevok/shevikas received from did not equip them with the skills necessary for teaching the adult learners. As a result, only three shevikas and one shevok were found to be very active in the class and concerned about their learners' achievement.

RDP-9 arranged a three day orientation course for the TCs with regard to the FE programme and supervision. The instructional materials used at the different training centres for the literacy personnel and shevok /shevikas were charts, flash cards, posters, guidebook, etc. But the trainees were dissatisfied as they were not really trained as to the appropriate use of such materials. Moreover, the shevok/shevikas also found that the physical facilities provided at the training centres were inadequate. The organisational flexibility was found to be absent throughout the training, thereby rendering the training not adequate to equip the shevok/shevikas and the other field personnel with skills to deal with problems at the grass root level.

A significant finding with regard to the operation strategy, was that there was no training course for the field level personnel such as SDOs. Lack of training in supervision affected the performance of the SDOs as they could not properly guide, monitor and improve the performance of the functionaries at the grass root level.

Instructional Materials for the FE learners.

The instructional materials used for the FE learners were the Primers 1,2 and 3, developed by FIVDB. The data pertaining to the appropriateness and the quality of these Primers have been collected from the critical comments of the Literacy experts and the investigator's observation of the utilisation of the primers

in the classes . The latter data has been collected in the course of the investigator's participant observation of the centres. The findings are being presented under the sub headings ,viz. Content of the learning material, Presentation style, and Print and appearance of the primers.

Content of the Learning Materials: The standard form of Bangla was used in the preparation of the learning materials. The local colloquial form which was what the learners were aware of, was not incorporated in the primers making it difficult for the illiterate persons to understand. As has also been supported by Srivastava(1980), interest in learning to read and write, as well as the rate of progress in learning necessitates the use of the dialects. This has not been taken into consideration by FIVDB during the preparation of the primers. In fact, the use of dialects has been totally avoided and only standard Bangla has been used.

These Primers have been prepared by experts influenced by the 'generative themes' approach recommended by Paulo Freire adult education programmes in the developing countries of Latin America. This approach is basically suitable for literacy programmes in languages of European origin. There is a difference between the structure of European languages and languages of Sanskrit origin. The latter is more efficiently learnt through the 'synthetic approach', as these languages are more phonetic and the structure of the vowels and consonants are very distinct and they require mastering separately. This is not so in the European languages. In order to hold the interest of the adult learners and enable them to learn the reading and writing of language in a comfortable manner, it is necessary to adopt an eclectic approach by combining both theme generative and synthetic approach.

Learning materials did not include lessons on different vocations, and different problems concerning the illiterate learners. In the preparation of the primers, the authors had not used story-method, dialogue-method, or the problem oriented method . These methods are more appropriate for adult learners who need to be highly motivated and get interested in the learning. The adult learners are able to benefit from literacy classes only when they find that the primers have some

actual reference to their lives and the content is presented in a style which is interesting .

As regards the content of the lessons, they were relevant to the rural context in which the learners are placed. What was lacking was the adequate number of practice exercises which help the learners to consolidate their learning. Moreover, as earlier observed the language medium was beyond the comprehension of most of the learners as they were used to the local dialect and the primers contained the standard Bangla language.

The learning materials prepared for neo literates should be able to rouse the interest of the learners for continuous learning. Guganani(1980), Verghese (1989) and Singh (1982) have also supported this requirement in the learning materials for adult learners. Melkwa Victor (1990) suggested in his study that literacy curriculum which is best suited for adult learners need to be based on their interests and requirements. In order to prepare such learning materials there is a need for the programme organisers to make a field study to identify the needs of the learners. Such an exercise was absent in the preparation of these primers prepared by FIVDB.

Moreover, it was found by the investigator that religious and folk literature was totally absent from these primers. These have a very powerful appeal for the adult learners. Mustaq Ahmed (1984) has also reiterated this view while discussing about the nature of content in the adult literacy learning materials. In informal talks with the instructors, the investigator was told that the learners preferred the inclusion of such topics about which they already had some knowledge. This not only stimulated readings, but it also helped to widen the scope of their desire to learn. Pedagogically, this only refers to the maxim of taking the students from known to unknown realms of knowledge. As Mali (1969) had observed, stories have a great appeal for learners, and they need to be included in learning materials for any age group. This was totally missing in the three primers prescribed for the FE centres.

