



Nipun Bharat mission: A paradigm shift to competency based learning in India

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Abstract

The government of India has been taking numerous initiatives through different flagship schemes and programmes for the improvement of education in India in terms of enrollment, funding, scholarships, quality education, quality research, professional experienced teacher recruitment and opening more new institutions by enabled them to provide both regular and distance courses. The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), Right to Education Act-2009, Rastriya Madhyamika Siksha Abhiyan, Rastriya Uchhatar Siksha Abhiyan (RUSA) are epitome in this regard. On the other hand, studies also show that the enrollment, retention and completion in education are not expected level. The existing education system is facing numerous challenges and needs a water maked change. In this connection, the paper explore those challenges with suggestions and shows how does India shift from tradition learning practices to competency based learning to inculcate, enhance and develop skills, knowledge and values among children to become an efficient responsible social member and citizen through the process of education and socialization process in school. In addition to this, the paper also highlights on the Nipun Bharat Mission and explores that how does it help for enhancing competency based learning in India to alleviate unemployment problems.

Keywords: competency based learning, nipun bharat mission, foundational literacy, numeracy, educated unemployment

Introduction

Present Indian Education Scenario

For a long time, the education sector has remained a top priority for the Indian government since 2002, the government has allowed the influx of 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the education sector. Between April 2000 to March 2020, the total FDI inflow in the country's education sector was Rs 3.24 billion.

At present the government launched the National Education Policy 2020, thereby paving way for large-scale reforms across school and higher education institutes. Despite this a major portion of the population in the country is still unable access primary schooling though government has been bringing many programmes and policies for the improvement of entire education system from bottom to top. In addition to this, even today majority of the remote areas of the nation do not have adequate school infrastructure and trained teachers.

Educated unemployment, in simple words is not finding a job in a particular industry despite holding a relevant degree and willing to work at industry standard wages/ salaries. Youth unemployment in India is among the major concerns and is one of the most widely discussed issues, yet it has hardly seen any resolution. The meaning of education to many is to complete schooling and college degrees. It is one of the great misunderstanding regarding the meaning of education in real among people. The numbers of years in schools and colleges do not guarantee to get into job market. But the quality of education and acquisition of real knowledge only can shape our life and pave way for better future. Most of our childhood and youth is spent in mugging up textbooks and very less i practical understanding and acquiring skills.

- An estimated 6.1 million children out of school in 2014 reduced from 13.46 million in 2006. Out of 100 students, 29% of girls and boys drop out of school before completing the full cycle of elementary education (SRI-IMRB Surveys, 2009 and 2014) ^[10].
- 50% of adolescents do not complete secondary education. (Rapid Survey of Children 2013-14) ^[8].

Concept Competency Based Learning

The learners can access to the job market with requisite skills and knowledge and in this connection, competency based learning is boon for them which helps to cater the needs of the job market. In other words, competency based learning can produce efficient human capital who can contribute to the economy of the nation. Therefore, this kind of learning is the need of the hour which can inculcate and grow all kinds of abilities among the students to earn livelihood in later life. Learning outcomes depends on competency. We can say learning outcomes is directly proportional to competency. Competency based education presents a personalized

alternative one that facilitates a move away from traditional assumptions about how schools must look, how teachers must teach, and how students must learn.

Competency based education weaves a new framework from core concepts and lessons from various reforms of the past 50 years, e.g Bloom's instructional approaches standards based education and youth development among others. It places the students at the center of highly personalized learning experience. (Bristow & Patrick, 2014).

