CHAPTER ONE

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1.0 The problem
A Study of Literacy Achievement in Literacy Centres of West Bengal.

1.1 Background of the problem
For a nation to grow and prosper, its people should have minimum life support facilities and adequate opportunities to develop. Ability to read and write simple messages forms the foundation for development of human society. Without it, it is not possible to ensure the growth of individuals and, ultimately, economic and social development. Literacy is a vehicle of education. Literacy, or education, not only generates a degree of conformity but is also necessary for any collective to prosper.

Education is recognized as a basic right of all people in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1948 and education is considered as the right of every child in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in November 1959. The first International Conference on Adult Education was held in Elsinor, Denmark in 1949. Since then there have been four more conferences that have deepened the discussions on and the understanding of adult education. These have taken place in Montreal, Tokyo, Paris and Hamburg in 1960, 1972, 1985 and
1997 respectively. While the Montreal Conference asserted adult education's role in upgrading and improving professional qualifications and established it as a condition for achieving economic progress, Hamburg expanded that understanding to include all types of learning engaged in by adults, and whose aim is to improve people's lives and abilities to participate in a more holistic way in overall social and human development. Other conferences on education over the years have taken into consideration many of the agreements and resolutions on adult education. Three of the six Education for All goals are concerned with adult education. These are:

Goals:

**Goal 3** “Ensuring ... learning needs ... of adults are met through ... access to life skills programmes”.

**Goal 4** “Achieving 50% improvement in adult literacy by 2015 ...”.

**Goal 5** “Enhancing educational quality ... Ensuring ... measurable learning outcomes are achieved ... especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills”.

The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), which was held in Hamburg in 1997, provided a comprehensive and holistic view of adult education. Agenda for the
future, the Hamburg document, makes the links between past conferences and declarations on adult education, including the Learning to Be (UNESCO, 1972), the UNESCO Recommendations on Adult Education (1976) and Delors Commission's report on Education for the 21st Century, entitled Learning: The Treasure Within. It is also links and emphasizes the role of education, and adult education in particular, to a host of international conference resolutions and agreements from Meeting Basic Learning Needs (Jomtien, 1990); Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992); Human Rights (Vienna, 1993); Population and Development (Cairo, 1994); Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995); Women (Beijing, 1995) and Human Settlements (Istanbul, 1996).

The world trend in adult literacy rate is broken down for developing regions and shows that Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States and North Africa and South and West Asia have come a long way, starting from an adult literacy rate of 40% in 1980. These regions made immense progress, all the more so in light of their high rate of population growth. In absolute numbers, illiteracy increased in all three regions during the 1990s. And together they accounted for 65% of the world's illiterate population in 1990. That figure increased to 70% in 2000 and it will move towards 80% in 2015. Adult literacy rates in these regions now hardly reach 60%. An acceleration will be
needed to avoid level of only 65%-75% literacy in 2015 - the target is 75%-80%. But regionally, Eastern and Southern Asia have the highest number of illiterates, with an estimated 71% of the world total illiterate population.

The problems appear to be most pronounced in the least developed countries, where there is also high population growth. The absolute numbers of illiterates in least developed countries rose from 165 million in 1990 to 185 million in 2000.

Since Dakar (2000), there have been two more United Nations events that are truly of historic importance for adult literacy and adult education work around the world: (i) "United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development", held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, and (ii) "United Nations Literacy Decade: Education For All", 2003-2012, initially proposed in June 2001, and launched on 13 February 2003 in New York. It should be noted that the United Nations Literacy Decade had now become 'United Nations Literacy Decade: Education For All'. The addition of the stem (Education For All) has been added to encourage member states of UNESCO to accept the goals of the Dakar Forum of 2000; and to undertake integrated planning for implementation of both the literacy decade and the Education For All (EFA) project launched in 1990.
Historical perspectives in the development of adult education in India

Upto the end of World War I, there had been very little progress in the sphere of adult education in India which was confined to night schools in metropolitan cities. However, some of the en-lightened Indian rulers of the princely States of Baroda, Travancore and Mysore had extended financial support to night schools. They also set up rural libraries mostly in the 19th century, and gave them patronage. The national leaders who steered the freedom movement were also concerned with the question of educating the masses as a part of the independence agenda. When the Congress Governments came to power in some provinces in 1937, adult literacy and education got included among the responsibilities of the Government. A series of provincial mass literacy campaigns were launched during 1937-39. But the Congress governments went out of power and the campaigns petered out. A CABE Committee appointed in 1939 on the problem of illiteracy suggested provision of facilities for adult education on the widest scale and introduction of free and compulsory primary education, as complementary activities. Besides, the Committee also suggested supplementation of official efforts by voluntary agencies interested in social amelioration. However, the Sargent Committee
(1944) asserted that the State must accept the responsibility for these programmes and solve the problem within 25 years.