In the first stage of learning, an illiterate is expected to learn simple words and gradually reach to the level of being able to read sentences composed of a few words. In the second stage, the learner is expected to be able to learn a group of connected words and reach the level of reading a few passages of continuous narrative pieces or verses made up of small and simple sentences. At the third stage, the learner is expected to read different types of prose which give new information and upgrade his knowledge and comprehension regarding various activities in the rural set up. The primers have not been visualised and designed in this graded style.

As regards to practice book, it was found to be developed for the follow up stage. The exercises and revision activities have been well arranged. The themes generated in different lessons have been well developed and explained. They are based on the maxim of easy to difficult learning process. The draw back of the practice book is the writing space provided is inadequate, more specially because the writing of neo literates of any age group is big and requires a lot of space to write words composed of different letters which have very distinct forms. The pictures included in the lessons also are not very clear visually as well as thematically. This, therefore came in the way of the learners acquiring the correct knowledge and also writing skills. While the section meant for developing reading skills were quite adequate, it was found that the practice book was inadequate for a three month course for the neo literates.

Presentation Style of the Primers: Presentation of content in the Functional Literacy, Primer -1 was found to be quite adequate, but the Functional Literacy Primers 2 and 3 show that the structure of sentences and the length was too large and inappropriate for the learners. The writing space provided for the learners to practice was not sufficient. Neo learners require more space to form letters and write words. Therefore, if the primers require them to practice in the book itself, then adequate space need to be given which was found to be lacking in the language as well as the numeracy lessons. To facilitate concept formation in numeracy, there is a need for graphic illustrations to be provided. It simplifies the process of understanding the functions of addition and subtraction. This was not to

be found in the FIVDB primers. It should be mentioned here that gender equity has been maintained in these primers, and the role of women have been adequately reflected in the different lessons. Of course stereo typing of roles have not been avoided, and this is a feature still found in the society at large. One other drawback of the primers was the repetition of the same sentence on the same page. The reading section of the lessons had this repetition which the adult learners found it boring. Even if it were from the point of view of drilling and consolidation purpose, a little variety would have made the primers more interesting to read.

If the content of the lessons which have been presented in small paragraphs had included information about health, hygiene, sanitation ,etc. the language aspect would have become more informative along with developing the linguistic skills.

Appearance of the Primers: An instructional material which is one of the most important tools to motivate the learner towards learning. It should catch the attention of the learner by its very cover page, illustrations inside and the type of font size used. In fact there are certain fixed norms with regard to the font size and the level of the learner.. The size of the book, the paper used, printing, stitching and binding along with the cover page ,etc. all go to make the book attractive and exiting. With regard to the primers used in the FE centres, the appearance was found to be very ordinary and drab. The paper used was the common newsprint which tear very easily and the pictures printed on them are not clear and distinct. This , to some extent made the learners lose their interest for the books and also the pride of possessing them.

The font size used in the Primer -1 was good and clear. But in the Primers 2 &3 , the size of the font, spacing between letters, words and alignment on the pages were not properly done for want of proper editing on the part of the publishers. Moreover, these two primers contain very long sentences which are printed in fonts not very appropriate for the level of the learners, even though they were adults. This made the pages look heavy with closely printed small letters. This created an optical hindrance for the learners at that level.

Teaching Methods and Media

The data pertaining to the teaching methods adopted and different media that are used and their efficacy has been collected through the reports of the Literacy Personnel, the shevok/shevikas, the learners and the observations made by the investigators in the four districts. In order to enhance the quality of the teaching learning process while using the instructional materials, the FIVDB had prepared a handbook in which five steps were recommended to be followed in a sequential manner while using the primers. These five steps were expected to systematise the instructional process in an educational programme of such small duration. It was expressed by the shevok/shevikas that these prescribed five steps curbed their freedom of teaching. Following these steps hindered any discussion that would emerge in the natural process of the class. A comment which has been made by the learners, literacy personnel and the community was that the classroom learning was not properly related to day to day life situations indicates this rigidity in the guidelines which curbed the freedom of the shevok/shevikas in handling the primers. Thus, it can be seen that what was planned to facilitate the teaching learning process became a restrictive feature of the programme. The data reveals that these five steps were used to a great extent by the shevok/shevikas only in 2 centres of Rangpur district. In other centres, the steps were not used that extensively.

