# Contemporary Initiatives for Foundational Literacy and Numeracy: Making India Modern

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**Abstract**

Foundational literacy and numeracy are the primary bases in the generation of knowledge. FLN in the early years of elementary education is crucial for further learning in higher grades. Government schools are supposed to instruct foundational literacy and numeracy skills at the primary. Over the last decade, various public and private organizations have shown very gloomy pictures about the status of FLN. In this research paper, the researcher has tried to present an overview of government schemes, initiatives, and programs directly and indirectly related to FLN. After studying the various sources, research papers, and articles, it is found that all schemes and programs are connected to FLN directly or indirectly and these schemes are assisting to uplift the status of FLN across India. These schemes, initiatives are NIPUN Bharat Mission, Vidya Pravesh, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, DIKSHA, and NISHTHA.

## Introduction

The most commonly used term 'FLN' stand for 'Foundational Literacy and Numeracy'. FLN is the ability to read basic text with comprehension, ability to write, and perform basic arithmetic operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division even in day-to-day life situations. The foundational literacy and numeracy are the primary bases in the generation of knowledge or human capital which improves the productivity of laborers and exacerbates the economic growth of a nation. Foundational literacy and numeracy skills are the first stair of human capital formation this is why it should be available for everyone in a country. In this situation, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have focused on scaling up of school years through compulsory enrolment in elementary education. SDG 4.1 states - "all girls and boys to complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes by 2030." According to a UNESCO report 2014, 21 out of 85 countries less than half of the children have learned the basics; India was one of those countries. NEP-2020 has mentioned that India is in a learning crisis. India has launched several schemes and initiatives to deal with the learning crisis such as NIPUN Bharat Mission, and Vidya Pravesh, and integrated several programs such as Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, DIKSHA, and NISHTHA.

## Objectives of the Study

- To study the different schemes directly or indirectly related to Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.
- To study the key objectives of different schemes directly or indirectly related to Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.
- To study the key features of different schemes directly or indirectly related to Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

## Schemes related Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

"We are currently in a learning crisis: a large proportion of students currently in elementary school-estimated to be over 5 crore in number-have not attained foundational literacy and numeracy, i.e., the ability to read and comprehend basic text and the ability to carry out basic addition and subtraction with Indian numerals" (NEP, 2020). To attain the national learning gaps at the elementary level, Indian government has

introduced and integrated with several schemes, initiatives such as NIPUN Bharat Mission, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, DIKSHA, NISHTHA, and Vidya Pravesh.

## 1. NIPUN Bharat Mission

The NIPUN Bharat Mission, the term NIPUN stands for 'National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy', is an extensive education initiative introduced in July 2021 by the Ministry of Education of India. NIPUN Bharat was launched with the basic aim of make sure that all children all-over the country achieve the compulsory skills of reading and numeracy at the end of grade 3, aiming to accomplish this goal by the academic year of 2026-2027. The NIPUN Bharat mission establishes a strong emphasis on foundational skills, especially in the crucial areas of reading and numeracy, which are fundamental for a child's holistic educational development.

### Key Objectives of NIPUN Bharat Mission

The 'NIPUN Bharat' was implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy, under the Ministry of Education. The mission director will be the head. Here are some key objectives of the NIPUN Bharat Mission.

A. It organizes the play way, discovery, and activity-based pedagogy so that the inclusive classroom environment can be established and Allows all the children from different backgrounds.

B. To help children be motivated, independent, and involved readers and writers with wide possessing sustainable reading, writing, and numerical skills.

C. To make sure that the child understands regarding different domains of numbers, measurement, and shapes. And enable them to able to solve numerical problem independent.

D. To assure the availability of quality contend with highly culturally influenced learning materials in their mother tongue.

E. To emphasis on continuous training of teachers, head teachers, academic resource persons and educational administrators, it helps to capacity building.

F. To actively associate with all stakeholders like teachers, parents, community, and policy creators for building a strong base of lifelong learning.