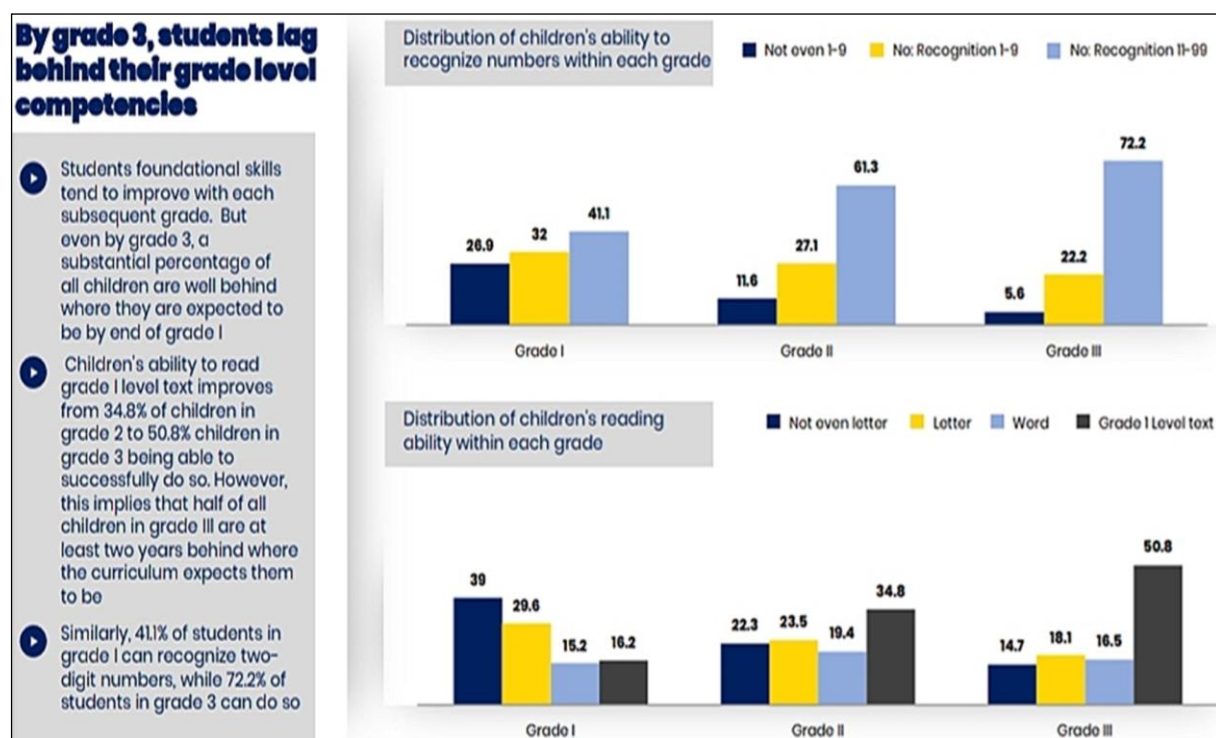
Background of Competency Based Learning

Competency based education was introduced in US higher education programs for teacher training and vocational education in the 1960s. It is accepted as professional education across the USA with great support. The goal of which is to provide students with skills, abilities and qualities needed in entering a workforce although it is still evolving field with no universally shared definition of what makes a model competency based. Since, 1960 the evolution of competency based education has gained the attention of educational policy makers and created an established place in higher education. This education directly interlinked with the theoretical knowledge to real world knowledge to apply in day to day life. In addition to that this education enables students to acquire all the necessary skills, knowledge and values which helps them to get into job market and perform better in the workplace.

Over the past years, competency based learning has rapidly gained momentum within the higher education space and has been supported by ICT. The competency based learning and methods are followed across the world in all educational institutions to improve the entire teaching-learning practices to produce efficient skilled responsible citizens globally who can not only solve their day to day problems but also contribute to the world society in a greater ways. In other words, competency based learning has several aspects to shape our life, future, education and society.

Current Learning Status of Schools in India

- Studies show that the primary education is lacking better leaning outcomes in India. Even though children are moving up from one grade to another, few master the grade level competencies expected to them.
- Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) based on a sample schools in rural districts shows that 72% of grade 5 children from rural India cannot do simple division problems. The percentage of students who can correctly do three- digit to one- digit division problem reduced from 68% in 2010 to 43% in 2018.
- National Achievement Survey cycle 3 and 4 for grade 5 revealed that 19 out of 31states / union territories which participated in both cycles show a decline in language and math outcomes in government schools.
- Many studies show that the privately managed schools do better than government schools with regard to learning outcomes of the students. In other words, it is needed to do a lot in government schools to shape the future of the students and nation. High paying private schools achieve significantly better outcomes than both school types but lower than international averages. (Central Square Foundation 2020).