Most of the shevok/shevikas were satisfied with the supply of instructional materials, such as the primers, flash cards and the flip charts. These were supplied in time. The supply of audio visual aids, however were not sufficient. So, they had to depend only on the black board and chalk sticks. The shevok/shevikas were not satisfied with the condition of the black board, as the surface was not polished which made the visibility difficult. Added to this, the lanterns and kuppies were also not maintained properly. These two factors hindered the process of learning. According to them the supply of chalk sticks was also not adequate which led to their limiting the use of black board. For this complaint, the literacy personnel replied that the shevok/shevikas did not collect the chalk sticks from the thana

office regularly. There appears to be a lack of co-ordination between the shevok/shevikas and the literacy personnel on such issues.

The learners themselves had nothing significant to opine about the teaching methods. But they did feel that the slow learners needed some kind of support in terms of remedial teaching, and this was not provided by the shevok/shevikas. They also felt that the shevok/shevikas could have been more affectionate to the learners in the class.

The investigator found that whenever counselling and demonstration methods were used by the shevok/shevikas, the learning was most effective, but this was done far too less. By and large, it was the lecture method that was adopted. In such instances where the lecture was followed by demonstrations or discussions, the learning was more effective. These shevoks and shevikas were not properly trained to use a combination of different methods to make learning effective. They were unaware of its possibilities because of the inadequate training they had received.

While teaching, content needs to be related to real life situations in order to make the teaching learning process effective, interesting and relevant, especially in the case of neo learners in the rural areas. The investigator observed that this was not done in all the classes regularly and meaningfully. Though the shevok and shevikas were aware about the significance of relating content to real life, they were unable to do so for two reasons. One, the FIVDB steps were so rigid that they could not incorporate this aspect easily. It gave them no time to do so. Secondly, they did not possess the necessary skill to do that as they had not been trained for such teaching. This reflects on the inadequacy of their training which has been already discussed.

It was also observed that the shevok/shevikas put more emphasis on reading than on writing and numeracy skill. The shevok/shevikas had a misconception that the adults need to be given more training in reading than in the other two skills.

Selection of Learners

As the data reveals, it was found that the procedure of the selection of learners to the FE centre was satisfactory from the point of view of all the concerned parties of the FE centre. As regards the age group, a total of 158 learners were in the age group of 16-35, 37 in the age group of 36-45. Out of the sample of 232 learners 170 were married and 214 had no previous schooling experience at all. The reasons for not having attended school in the childhood was basically parental resistance born out of economic compulsions and not realizing the significance of education.

The learners were generally landless labourers, who supplemented their income with petty trading, cattle rearing poultry farming and rice husking and domestic labour. By and large, these learners were living under severe economic constraints and had large families to take care. Nearly 102 learners were supporting a family of more than five members.

Achievement of Learners on Reading, Writing, Numeracy and General Awareness.

Findings pertaining to Reading Skill Tests

Singh T.R.(1971) found in his study on functional literacy programme that the difficulty with conjunctives and conjunct consonants words continued to trouble at least some of the students even after the functional literacy course was over. The present study also finds the same condition with the learners in the FE centres.

Data as revealed in **Tables 34,35,36**, shows that the achievement of learners on the reading skill test was not satisfactory. Only 34.4 per cent of learners were assessed to be good in the reading skill test. In the first reading test, where the learners were expected to form words, out of a total 214 learners, 121 learners were able to perform correctly. In the second reading test, out of a total 214 learners, only 29 were able to read the paragraph having two compound consonants correctly. This poor performance seems to show that **reading compound**

consonants was found to be difficult for the learners. In the third test, out of a total 214 learners only 71 learners were able to read a paragraph with one conjunction and two compound consonants with comprehension correctly, and a total of 96 learners were found to be fair and satisfactory on this test.

On the whole, the data reveals that the male learners were better in reading than the female learners. A large number of learners were unable to read the compound consonants even after the course was completed, confirming the findings of Singh.T.R, as quoted earlier.

Findings pertaining to Writing Skills

The number of learners who appeared in this first test of copying 5 selected words were 212, out of whom 132 learners could copy all the words correctly and clearly. In the second test out of a total 212 learners, 66 were able to write their address correctly and 102 were able to do it in a fair and satisfactory manner. On the third test, only 47 learners were found to be **good** in filling up the gaps with appropriate words and another 95 were found to be fair and satisfactory. In the picture composition test 172 learners out of a total of 212, were unable to perform even at the satisfactory level; whereas in the letter writing test only 15 learners could write a letter in the proper format. Around 167 learners could not perform even to a minimum satisfactory level.

