

Understanding Foundational Language Literacy in Context with Mission NIPUN BHARAT 2021

Anshuman N. Tiwari¹ & Tarunkumar B. Kuvad²

¹Junior Research Scholar, Centre of Education,
Indian Institute of Teacher Education Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India

²Ph.D. Scholar, Centre of Education,
Indian Institute of Teacher Education Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India

Received: January 01, 2022

Accepted: February 01, 2022

ABSTRACT: NIPUN (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) BHARAT -2021 mission launched by School Education & Literacy Department, MoE, Govt. of India is working under mission mode in every state of India to ensure the achievement of Universal Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in school education by 2026-27. This paper discusses how the Early Child Care Education is very important for the development and improvement of foundational language and literacy. This paper focuses on the critical analysis of data of nation-wide enrolment of children in primary education and nation-wide performance of the students in foundational language literacy and numeracy. It also throws light on the concept and components of foundational language and literacy which mainly include reading and writing with special focus on reading with understanding. Reading with understanding is largely discussed in this paper. Only reading the letters or word is not reading, reading along with an ability to comprehend the meaning of the written work is in fact what reading is and should be taken as skill. This paper also discuss how foundational language and literacy is important at the early stage of learning to remove the drop out in secondary and higher secondary education. Various strategies for improving foundational language literacy and numeracy like curriculum revamping, pedagogical innovations, restructuring teacher education programs, revisiting assessment, administrative support and learning resources for the same have been also discussed in this paper.

Key Words: Foundational Language Literacy, NIPUN BHARAT, Early Childhood Care Education, Reading, NEP 2020, NAS 2017

Introduction

In this technological and dynamic era of globalisation education is the main concern of every parent for the progress of their children. Education is the only weapon through which a better society can be imagined. To improve the quality and productivity of education, early education of the child should be focused very significantly. The NEP-2020 prominently emphasises on Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) by implementing 5+3+3+4 (Foundational, Preparatory Middle and Secondary) in school education system. NEP 2020 stress on universal acquisition of foundational skills by all children at the end of Grade III. Foundational learning accounts for children's ability to read and meaningfully comprehend as well as use elementary mathematical operations in day-to-day lifestyle. NEP-2020 also suggests that if proper steps toward the improvement of foundational learning will not be taken then entire policy will become extraneous. India has nearly 25 crores school going children out of which 3.46 crores children of age group 3-6 year are enrolled in 13.87 lakh Anganwadis and Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is 102.7% (UDISE 2019-20, MoE, GoI) which specifies that nearly every child in primary level is enrolled in school which is graphically shown in figure 1. But at the same time, they face difficulties in learning as they have not been provided with foundational learning skill of basic reading and numeracy.

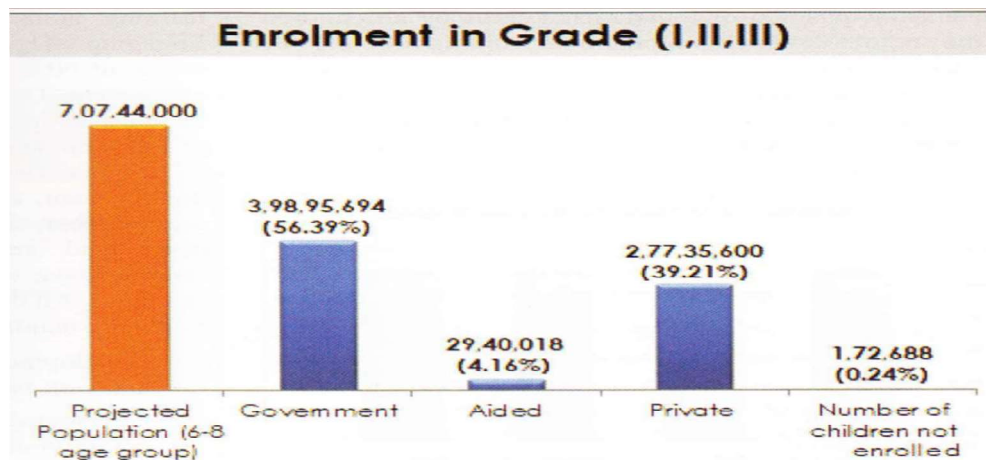


Figure 1: Enrolment in grade I, II, III in India

Source: Adopted from UDISE 2019-20. MoE, Government of India

NEP 2020 on Foundational Language Literacy and Numeracy:

NEP 2020 Para 2.2: The highest priority of the education system will be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school by 2025.