(Source: Ministry of Education, Govt. Of India)

Fig 1

Challenges in Education System of India

- **Lack of quality and standards in government schools/ institutions-** By the year 2017, half majority of students (52.2%) in India were enrolled in government schools. In comparison with a huge weight age of 74.1% in 1978, this figure has shown a huge dip. The low quality of education provided in government schools is responsible for this cause. Since long the government has been taking numerous flagship programmes and schemes, still the schools are facing numerous challenges with regard to quality education which is not a good symbol for the future of the countless students. These unnoticed challenges for instance, unavailability of trained teachers, no updated teaching methods followed as per the needs of the children and the society, unfavourable leaning environments in the school etc. are causing to push the quality of education to lower and lower. These challenges are enforcing parents to move towards privately managed institutions for better education which is costly most of the time for them. They are choosing this out of compulsion because they never compromise with the future of their children.
- **Outdated instructional delivery-** the outdated instructional practices followed in schools is major cause of quality education to be delivered to children. This leads backward when we talk about the quality education till today in comparison to the schooling of other nations in the world. The proper participation of children is still far from reality in the classroom because of outdated teaching methods practiced in the schools. Our schools are unable to provide all the skill set required in 21st century to our children which directly hampering in producing efficient skilled workforce and posing as barriers in the way of nation building.
- **Less Focus on holistic development-** there are also questions arise regarding the quality education because of faulty curriculum and methods practiced in the schools. There is no proper focus on skills education and on co-curricular activities among the students which are posing as obstacles on the way of real progress of the students and it is one of the major challenges even till today our education system is facing. These challenges are reducing competencies and denying to thing children out of the box completely. The academic hegemony with faulty practices is hampering to produce efficient skilled human capital in the nation. It is noticed that most of the time students forced to take career perspectives by choosing wrong academic path even they do not have interest on it because of family and social unreasonable expectations. All these practices push children to run after grade and numbers, instead after real knowledge and skills which directly hampers on the nation building and all round personality development of children. Children forced to kill their dreams and interest and this leads them to nothing at the end.
- **Examination Systems are score- centric-** The needs of the global society is to produce efficient skilled responsible global citizens who can understanding the global society in a better ways and can contribute for the development. But our education system in India is still aged old examination based performance. This poses a great barrier on the way of proving quality education and to produce skilled and efficient global citizens. In other words, our educational practices are enforcing students to remain within the box of four walls in the school. The competition market has made ugly completely to our education system and people understand education means is to get into high salaried job. The examination based education system is ruining the potentials of our children and we need to do better more to shape the future of the nation through education.

Paradigm Shift in Present Learning System

The National Education Policy 2020 calls for a 'Shift from (an assessment system) that is summative and primarily tests rote memorization skills to one that is more regular and formative 'Competency Based Learning' promotes learning development for our students and tests higher- order skills, such as analysis, critical thinking and conceptual clarity.

NCERT's (National Curriculum Framework) NCF 2005 took a constructivist approach.

Based on NCF 2005, the entire teaching-learning practices are updated and needed practices are introduced in 2015. The following are some major aspects among them:

- Learning outcomes are to be included in each content
- Competency based learning
- Burden free education minimizing textbooks
- Class based and curriculum based teaching-learning practices