The data shows that the number of learners whose initial performance was good, gradually decreased. The overall picture shows that men performed better than the female learners. A high percentage of male and female learners did not well in the picture composition and letter writing activity. This shows that **they they learnt and retained were the basic minimum skills** - viz., being able to write their own names and address to some extent. This could be attributed to the fact that practice in writing was not adequate due to the limited space in the work books, inadequate black board work by the instructors, lack of elbow room and illumination in the FE centres. The learners also did not find the time and inclination to practice after the course was over.

Findings pertaining to Numeracy Skills

Out of the 208 learners who appeared in the first numeracy test, 180 were able orally count numbers 1 to 50 correctly. The overall performance on the numeracy test one was good and nearly 75.23 per cent of female learners were rated **good**. This indicates that most of the female and male learners were able to count up to 50. Out of 208 learners who were present for the second test, only 113 were able to identify the numbers correctly. Of the total of 208 learners, 141 were able to complete a series of numbers correctly and 38 learners were found to be fair and satisfactory in their abilities. A total percentage of 67.78 male and female learners achieved a **good** rating and the learners from Lalmonirhat were the best of the four districts in this test. The fourth and the fifth numeracy test contained simple problems requiring the use of addition and subtraction. In the fourth test contained 3 addition problems selected from the primers. Out of 208 learners, 117 could solve all the problems correctly and the learners from Rangpur had the highest total percentage of learners in this category.. Out of the 208 learners, 87 learners were successful in solving all the three problems of subtraction in the fifth test. Nilphamari and Rangpur districts performed better than the other two districts on this test. What is to be noted here is that the general performance of the learners seems to have gradually decreased in the fourth and fifth tests where in computing addition and subtraction was required.

Generally in all the numeracy tests, the male learners fared better than the female learners. The overall performance of learners in all the three skills seems to have gradually deteriorated. The retention and application of skills remained to the minimum basic level rather than progress. This could be due to the lack of remedial teaching, follow up programmes and also to the loss of interest on the part of the learners for sustained efforts. One point to be noted here is that the performance of the learners on Numeracy tests was better than on Reading and Writing, though during the class period, more time was allotted for Reading and Writing than what was allotted for Numeracy. The better performance on Numeracy may be due to the fact that they could relate to this skill to their daily life situations and have been

dealing with this already without any education. However, even in these Numeracy tests, their oral performance was better than in solving problems in the written form. Perhaps the writing part of the Numeracy test hindered their performance.

Findings pertaining to awareness regarding Personal habits, hygiene and health.

The data presented in tables 46 to 55 pertain to the knowledge and practice of hygienic habits in the day to day life of the learners. Generally the learners are aware of the different cleansing agents and methods of keeping themselves clean and free from diseases. Mango and Neem twigs, charcoal, ash and mud were commonly used as cleansing agents for teeth. Many of them who used charcoal, ash and mud were unaware of the fact that the enamel of their teeth gets affected by using these for a long period of time. Soap and soda were the main detergents used for washing their clothes. In spite of being aware of the benefits of soap, toothpaste and other modern cleansing agents, many learners could not use them as they could not afford to buy them. The learners were more concerned about keeping their nails trimmed and clean but were not so seriously bothered about the condition of their hair and washing their hand with cleansing agents before meals and after visiting the toilets. It appears that they were not aware of the potential danger of the unseen bacteria that may lurk on their hands.

Moreover, the learners were living in such state of poverty that a large number of them did not have proper toilet facilities, and their dwellings were 'kutchha' houses made of mud, straw, and bamboo. In such situation, they could not afford to wear slippers when answering the nature's call. This has a direct relation to the fact that a large number of them had worms which is more often than not caused by visiting latrines barefoot.

As regards drinking water, the learners reported that they regularly purified the drinking water with the help of tablets but only during the flood times. In spite of having knowledge about nutritive food, only 22.16 per cent of learners were able to provide their children with such food that ensures health and stamina. Though 44.37 per cent of learners were aware of proper food, they could not afford it for

themselves or their families. Only 24.05 per cent were ignorant in this regard. So, it can be said that there was no lack of knowledge about nutrition, and health habits, but the practice of the same was beyond their means.