NEP 2020 Para 2.4: On the curricular side, there will be an increased focus on foundational literacy and numeracy - and generally, on reading, writing, speaking, counting, arithmetic, and mathematical thinking - throughout the preparatory and middle school curriculum, with a robust system of continuous formative/adaptive assessment to track and thereby individualize and ensure each student's learning.

Foundational Language Literacy and Numeracy: The word 'foundation' is prominently placed in NEP-2020, because our mindset was like that the formal education of a child starts from class I, but this visionary policy of 21st century equally focusing on the ECCE of the children which boost up the foundational literacy of the children. The positive environment of daily life learning also play very important role in the language acquisition and children easily learn reading and writing as they easily learn listening and speaking.

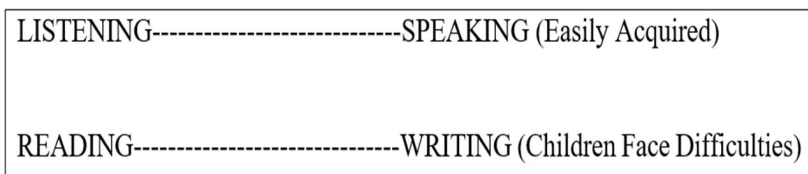


Figure 2: Language Acquisition (LSRW)

The foundational Language Literacy (FLL) is a child's ability to read and write with meaning. A strong foundation of basic reading and writing at the foundational level will enable child to develop ability to read and learn fluently.

Class 3 is considered to be crucial stage by which children are expected to have acquired these skills but in India figure of National Achievements Survey 2017 (NAS-2017) shows that 33% of class 3 cannot read small text with comprehension, nearly 18% and 13 % children of class 3 are under basic level in language and numeracy respectively, 15% and 18% children of class 5 are below basic level in language and numeracy respectively, only 47% and 53% of class 3 and 47% and 44% children of Class 5 have achieved proficiency in language and numeracy respectively which is shown graphically in figure 3. The students lacking in foundational literacy may become increasingly incapable of closing the gap in their learning and at the long run drop out from the school will takes place. Keeping this in the centre, the NEP-2020 and Atamnirbhar Bharat realise that foundational language and literacy is crucial to learning. In perspective to this, School Education and Literacy Department, MoE, Govt. of India has launched a very sound mission called NIPUN BHARAT (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) on 5 July, 2021 which is ensuring universal achievement of foundational language and numeracy skills in 3-to-9-year age group children.

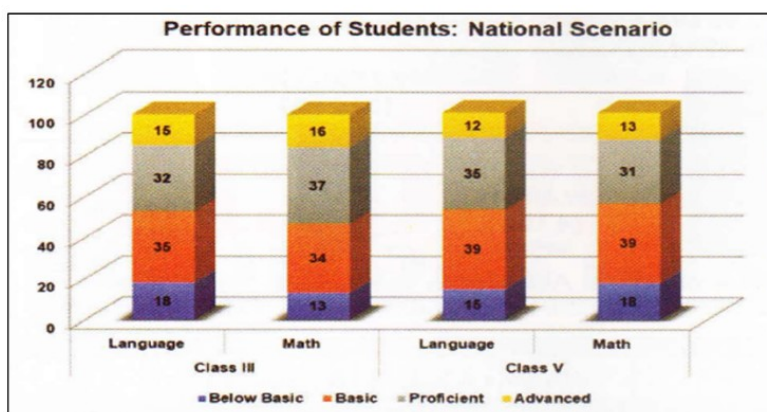


Figure 3: Performance of Students: National Scenario of India

Source: Adopted from National Achievements Survey 2017 (NAS-2017). MoE, GoI.