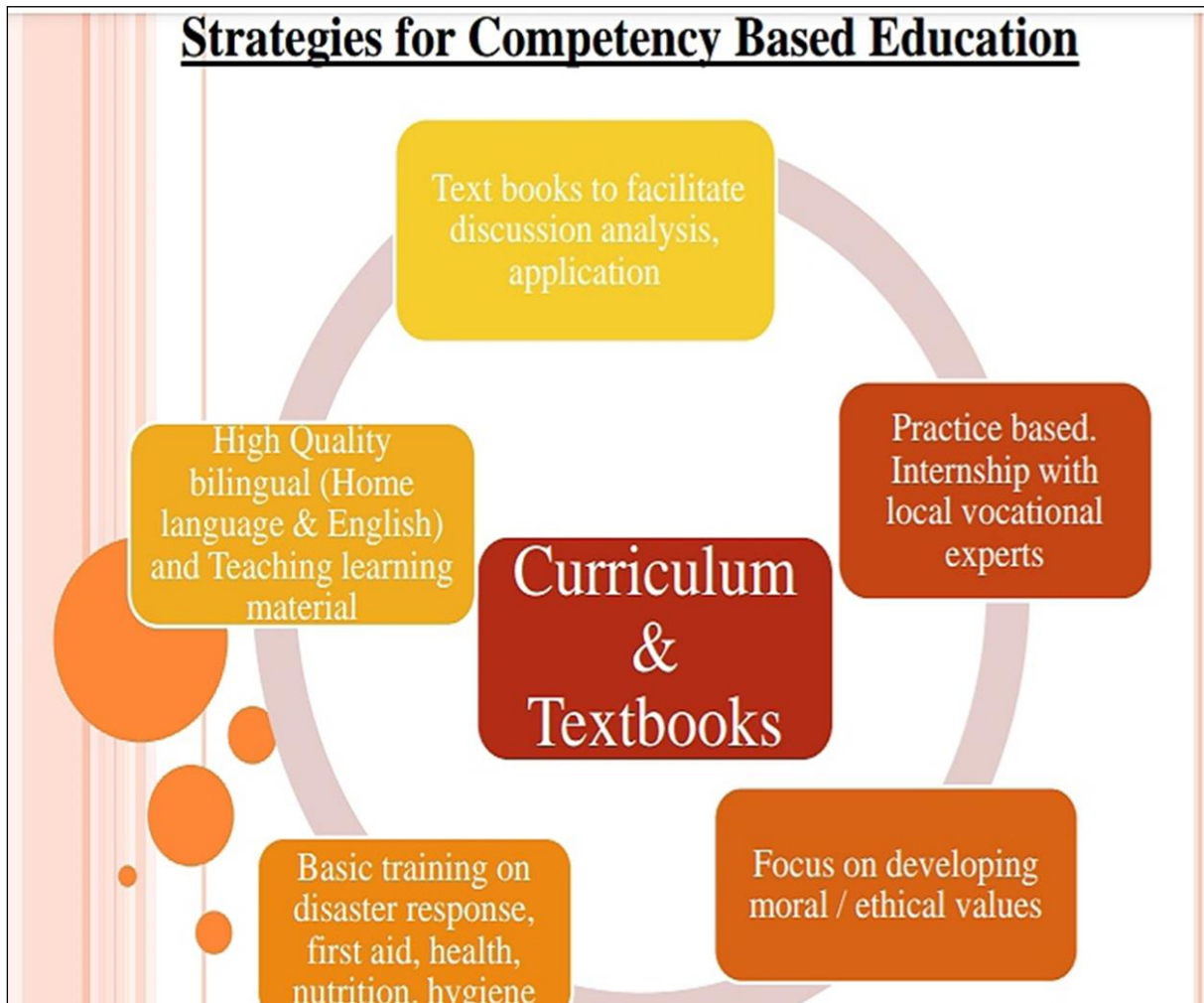
Major Shifts Envisioned in National Education Policy

- The pedagogical practices based on competency learning through integrated art, sport education and storytelling methods are initiated for better performance.
- Less emphasis on input and greater emphasis on output potential concerning desired learning outcomes.
- Formative and adaptive assessment 'as', 'of', and 'for' learning will be aligned with the learning outcomes, capabilities and dispositions for each subject in a given class.

- The learning outcome assessment are widely followed to develop skills and knowledge required in 21st century society through examining relevant knowledge concepts, needed skills of high orders, real life knowledge application etc.