Eradication of illiteracy has been one of the major national concerns of the Government of India since independence. During the first Five Year Plan, the programme of Social Education, inclusive of literacy, was introduced as part of the Community Development Programme (1952). A new implementation machinery comprising male and female Social Education Organizers at grass-roots level and a Chief Social Education organizer at the project level was created. A comprehensive training support was provided through the establishment of Social Education Organizers' Training Centres (SEOTCs). Model community centres, rural libraries Janata Colleges, youth clubs, mahila mandals and folk schools were encouraged. Folk schools on Danish High pattern called Vidyapeeths in Karnataka and Jagriti Vihars in Bihar provided a variety of skill-oriented adult education programmes to the rural youth. Government of India established a Council for Rural Higher Education for promoting the provision of graduate-level manpower through the scheme of Rural Institutes. These gave fillup to rural development including literacy programmes. A Standing Committee of the CABE on Social Education was constituted in 1956. A National Fundamental Education Centre was started to provide high-level training facilities
and undertake researches related to adult education. Efforts of varied types were made by the States for the spread of literacy. Among these, the Gram Shikshan Mohim initiated in Satara District of Maharashtra in 1959 was one of the successful mass campaigns. It aimed at completing literacy-work village by village within a short period of 3 to 6 months, through the honorary services of primary teachers and middle-school and high school students, supported by the entire community. It achieved a good deal of success but suffered from the lack of follow-up due to financial constraints and score of its good work was lost as a consequence.

In spite of these varied initiatives the programme of adult literacy did not make much headway. The Community Development Programme got weakened and was soon abandoned. It was assumed that adult literacy would automatically become universal as soon as the universal and compulsory elementary education became a reality. The literacy rate in India, therefore, increased only from 16.67% in 1951 to 24.02% in 1961. But the Kothari Commission (1964-66) took up the threads again and emphasized the importance of spreading literacy as fast as possible. It suggested the following measures:

a. Expansion of universal schooling of five-year duration for the age group 6-11.
b. Provision of part-time, education for those children of age group 11-14 who had either missed schooling or dropped out of school prematurely.
d. Use of mass media as a powerful tool of environment building for literacy.
e. Setting up of libraries.
f. Need for follow up programme.
g. Active role of universities and voluntary organization at the State and district levels.

With the help of these measures, the national percentage of literacy could be raised to 60 by 1971 and 80 by 1976. The Resolution of NPE 1968 not only endorsed the recommendations of the Education Commission but also reiterated the significance of universal literacy and developing adult and continuing education as matters of priority.

The schemes of Functional Literacy for Adult Women (FLAW) started in 1975-76 in the experiment ICDS project areas was gradually expanded in 1981-82. The FLAW aimed at enabling illiterate adult women to acquire functional skills along with literacy to promote better awareness of health, hygiene, and child care.
On 2nd October 1978, the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was launched. The NAEP aims at the extension of educational facilities to the entire population of approximately a hundred million illiterates, with special attention to the 15-35 age-group. It has given itself about five years to do this, beginning from April 1979. The incidence of illiteracy and social disability being much higher among women and persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, they are to be given priority in the organization of programmes.

In emphasizing the correlation between working, living and learning, the NAEP has borrowed heavily from Gandhi's ideas on basic education (Nai Taleem). In its methods, the NAEP incorporates the essential features of non-formal education, particularly in emphasizing the importance of its relevance to the environment and the learner's needs, flexibility regarding duration, time, location, institutional arrangements, etc., diversity of curriculum, and teaching and learning materials. In conformity with the ancient Indian adage, sa vidya ja vimuktaye ('that is true knowledge which liberates') which finds an echo in many a recent thinker, education under the NAEP is viewed as a means towards man's liberation. Again, it follows Gandhi, Tagore and Julius Nyerere in emphasizing the
importance of the development of the people it serves as the only means for the development of the country.

The conceptual framework of the NAEP has been concretized around three aspects of its programme content:

- Literacy and numeracy, at a level which would enable learners to continue to learn in a self-reliant manner.

- Functional development, functionality being viewed as the role of an individual as a producer and worker, as a member of the family and as a citizen in the civic and political system.