Coming to the knowledge about diseases, their causes and prevention, the data reveals that learners were aware of the cause of worms, diarrhoea and other infectious diseases for which there are immunisation procedures. But a very small number of learners took the six monthly dose for worms, and consulted the doctors at the health centres regularly. A few use indigenous methods to avoid the same (e.g. consuming juice of tender pine apple leaves,). Use of iodized salts for prevent goitre is known to nearly 63 per cent of learners of whom only 19 per cent could afford using iodized salt, as the cost was found to be prohibitive. At the same time a considerable percent of learners were unaware of the cause of goitre, which is a very common disease prevalent in Rajshahi region.

Almost 54 per cent of learners have the knowledge about saline therapy and the source of information regarding this has been the Radio, TV and the local health centres. The same source also provided them with the information regarding the immunisation vaccines and their need. Yet only 37.26 per cent of learners have immunised their children and another 46.6 per cent learners, though are aware about it, have not got their children immunised. The fear of the pain caused during inoculation has prevented them from doing so. It appears that a large number of learners are aware of the vaccines and their benefits, but due to unreasonable fears of pain, have not taken the benefit of the knowledge. The FE centres have not educated the learners on these aspects.

Nearly 66 per cent of learners are aware of the importance of keeping their surroundings clean. The female learners were more aware in this aspect than their male counterparts. Though the learners may not be aware of pollution, its causes and prevention in a very academic way, they very indirectly help towards maintaining the ecological balance by not cutting trees for their fuel purposes. In fact they seem to be using dry leaves, dry food grains, husk, gaitha etc. as cooking fuel. This is very significant to be noted in the rural context. In fact, in the case

profiles, quite a few learners have mentioned that they regularly plant trees in their surroundings.

FE programme has helped in creating an awareness about loans available from RDP-9 and the proper utilisation of the same. About 37.26 per cent of learners have used the facility very productively. The case profiles reveal how the learners have availed of the loan facility more than once in order to improve their life style, by expanding their supplementary occupations etc. Only 17.92 per cent learners used the loans unproductively on social functions, while 44.81 per cent were not aware of the availability of loans from RDP-9.

In spite of knowing about the high rate of interest charged by Mohajans, 65.56 per cent of learners borrowed from them occasionally, and among those who borrowed, female learners were more than men. Nearly 79 per cent of learners were aware of the dangers of signing blank documents and so refrained from doing so.

About 55.18 percent of learners were aware of the minimum marriageable age for boys and girls, and their source of information in this regard were the Radio and TV. The need for registration of marriage was known to a very small segment of the sample and only 11.32 per cent of learners had documented their marriage. Dowry system also was not considered favourably by 87.55 per cent of the learners and nearly 79 per cent were against divorce.

As regards Family Planning, 66 per cent male and 87.80 per cent female learners had a positive attitude towards family planning. 125 learners adopted FP methods and believed that small family leads to happiness.

With regard to national awareness, 73.11 per cent learners were able to state the name of their country correctly and with proper pronunciation. Another 78.48 percent of learners were able to correctly state the name of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The data also reveals that a total of 138 learners fully and correctly state the minimum age for franchise and they also had cast their votes during the

previous election. Here, the female learners were more in number than the male learners.

All participants mentioned that the Radio, TV and the FE centres were the sources for this information. This shows that the learners did not get sufficient information about personal, social and national issues from the primers and their respective shevok/shevikas. The information contained in the primers was very brief and were not fully discussed in the class, as it ought to have been done in a functional education programme. These findings seem to coincide with the findings of Gunganani(1980) and fully in agreement with that of Imam(1990).

In short, it shows that the impact of the FE programmes leaves much to be still achieved.

Reasons for Drop out from FE Programme.

The investigator collected information about drop out learners from the present learners, who provided the probable causes for the drop outs. The most probable reason for the learners to discontinue from the class could be the loss of income that was incurred by the learners by attending the class. Most of the learners who dropped out had to work during the time when the classes were conducted. Since earning livelihood took priority over education, the learners were compelled by circumstances to discontinue their functional education.

Benefits derived by the learners from FE programme.

The major benefit derived from the FE programme as perceived by the learners was that they were able to write their signatures. AS for other benefits, 56.89 per cent of learners felt that they were no longer illiterates. But actually, their retention level was limited to recognition of alphabets, and another 28.44 per cent of learners were able to calculate their daily accounts. Only 13.79 per cent learners could read sign boards, posters and milestones. All the same being able to sign was a great achievement for them who were accustomed to only use their thumb print. This helped to raise their self concept.