Recommendations of NEP 2020 for Competency Based Learning

- Flexibility in selecting subjects.
- Focus on proficiency in languages, scientific temper, creativity and innovation, art and aesthetics, health and nutrition, fitness, wellness.
- Ethical and moral reasoning, gender sensitivity, citizenship skills, resource conservation.
- Current affairs and knowledge of critical issues.
- Mathematical thinking and mathematics, science based on data, artificial intelligence and learning through machine.



(Source: Ministry of Education, Govt. Of India)

Fig 2

Objectives of competency based learning

- To bring into practice of pre-determined professional and practice based learning, education based on real world and life, competencies based on practical implications etc.
- To practice proper measurement of learning outcomes based on behavioral terms for the achievement of competencies among children.
- To enable students to think out of box through competencies in real life by reducing old aged dominant bookish knowledge.

Benefits of Competency Based Learning

- **Student work on their own pace-** One of the strong aspect of competency based learning is to enable children to learn at their own space. There is no interference in their learning and they are the owners of their learning. This helps to bring out the innate potentials of the students and helps the to understand in holistic ways deeply. In other words, it helps to develop the knowledge and understanding horizon of children to do better out of the box.

The learning should not be based on only booking knowledge and imposition of expectations of the family and society. When they move without their interest, it creates barriers and gaps in their understanding abilities. The children work here and learn at their own pace to master the matter. The appropriate learning outcome assessment of children in diverse dynamic social life, enables them to become efficient skilled persons to deal with day to day life in real.

- **Flexibility-** Competency based education is a boon for the dropout students those who still want to do better in life without any discontinuation. In this learning, there is greater flexibility for children to grow in life and students need not waste their time by sitting passively in traditional classroom after mastering the contents. It encourages them to demonstrate their skills in real life situations. In other words, it provides an ample opportunity to express self with full potential development of students.

The competency based learning, hence based on children's interests which completely against and opposite of rigid existing education practices in schools. They can have experience by participating directly in given project based works and assessment is also done accordingly. Therefore, this is more flexible and is done completely according to the interest of children. The experiences of children are given due weightage here. In other words, it opens up many ways to gain experiences and knowledge through different sources at different places at different times.

- **A ticket to gain real- work experience-** The real goal of education is to make students into a great leader in their respective interested area. The accumulation of marks and grade is not but the skills are demanded to solve day to day problems in real life and all these possible through competency based learning and with real experienced learning. This is not only limited to single discipline but also across the disciplines for instance healthcare education, nursing education, medical education, teacher education etc. Which are next to impossible in our traditional examination oriented aged old teaching-learning practices.
- **Personalized way of teaching-** The competency based learning is a challenged and a bold step against the traditional teaching-learning practices which directly helps students to acquire relevant skills, knowledge by reducing gaps and barriers. In other words, all kind of successes are possible in this kind of education system. It is a personalized way of teaching where students can learn in transparent ways and authentic manners. Teachers can create meaningful methods to deliver the contents through different experience based approaches. Students are free to choose, learn, and give their feedback which helps teachers to assess students' performance in a better way for their all-round personality growth. Furthermore, this learning is helpful to reduces gaps among students and mastery over the content through experience at the field.