- Social awareness, including an awareness of the impediments to development, of laws and government policies, and the need for the poor and illiterate to organize themselves in pursuance of their legitimate interests and for group action. The programme is to be implemented in the form of compact projects.

The National Policy on Education (1986) has given an unqualified priority to the following three programmes for eradication of illiteracy, particularly among women:

- Universalisation of elementary education and universal retention of children up to 14 years of age.

- A systematic programme of non-formal education in the educationally backward states.
c. The National Literacy Mission which aims at making 100 million adults literates by 1997.

The major thrust of these programmes is on promotion of literacy among women, members belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes particularly in the rural areas.

The Eradication of illiteracy from a nation that is set to become the most populated in the world is by no means easy. This was realized in eighties and the National Literacy Mission came into being on 5th May, 1988 to impart a new sense of urgency and seriousness to adult education. The first breakthrough came in Kerala, in Kottayam city followed by Ernakulam district where the literacy campaign was initiated in 1989 and completed within a year.

For the first time, an area-specific, time bound campaign approach had been implemented and the community become responsible for running its own development programmes and consequently determining its future.

The National Literacy Mission in the mean time has been revitalized with the approval of the Union Cabinet on 30th September, 1999. The Mission's goal is to attain full literacy i.e. a sustainable threshold literacy rate of 75% by 2005. The Mission seeks to achieve this by imparting functional literacy to non-literates in the 15-35 age group. This age group has been the focus of attention because they are the
productive and reproductive period of life. To tackle the problem of residual illiteracy, now it has been decided to adopt an integrated approach to total literacy campaigns (TLCs) and post literacy programme (PLP). This means the TLCs and PLPs will be implemented under one literacy project to achieve continuity, efficiency and convergence and to minimize unnecessary time lag between the two. Post literacy programmes will be treated only as a preparatory phase for launching Continuing Education with the ultimate aim of creating a learning society.

In different five year plans, literacy received special emphasis and various programmes of action were initiated. In the field of adult education, the National Literacy Mission is in place with clear focus and medium-term goals. The Tenth Plan targets for adult education are:

- To achieve full literacy, i.e., a sustainable threshold level of 75% by 2005.
- To cover all left over districts by 2003-2004.
- To remove residual illiteracy in the existing districts by 2004-2005.
- To complete Post-Literacy Campaign in all districts.
- To launch Continuing Education Programmes in 100 districts by the end of the plan period.
Literacy rates in India have been consistently on the rise since independence: from 18.34% in 1951 to 28.31% in 1961, 34.45% in 1971, 43.56% in 1981, 52.11% in 1991, and 65.38% in 2001. As part of the National Literacy Mission (NLM) of India launched in 1988, 574 out of the total of 598 districts of India have been covered by the NLM, using the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) approach. Three hundred and two districts had already entered in the post-literacy phase; and 112 districts had received sanctions for initiating continuing education programme.

Some critical observations on research findings in India

While reviewing the various studies conducted by investigators some interesting findings were noticed. As for example Rao, B.S. Vasudeva (1999) evaluated total literacy campaign in Nellore district, Andhrapradesh. Mosiforeba Victoria Adegbije (2000) studied on Improving the Effectiveness of Non-formal Education through the use of Instructional media. K. Sudha Rani and D. Uma Devi (2000) studied on the problems of the learners in continuing education center, Chauhan Harising (2001) studied on problems of post literacy centres, Sahoo. C. Umesh (2003) studied on post literacy programme of Aurangabad district, Maharastra etc. Satwant Bhangoo and Amit Kaur (1995) studied on the Multi-Media Approach in Learning by
Adult Rural Women. The findings of these research studies indicate that there are various factors like socio-economic background, physical facilities, learners attendance, instructors attendance, teaching method, learners family problems, etc. affect literacy achievement. Jhansi, S.C., Mishra, S.K. (2000) studied on 'Urban Adult Education - Issue for Concern'. The study revealed that in all urban areas, adult education plays an indispensable role in development. It is only focussing adult education on special groups of people (like migrants, deprived and unorganized workers, and pavement and slum dwellers) can they be salvaged from perpetual illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and under-employment. Above all, it is very essential to identify their needs and consider possible action before adult education programmes are organized and carried out for them.

Significance of the study

There are various factors which affect literacy achievement. Some of the essential components namely teaching learning method, media and materials used in teaching learning process, need, interest and motivation on the part of the learners to continue till the completion of the programme, inadequately equipped adult education centres, lack of availability of committed and competent instructors are the important determinants of literacy achievement. According to 2001
census the rate of literacy is 69.22%, where male literacy is 77.58% and female literacy is 60.22% in West Bengal. While taking review it was observed that very few studies are available on literacy achievement in West Bengal excepting the studies of Council for Social Development (1981), Chakrabarti, Sharmistha (1995, 1999), Ghosh Sukumar and Sikdar Prasad Deb (2000) etc.