G. It compiles various type of assessment tools and technique like portfolios, group and collaborative work, project work, role plays, games, songs, oral presentations, and short tests to confirm the assessment as, of, and for learning.

### Key Features of NIPUN Bharat Mission

1. **Holistic Approach:** The NIPUN Bharat accepts a comprehensive pathway to FLN by focusing on three areas like foundational literacy, foundational numeracy, and early language learning.

2. **Age-Appropriate Learning Outcomes:** The scheme has set some specific learning outcomes for certain age/grade, which have to be accomplished by each learner at the end of certain age/grade.

3. **Tracking and Monitoring:** The scheme has implemented a powerful system to observe the improvement of each child and mark the areas where interventions are needed.

4. **Community Involvement:** Encourages parents and community members to support children's learning at home and in the community.

## 2. Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is an integrated scheme for school education covered from pre-primary to senior secondary levels. The scheme was started in 2018. It integrates with three education schemes, i.e., Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education. The scheme aims to confirm the inclusive and equitable quality education as a commandment of the Right to Education Act (RTE) and promote learning outcomes of learners all over India.

### Key Objectives of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan

- **Universal Access to Education:** Ensuring that education is for all children, especially those from marginalized communities. All children have access to quality education.

- **Quality Education:** The scheme works on teacher training, curriculum development, provide better infrastructure, and community involvement, to assure the stakeholders about the quality of education.

- **Equity and Inclusion:** Promoting equity and inclusion in education by addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups, such as girls, children with disabilities, and those from marginalized communities.

- **Holistic Development:** Fostering the holistic development of children through a focus on physical, social, and emotional well-being.

- **Up-Gradation:** Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan works as a connecting agency for teacher training. SSA helps to up-gradation and strengthens bodies, and institutes such as SCERT, SIE, DIET, etc.

### Key Features of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan

- The National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy to secure that the each child acquires the expected leaning capabilities of reading, writing and numeracy at the end of grade 3 to up to grade 5.

- SSA conducts teacher training session for in-service teacher for ECCE teacher and workers from Anganwadi.

- With the help of NISHTHA it has developed specific training modules to instruct the pre-primary and primary teachers on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

- Allotment for TLM maximum Rs 500 annually per child, Rs 150 for per teacher for manuals and resources, Rs 10-20 lakh for assessment process each district.

- To enrich the foundational skills among learners SSA integrates digital learning and educational technology for effective teaching-learning process.

## 3. DIKSHA

The DIKSHA 'Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing' is a digital platform that was introduced on 5th September 2017 by the MHRD and NCERT to promote quality education across India. Its aims include providing access to a spacious range of interactive content, such as explanatory videos, quizzes, assessments, and e-resources, including e-textbooks from NCERT and other educational boards, which are linked with QR codes (Sanjoy, 2023). It supports 32 Indian languages. DIKSHA grants a vast range of digital resources and equipment to assist teachers, students, and educational administrators.

### Key Objectives of DIKSHA

i) To give access to premium-quality digital and divers resources to uplift the quality of education across the country.

ii) It organizes interactive and self-paced courses to raise the continuous professional advancement of the teaching staff.

iii) To reduce the inequalities to access the different types of modal, it offers multilingual resources to all learners across the country.

iv) It creates a healthy environment for inclusive education so that diverse group of learner including differently-abled students and marginalized groups can participate actively in the education system.

v) Encourage digital literacy among students, teachers, and parents, ensuring they are well-equipped to navigate the digital age.

**Key Features of DIKSHA**

A. **QR Code-Enabled Textbooks:** DIKSHA has a unique feature to access the textbooks state-wise and language wise. The textbooks have linked directly to a specific QR codes. When someone scans these QR codes then he/she able to access various types of supplementary learning materials such as e-materials, videos, and exercise that align with the curriculum to enhance the learning experiences.

B. **Personalized Learning:** DIKSHA offers fully personalized learning experiences on the basis of learner's grade, language preference, and subject of interest. Students can understand their own level of learning through self-assessment tools and students can recheck and revisit the same contents or tests.