This only shows that this short duration of FE programme has not made them fully functionally educated, but has created an awareness about the importance of education especially for their children. This is confirmed by the ten case profiles where in each of them have emphasised the importance of education for their children. Another benefit that they have gained through FE programme is about the knowledge about minimum wages and loan availability from RDP-9. As regards information which motivated them to improve their life styles and awareness about other health and social issues were gained from Radio, TV and the local health centres.

Local People's Attitude towards FE Programme.

The investigator had interviewed 64 local persons who were actively supported the FE programme in various ways. Of these , 20 male and 2 female local persons send their children , both boys and girls, to school. They are conscious about the need of education for their children. They appreciate the FE programme's role in eradicating illiteracy. They opined that because of the FE programme the villagers have also realised the importance of sending their children to schools. At the same time they also felt that the duration of the programme was too short to be effective.

They stated that the backwardness of women in their society is due to lack of education, and so these local people considered it necessary to send their women folk to the FE classes. The local persons were also actively involved in helping to build the FE classes. This indicates their positive attitude to this programme.

Implications and Suggestions .

The present study was mainly concerned with the organisation of the FE programme, its curriculum, and evaluation of its effectiveness in the rural situation of Bangladesh. In the previous sections the findings have been discussed which convey some definite educational implications to the planners of literacy programmes with regard to curriculum, training of personnel, instructional

materials , methods and media and also the organisation of the centres. These are briefly mentioned here in the following paragraphs.

Location of the Centres

It has been observed that generally literacy programme receives inadequate attention from the society. Organisers seem to feel that the literacy programmes can be conducted anywhere and every where. Congenial physical environment has an important influence on the learning. The cleanliness surrounding the centres, the physical facilities in terms of lights, sitting space sufficient privacy to conduct teaching learning process and quiet atmosphere are certain basic requirements for any educational activity to take place. Care should be taken to see that the centres are not located in crowded public places where there is a lot of noise and distraction, in order to ensure the learners' attention and concentration. More over in adult education classes, the learners are already physically tired after a day's hard work. For them it is necessary to provide with fairly comfortable sitting space to read and write.

The FE classes need to be scheduled during those months when the adult learners are comparatively free to attend them and benefit from them. The most appropriate period for the agricultural section of the population is those months between harvesting and sowing of seeds in the subsequent season. This is the time when the peasant enjoys comparatively more leisure time, and so would be able to take the full advantage of FE programme.

Selection of Shevok/Shevikas

The selection of shevok/shevikas should be done properly. School and college going students and unmarried young girls have a tendency of being irregular and this disturbs the functioning of the centre. The former are preoccupied with their own studies and hence are not able to fully concentrate on their jobs as instructors, and the latter are likely to discontinue midway of the course if they are

married off. As the organisational set up is not geared up for filling such vacancies caused by the marriages of the instructors, the centres cease to function causing a lot of frustration to the learners.

Moreover, if the learners are much younger than the adult learner group, they are unable to make an impact on them. The young instructors may not be able to infuse confidence in the learners. The instructors need to be optimistic and highly motivated so as to transfer the same spirit in the reluctant adult learners. The shevok/shevikas must be able to communicate with the local leaders and take their suggestions and understand the grass root level needs.

Motivation of Learners

The motivation of the adult illiterate still continues to be a major problem. The average illiterate has little or no attraction for literacy. He/she does not think that there will be any change in his/her life style by becoming literate. The existing unemployment among educated youth is a big demotivating factor. The desire for learning usually depends on the satisfaction of ones basic needs. The FE personnel at all levels, need to convince the adults that education would help them to improve the quality of their life gradually, but surely.

Moreover, the FE personnel also have to motivate the educated members of the group to volunteer to give time and effort to accomplish goals of the literacy campaign.

Instructional Materials, Methods and Media.

Instructional materials, and the audio visual aids can be effective motivating factors for increasing the adults' interest for learning.. For this, the content of the instructional materials should have to be prepared on the basis of the learners' needs and their context. Their presentation should be in consonance of their language, culture and work in order to hold the interest of the learner group. With regard to the instructional aids, they should be readily available at the FE centres and need to be attractively presented in order to create an interest for learning in the illiterates. More basic facilities like the black board and the charts need to be in

good condition so as to be used effectively and as frequently as the situation requires. Primers, flash cards, pictorial presentations, maps and sketches should be used in the FE centres. The alphabet charts (calendar type with illustrations) are very effective.