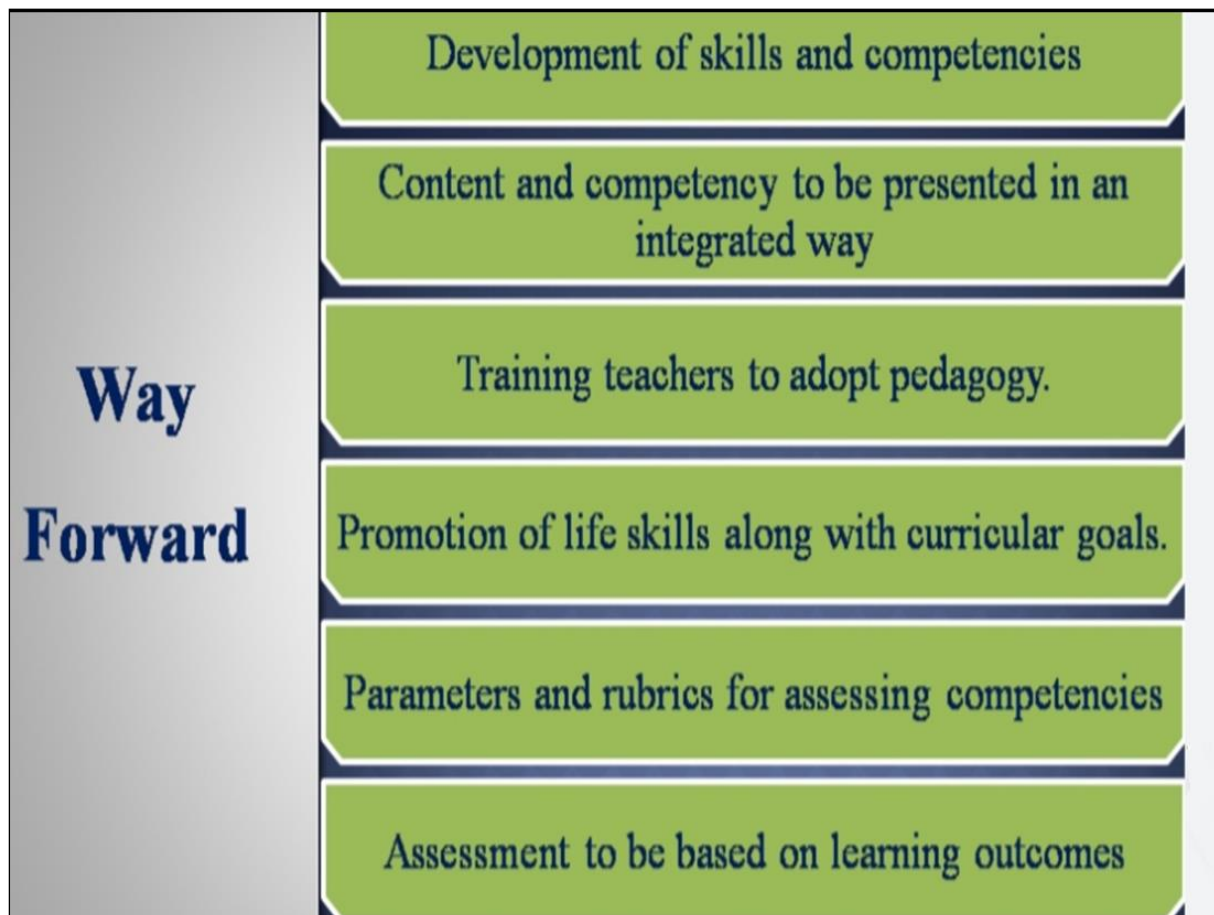
So, this is not linear way of progress in teaching-learning, rather provides complete instructional support to the students to grow in a greater ways. All the required skills and knowledge are possible here in this kind of learning. This highly recommends for the learning at own pace and based on the interests of the children.

- **A skill based training program that ensures quality-** the competency based education is favorable for both equality and quality at the same time in the classroom. The focus on quality learning of students is at topmost priority in this kind of learning. The competency based learning is designed completely based on the national quality assurance in education for the children. In other words, it can be said that it is the one of the most important driving force to bring quality education in the country. So, the skill based training are full of quality and ensure better learning outcomes in diverse areas of the students.

Prospects of Competency Based Learning

The competency based learning has numerous benefits and aspects which are necessary to focus on for the overall improvement of education in the country. The following are some major way forward for competency based learning:

- Development of skills and competencies
- Content and competency to be presented in an integrated way
- Training of teachers to adopt pedagogy
- Promotion of life skills along with curricular goals
- Parameters and Rubrics to assess competencies
- Assessment to be based on learning outcomes



(Source: Ministry of Education, Govt. Of India)

Fig 3

Nipun Bharat Mission

Background of Nipun Bharat Mission

National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) NIPUN. Which is 'A National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN).