C. **Integration with Other Government Initiatives:** To raise the foundational literacy and numeracy DIKSHA has collaborated with different government schemes like as NIPUN Bharat and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. So that learners can achieve the expected skills of FLN concerning grades.

D. **Community and Collaborative Learning:** DIKSHA helps the community to effectively participate in the education system by offering them access to resources and tools that nourish collaborative learning and cooperation among students, teachers, and parents. It inspires the community to share resources and teaching techniques to raise educational quality and equality.

E. **Offline Access:** It allows users to download the content, materials, and other necessary teaching-leaning materials so that users can access them offline mode. DIKSHA ensure that internet connectivity would not be the hinder from remote areas and rural areas.

**4. NISHTHA**

The term 'NISHTHA' stands for 'National Initiative for School Heads and Teacher's Holistic Advancement', which is an integrated teacher training initiative. NISHTHA was started on 21 August 2019 by the Department of School Education and Literacy under the Ministry of Education. The initiative intends to improve the skills and capacities of teachers and school heads all over the country. NISHTHA looks to entitle the educators with the basic skills, knowledge, and innovative pedagogical knowledge to enhance the total quality of school education, from pre-primary to higher secondary.

- **NISHTHA-1.0 for Elementary level (Classes I-VIII):** NISHTHA 1.0 had goal to train 24 lakh teachers and school heads from pre-primary to upper primary schools. It launched in August 2020 in 30 states and UTs of India in 11 Indian languages, in collaboration with 8 autonomous bodies under MOE, MOD, and MOTA.

- **NISHTHA-2.0 for Secondary level (Classes IX-XII):** NISHTHA 2.0 had targeted to train 10 lakh teacher and school heads at secondary level. NISHTHA launched in July, 2021 in 33 states and UTs of India and it is available in 10 Indian languages, in assistance with 8 autonomous bodies under MOE, MOD, and MOTA.

- **NISHTHA-3.0 for NIPUN Bharat (ECCE to Classe V):** NISHTHA 3.0 had targeted to train 25 lakh teacher and school heads at pre-primary and primary level. NISHTHA launched in September, 2021 in 33 states and UTs of India and it is available in 11 Indian languages, in assistance with 5 autonomous bodies under MOE, MOD, and MOTA.

- **NISHTHA-4.0 for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):** NISHTHA 4.0 had targeted to train 25 lakh teacher and school heads at pre-primary and primary level. NISHTHA launched in September, 2022 in 36 states and UTs of India and it is available in 2 Indian languages, in assistance with 5 autonomous bodies under MOE, MOD, and MOTA.

**Key Objectives of NISHTHA Program**

A. **Improve Learning Outcomes:** NISHTHA helps teachers to furnish innovative pedagogical techniques and content knowledge that directly affect students learning outcomes as well as improve the quality of education.

B. **Promote Competency Based and Experiential Learning:** NISHTHA promotes competency-based and experiential learning and gives training to the teachers accordingly. So that learner can have a hand on and real time experience.

C. **Strengthening School Leadership:** NISHTHA tries to develop effective leadership and managerial skills among the teachers and school heads so that they can manage school as well as classrooms properly.

D. **Focus on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN):** NISHTHA helps teachers to develop capacity for improvement of foundational literacy and numeracy skills with advanced teaching-learning skills and innovative pedagogical content knowledge.

E. **Integrate Digital and Inclusive Education:** NISHTHA trains teachers to integrate digital teaching-learning tools in classroom practice so each student gets an equal chance to learn in an inclusive classroom, especially those with disabilities or special needs.

F. **Foster Continuous Professional Development:** To promote self-improvement and adaptation to new teaching-learning methodologies, NISHTHA inspires building a culture for lifelong learning and continuous professional development among teachers and school heads.