The primers used in functional education programmes should reflect the philosophy of functional education and not be mere instructional material for teaching the 3 R's. The content of the lesson should have direct bearing on the life and issues of the learners and need to be culture specific. Emphasis should be given to such themes that are related to social, health, economic and political awareness. Adults should be encouraged to utilize their knowledge practically for their own benefit. As it was seen in this study, the general social awareness that was created in the learners were not through the FE programmes, but other mass communication agencies and organisations like the health centres. On the other hand, awareness about such matters are part and parcel of any functional educational programmes. These need to be reflected in the primers as well as in the transaction of the same in the classroom activities initiated by the shevok/shevikas.

The illustrations in the primers need to be attractively presented in different colours and with clarity so that any ambiguity regarding their purpose is avoided. The presentation style of the content includes the structure of sentences, the length of sentence and the language used. The primers should enable the learners relate the language used in the book to their own local dialects in order to avoid another cause for alienation of the learners from the mainstream of the society. The sentences should contain the local metaphor and idiom or at least efforts need to be made to relate them to what the learners have already acquired.

It must however, be borne in mind that the aids are only tools to promote active participation of the learners. The teaching devices and tools are not the end of the programme, but they are only techniques to help the learners to achieve the goal, that is the attainment of skills of reading and writing.

Training of the Literacy Personnel.

The training of the literacy personnel is a very important input for the success of any educational programme. The contents of the training should be based on the needs of the trainees at the different levels. As it was observed in the present study, the literacy personnel at different levels were constrained due to lack of proper training whether it be for organisational management of programmes, monitoring and supervision, training the shevok/shevikas, preparation of instructional material, evaluation or teaching the adults. All these tasks are very specialised and complex that require proper orientation. Hence, it is essential that all these literacy personnel at the different levels are properly oriented regarding their functions so as to avoid frustrations and helplessness on the field. The training inputs need to include practical demonstrations and discussions where in the probable issues that arise on the field are anticipated and ways and means of tackling them are learnt. It has been observed in the present study that the shevok/shevikas were left to their own ingenuity about the use of teaching aids, teaching methods and evaluation techniques. The supervisors and monitors also were unaware of educational processes of teaching and evaluation as basically they were merely officers without any specialized training in pedagogy. Hence, they were limited in their skills of dealing with problems of teaching and evaluation and provide the shevok/shevikas the necessary guidelines.

The manual and guide books prepared for literacy personnel and shevok/shevikas should include: (I) knowledge oriented contents, (ii) skill oriented practical content such as preparation of instructional materials, effective use of different literacy methods, group discussions, etc. Adequate stress need to be laid on the need to relate the contents to the real life situations and develop proper aptitudes and attitudes for problem solving, commitment, active participation in the efforts to help the learners improve their living standards and quality of life.

For this, the trainees need to be acquainted with the complex socio economic problem of the learners which would develop in the shevok/shevikas and

the other literacy personnel proper empathy, insight and sensitivity to interact with the poor and illiterate learners.

Another important aspect of any programme for its sustained impact, is the organisation of follow up activities. After the closing of the FE centre, periodical follow up is necessary in order to ensure that the new literates do not relapse into illiteracy. Constant and regular interaction will not only motivate the neo literates to maintain their newly acquired knowledge, but also motivate them to improve upon the same. It also helps to assure them to believe that the state and the society genuinely cares for them and thereby develops in the learners a strong self esteem and positive attitude towards society and nation.

Suggestions for Further Research.

Researches usually stem from the need or limitations of what already exists. In search to fulfil the need or to alleviate the shortcomings in ones own research, a researcher comes across many other problems which can only be solved through separately designed further researches. Any research endeavour, therefore, raises more problems and issues than it proposes to solve, thereby initiating further explorations in the field. The present investigator, while conducting her study came across many such problems pertaining to the same area of study which could add throw greater insights regarding non formal systems for adult education. The studies that could be undertaken are:

1. A replication study of a similar type in other centres under different projects in the rural and urban areas of Bangladesh.
2. Studies on the different problems of functional education programmes in Bangladesh.
3. Studies regarding the problems in the practical implementation of functional education for the various age groups.
4. Development of need based curriculum for functional education.
5. Studies to develop system of evaluation of the functional education learners and the impact of functional education on the lives of the learners.