Nipun Bharat Mission was launched by union education ministry under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme (an overarching program for the school education sector extending from preschool to class 12) aligned with NEP(National Policy Education).It focuses on providing access and retaining children in foundational years of schooling,teacher capacity building, development of high quality and diversified student and teacher resources. It focuses on the children of age group between three to nine and includes from pre-schooling to grade three. The children who are in class 4 and 5 and have not attained the foundational skills will be provided individual teacher guidance and support and age appropriate and compensate on the quality learning materials which enables students to get needed competencies in life.

Nipun Bharat is the need of the hour

The children of our nation are still outside of the school due to several structural and other problems, though government has been striving consistently to bring all children to the school through different flagship schemes and programmes. On the other hand, studies show that the quality and skill based education for our children are still far from dream and expected level. The World Bank's Learning Poverty Index indicates that India needs to do a lot for the skill and competency based learning of all children in the country. The report also shows that more than fifty five percent (55%) of school going children in India cannot read, understand a short sentence and cannot do simple arithmetic calculation. It also shows that children cannot perform well as per their age appropriate text by grade V (World Bank's Learning Poverty Index).

It is noticeable that the time needs to upgrade the skills and competencies in children through different ways in the school in India. The skill and competency based learning are essential for our children to make them efficient citizen, responsible social member and an integrated part of the economy as efficient human capital. But on the other hand, the picture of our children are regrettable and shows that still 13-18% of the students from grade III, grade V and grade VIII are below learning levels. It is also shows that only 39-53% students of our nation have achieved proficiency levels (National Achievement Survey Report, 2017) ^[9].

In this regard, Nipun Bharat scheme will help children 'read to learn' so that they don't get left behind among the children of other developed nations of the world. It is a bold step of the government to enhance skill and

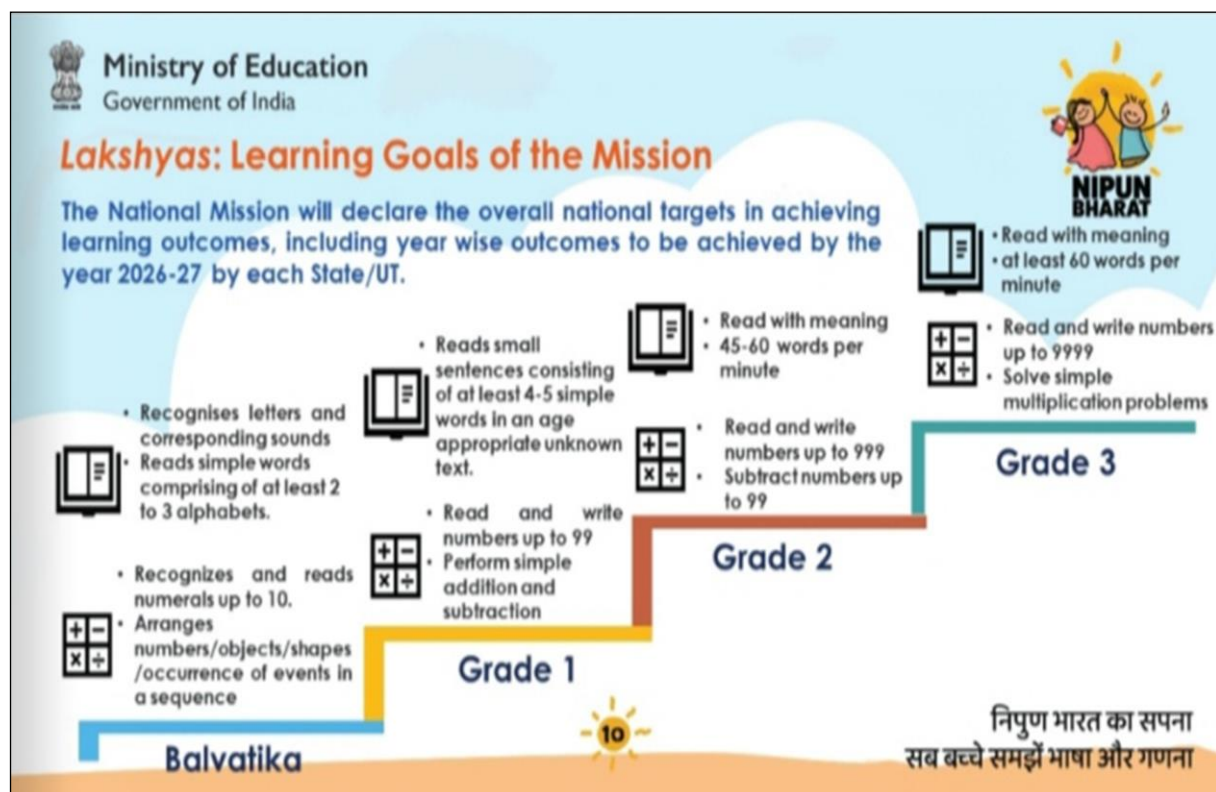
competency based learning in schools to develop all round personality of children. In this sense, it is the need of the hour to welcome initiative like Nipun Bharat Mission to empower our children in the world.