**Key Features of the NISHTHA Program**

i) **Comprehensive Teacher Training Modules:** The NISHTHA initiative develops different types of teacher training modules such as subject-specific pedagogy, inclusive education, health and well-being, safety and security in schools, and innovative teaching strategies. It helps teachers as well as school heads to continue a healthy environment in the classroom and school.

ii) **Cascading Model of Training:** NISHTHA follows a unique teacher training model called 'cascading'. In this model, national and state-level master trainers train district and block-level trainers, and then teachers get training from block-level-trained trainers at the grassroots

level. This process ensures wide reach and consistency in training quality across the country.

iii) **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Includes a strong structure for monitoring and assessing the training programs in order to measure their efficacy and progress. Participant's feedback is continuously gathered to enhance the delivery strategies and content.

iv) **Content in Multiple Languages:** NISHTHA makes available training materials and resources in various languages to confirm that the teachers from various linguistic backgrounds can participate fully and enjoy the benefits of the program.

v) **Interactive and Engaging Training:** NISHTHA to make training sessions engaging and interactive utilizes various types of methods such as discussions, case studies, quizzes, and group activities etc. So that trainee teacher can have a practical and hands-on experience about teaching-learning process.

vi) **Focus on Inclusive Education:** To teach children with special needs those with intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, physically challenged, and from marginalized sections. NISHTHA provides training about different inclusive education techniques to help the teaching-learning process run smoothly.

## 5. Vidya Pravesh

'Vidya Pravesh' was introduced by the Ministry of Education on 29th July 2021, and the NCERT prepared the program. 'Vidya Pravesh' is a 'Three-month Play-based School Preparation Program' for Grade I that has been developed under the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP 2020). It was designed with the aim of ensuring a pleasant transition from home or pre-primary education to formal education in grade 1, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The module includes various activities and worksheets specifically designed for the first three months (or 12 weeks) of Grade 1. These activities aim to develop key skills in children, such as helping, sharing, cooperating with peers, adapting to a school routine, adjusting to a new environment, and focusing on tasks for extended periods to improve their attention span. Additionally, the activities introduce foundational literacy and numeracy concepts, fostering essential skills that contribute to a strong learning foundation in the early years of primary education.

### Key Objectives of Vidya Pravesh Program

- To enhance the school readiness inclusively for children coming to grade 1 from various background.
- To confirm an easy transition of children to grade 1 from home or pre-primary schools.
- To lead the holistic development of children it gives play-based, age and developmentally precise learning experiences in a delightful environment.
- To set a solid foundation on literacy and numeracy that will boost future learning in higher grades.
- To ensure the impartial learning opportunities for all children irrespectively of their socio-economic background and past learning experiences.

### Key Features of the Vidya Pravesh Program

1. **Parental Involvement:** Vidya Pravesh inspires parents to assign with their children through learning activities at home, build a solid home-school connection because parental involvement is very crucial in the child's early learning journey.

2. **Child-Centric Approach:** Vidya Pravesh follows a fully child-centric approach so that all children can learn according to their capacity, interest, and pace. Vidya Pravesh designs learning materials, assessment tools, textbooks, and supporting materials according to each learner's capacities.

3. **Holistic Development:** One of the 'Vidya Pravesh' program's main aims is to lead children's holistic development. The development is not bound to only cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development, and it nourishes curiosity, creativity, and the ability to express themselves among children.

4. **Culturally Relevant and Context-Specific:** 'Vidya Pravesh' creates learning content and all other activities highly culturally influenced. It includes local stories, traditions, customs, context, and knowledge systems to make learning more interesting and engaging for young learners.

## Conclusion

The New Education Policy (NEP-2020) has discussed precisely about FNL at the elementary level officially for the first time in India and emphasized on its importance for higher grade learning and life-long learning. It this study we have presented an overview of five schemes such as NIPUN Bharat Mission, Vidya Pravesh, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, DIKSHA, and NISHTHA. Tried to make a concept about how these does schemes work, what are the objectives and features of these schemes. We have also discussed the way of making of modern India by these schemes, and initiatives.

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