“NIPUN BHARAT KA SAPANA SAB BACCHE SIKHEN BHASHA AUR GANANA”

Source: (NIPUN BHARAT 2020. SE&LD, MoE, GoI)

Key Concept of Foundational Language Literacy: Foundational language literacy generally deals with oral language development (which includes improve listening comprehension, oral vocabulary and extended conversation skills), decoding (involves written words based on understanding the relationship between symbol and their sound), reading fluency (ability to read text fluently, speed, expression and comprehension), writing (includes the competency of writing Akshara (alphabet), words and writing for expression). Language, literacy and reading development in the prekindergarten years proceeds through several levels of foundational skills with skills and behaviours becoming more complex and more proficient as children get older (Brown C. S., 2014). According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD-2000) of United State, foundation skills include three elements:

- **Phonemic awareness:** The awareness that spoken words are made up of individual sounds (phonemes) and the ability to manipulate these sounds.
- **Knowledge of high-frequency sight words:** The most common words, which students should be able to read quickly and automatically.
- **The ability to decode words:** To translate a word from print to speech (for example, by using known sound-symbol correspondences to sound a word out and decipher it).

Components of Foundational Literacy:

- **Reading for pleasure:** When children read for pleasure, when they get “hooked on books”, they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called “language skills” (Krashen,1993). The path of a reader is not a runway but more a hack through a forest, with individual twists and turns, entanglements and moments of surprise (Holden, 2004). When a child read novels, storybook etc. he enjoys while studying but when he starts reading textbook then there is tremendous fear of exam more than that of pleasure.
- **Reading is Understanding:** This is one of the most important points of foundational literacy. It means that how much student have comprehended after reading.
- **Expression of experience of child:** When child read and understand the sole concept properly then he can express his experiences in an innovative manner.
- Listening and speaking with understanding
- Writing for different purposes after listening and reading on the basis of comprehension.

Reading (Letter vs. Meaning): Reading is the identification of Akshara (letters) and words, reading is not only mere reading but it is ‘reading for understanding’. The reading skill is natural and easy for those who got opportunity to read. If in the starting phase of education proper environment and opportunity is provided to the children then they can learn reading easily. The reading skill is very complex for those who

get stuck on the preparation for reading. Reading is simply reading, there is no practical existence of word reading readiness, child interact with the environment and see letters, words, sentences, these all are included in reading not reading readiness. It is a misconception that reading begins with a letter. In Indian context teachers use to teach alphabets and then move on to reading books practices. This misconception has to be dropped, then only we can achieve the goal of foundational literacy “acquisition of foundational abilities of children”. If children only identify the alphabets and speak it but if they do not comprehend the meaning of the word or sentence then it is not said to be reading. For example, a common Indian child who knows English well but don’t know Italian language can read the word and sentence written in the Italian language but cannot be able to comprehend the meaning of that word or sentence.

I love my parents (English) ----- amo i miei genitori (Italian)
India is my country (English) ----- India è il mio paese (Italian)

This confirms that for learning the language familiarity with the language is essential and this familiarity increase only when children’s lives in language rich society, continuously uses those languages in their day-to-day life and have access to rich language material. Teachers play important role in improving the foundational literacy of the children, because if proper method is used by the teachers, then children will be easily able to read and identify the letters, words, sentences and express their thought and experiences in the form of writing appropriately.

Strategies for Improving FLN: Some initiatives for the improvement of foundational language literacy and numeracy as per Background Paper for Teacher’s Fest-2020 of NCERT are as follows and shown in figure 4.

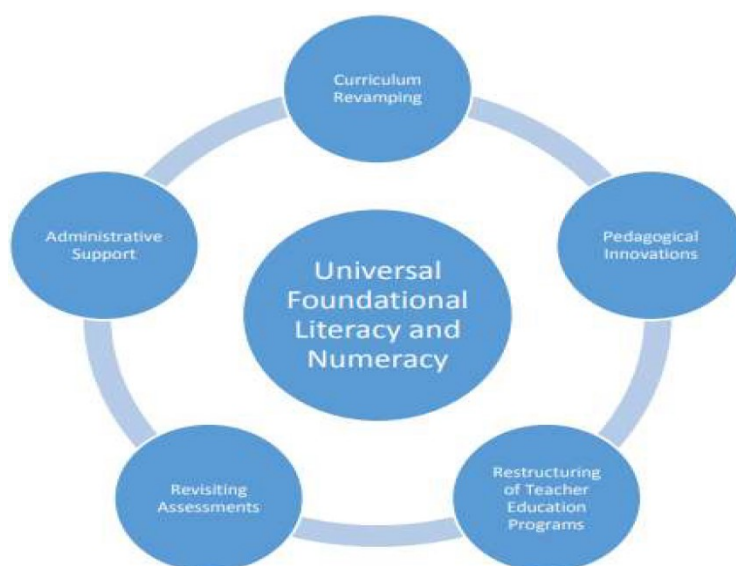


Figure 4: Action points for the attainment of Foundational Language Literacy & Numeracy
 Note: Adopted from Rajput, Anup (2020). Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. NCERT New Delhi