Understanding Foundational Numeracy

Foundational Numeracy means the ability to reason and to apply simple numerical concepts in daily problem solving. Key components include:

- Concept on pre-numbers- Students able to understand and count basic numeric.
- Numbers and operations on numbers– Learning the basics of mathematics like the base ten system to repeat numbers.
- Shapes and spatial understanding– Perform simple computations in up to three- digit numbers and apply them in daily- life skills.
- Measurement- Perform basic operations like addition, subtractions, multiplication and division on numbers up to three digit.

Learning Goals of the Mission



(Source: Ministry of Education, Govt. Of India)

Fig 4

Role of States and Union Territories in achieving the goal of FLN by 2026-27 in mission mode:

- Preparing state specific stage- wise action plan
- Creating multi-year action plans to achieve respective FLN targets
- Set target annually and assess annual progress by developing precise tools at central level.
- Teacher availability assurance and foundational grades are for capacity building.
- Mapping of each enrolled child through students registry in foundational grades.
- Textbook and uniforms delivery assurance before academic session begins.
- Link and pulling mentors to help teachers in academic arena.
- Ensure parents and community awareness about desired learning outcomes.

Findings

- The present education status does not fulfil the present job requirement due to the gap in the current education system.
- To fill up the gap innovative approach have taken which is 'Competency based learning' which is unlike traditional system of learning, which highly focus on skill development of a youth and which will facilitates the youth with the opportunity for employment.
- 'NIPUN BHARAT MISSION' is a government programme launched for making 'Competency Based Learning' approach into action.

- NIPUN BHARAT MISSION aims on providing basic skills to school going children till grade 3 by 2026-27.
- School education is the foundational stage which should be strong enough to climb the higher stages which required knowledge and skills.

Critical Analysis

The Indian Education System which is based on traditional system of learning that mainly focuses on rote memorization neglecting the skill-based education which is an important reason for unemployment in India. In other words, the competency based learning through Nipun Bharat Mission is a welcoming step of the government to produce efficient skilled citizen in the country. It will help indeed to bridge the gaps and challenges of existing education system and open a way to take our education system to a greater way in comparison to other nations of the world. Students can read, write and can do basic arithmetic in the school with other necessary skills. The rank of India in the skill test on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy of students will be upgraded in the world.

The problem of unemployment in our nation can be overcome by taking innovative approaches into account the Competency Based Learning, which trains the students with skills they need in today's competitive world. To enhance the quality of Competency Based Learning the Union Education Minister of India has launched the "NIPUN BHARAT MISSION SCHEME", which provides a pathway to skill based education. It aims to focus on pre-school to grade III students with the learning outcomes of Foundational Literacy Numeracy (FLN) on experimental basis and if this mission fulfills its objectives then it will likewise be implemented on higher classes as well for providing a skill based education to the youth.

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