Resources for improvement of Foundational Literacy (FL): 20 years back in country like India was not having much resources of education for teaching learning process but due to advancement of science and technology the development is taken place in almost every field and education is also not untouched from it. Now a days there are number of learning resources available for the learning. According to NIPUN BHARAT-2020, resources and materials for the enhancement of FL are:

- Setting up of school and public libraries in remote area by the help of community and local government.
- Setting up digital library for all like DIKSHA, E-Path Shala, NROER etc.
- Workbooks and activity material like learning kit, play based material etc.
- National book promotion policy to ensure the availability, accessibility, quality and readership of books.

Conclusion: Language literacy does not start from the knowledge of alphabet because alphabet knowledge (Akshara Gyan) has no existence of its own. Many of us believe that first, children should learn alphabet and then start reading and writing but this is a fallacy. Reading starts from the same time when the child looks at the printed, written and painted things in his surroundings and starts interpreting the meaning according to their neuropsychology. As seeing the requirements and urgency of foundational literacy in India, a nationwide mission NIPUN BHARAT has been started to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy is the need of the hour, so that last child of society can win battle against low learning level with the help of administrative and pedagogical efforts. Parental participation in learning at home can also play important role for enhancing the language literacy as well as numeracy. Under NIPUN BHARAT mission foundational literacy and numeracy skills is imparted through different organisations mainly to the children of ECCE, class 1,2 and 3 children's which is really helping children to learn and read meaningfully as they progress academically and in future, they can develop 21st century skills like problem solving and critical thinking. These skills provide every child with an equal opportunity to succeed and become empowered citizen of the society.

“BACCHA BACCHA NIPUN BANEGA APANA BHARAT UNNATI KAREGA”

References

1. Brown, C. S. (2014). Language and Literacy Development in the Early Years: Foundational Skills that Support Emergent Readers. *Language and Literacy Spectrum*, 24, 35–49.
2. Clark, & Rumbold, K. (2006). Reading for pleasure: A research overview. National Literacy Trust, 1–6.
3. McQuillan, J. (1997). The effects of incentives on reading. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 36, 111-125.
4. Meek, M. (1991). *On Being Literate*, London: Bodley Head.
5. Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. New Delhi: Government of India. Retrieved on 26 February 2022 from https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
6. Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2021). NIPUN BHARAT. Retrieved March 5, 2022, from https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/nipun_bharat_eng1.pdf
7. Mitchell, R. (1992). Testing for learning: How new approaches to evaluation can improve American schools.
8. Moss, B., & Hendershot, J. (2002). Exploring sixth graders' selection of nonfiction trade books. *The Reading Teacher*, 56, 6 - 17.
9. NIPUN BHARAT. (2021, October 8). [Slides]. Department of School Education & Literacy, GoI. Retrieved on 03 March 2022 from <https://diksha.gov.in/assets/docs/nipunbharat.pdf>
10. Rajput, Anup (2020). [Slides]. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. NCERT, New Delhi. Retrieved on 3 March 2022 from https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/shikshak-parv/Foundational_LiteracyandNumeracy.pdf
11. Sharma, Rashi. (2022, February). NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020. YOJANA, 66(2). Retrieved on 03 March 2022 from https://books.google.co.in/books?id=cS5eEAAAQBAJ&pg=PA29&lpg=PA29&dq=NIPUN+BHARAT+YOJANA+RA+SHI+SHRMA&source=bl&ots=KltVo82F4F&sig=ACfU3U3LIgSIKPF_qU8rDG_cwvvIjd5qQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwja1qzW7a_2AhXJyigGHYZoCzkQ6AF6BAGTEAM#v=onepage&q=NIPUN%20BHARAT%20YOJANA%20RA+SHI%20SHRMA&f=false
12. Sharma, Usha. (2020). NEP 2020: Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. Shikshakparva, NCERT New Delhi. Retrieved on 04 march 2022 from https://www.education.gov.in/shikshakparv/docs/background_note_foundational_literacy_Numeracy.pdf