Though there are various important factors which affect the literacy achievement, but it is not possible to take all the variables related to literacy achievement in one study. So the important relevant and significant determinant of literacy achievement such as socio-economic background of the learners, learners need and interest, instructors background and knowledge of the subject matter and teaching method, teaching-learning media and materials used in literacy centres are taken in this study.

1.2 Objectives of the study

- To study the literacy achievement of the learners in literacy centres.
- To study the teaching learning methods (lecture method, sentence method, question-answer method, repetition (drill), active participation, creative learning environment) in the literacy centres.
• To study the role of teaching media (radio, tape recorder, television, video films, songs, dance, recitation, outdoor and indoor games etc.) and materials (primers, exercise books, posters, leaflets, newspaper articles, map, charts, globe, playing materials, blackboard, chalk, etc.) in literacy achievement.

• To study the socio-economic background (income, education and occupation) of the learners in literacy centres and its relationship with literacy achievement.

• To study the need-interest of the learners for literacy development.

• To study the instructor’s background (income, education, occupation) and knowledge of the subject matter.

1.3 Hypotheses

• Teaching learning method influences literacy achievement.

• Teaching media and materials used in the centres are effective in literacy achievement.

• Socio-economic background of learners influences literacy achievement.

• There is relationship between learners’ need, interest and literacy achievement.
• Instructor's knowledge of the subject matter influence learners' literacy achievement.

1.4 Methodology

Sample

Multiphase stratified random sampling technique was adopted in this study. The methodology took care of special pockets (SC/ST, Muslim, Minority) by giving them due representation. The sample for the study was both male and female learners in the age group 9-35 years. South 24-Parganas, Birbhum and Kolkata were selected on the basis of literacy level (low, medium and advance) for this study. 276 learners from twenty-four literacy centres (eight centres from each districts and Kolkata) were selected randomly for the study. The centres were selected from two NGOs namely Narendrapur Lokashiksha Parishad of Ramkrishna Mission and Viswabharati Pallisangathan and Bangiya Saksharata Prasar Samity in Kolkata who are running literacy centres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Panchayat</th>
<th>Village</th>
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<td>South 24-Parganas</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birbhum</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolkata</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Kolkata majority of the samples were taken from Alipore Correctional Home.

**Tools**

With a view to achieving the above mentioned objectives following tools were used for the study:

1. Literacy Achievement Test. It was prepared as per NLM norm. It measures competency of reading, writing and numeracy as suggested by National Literacy Mission (NLM). Out of 100 marks, reading have a weightage of 40 marks, writing 30 and numeracy 30.

2. Interview schedule and observation taken in the class room to assess the teaching-learning method.

3. Interview schedule and observation taken in the class room to assess media and materials used in teaching-learning process in the literacy centres.

4. Interview schedule on socio-economic background (income, education and occupation) of the learners.

5. Interview schedule on learners need, interest to attend the literacy classes.

6. Personal profile of the instructors and their knowledge about literacy.
All the tools were prepared by the researcher under the guidance of the supervisor, Dr. Sharmistha Chakrabarti, Department of Education, Calcutta University and finalized on the basis of result of pilot study and opinions of experts. The tools were mostly structured and few were open-ended.

Home visits, individual interview and discussion with the learners, instructors, members of local village education committees, parents were undertaken.

1.5 Pilot study

Pilot study was conducted on twenty-five learners from two literacy centres of South 24-Parganas district and Kolkata respectively. Necessary changes and modification of the schedules were made on the basis of the findings of the pilot study.

1.6 Statistical treatment

For quantitative analysis of data, percentage, mean, S.D., C.V., correlation-coefficient etc. were applied. Inferences were drawn on the basis of t-test and z-test. Qualitative analysis was done during visits to centres, house and informal discussion with learners, parents and instructors.
1.7 Collection of data

Literacy achievement test was administered on 276 learners of twenty-four adult literacy centres. To assess the method of teaching, effective use of teaching media and display of study materials by instructors, classroom observation was undertaken by the researcher. Instructors were interviewed and their personal profile, socio-economic background and their knowledge of subject matter was found through interview schedule.

1.8 Limitation of the study

Samples were limited to twenty-four literacy centres in two districts of Birbhum and South 24-Parganas and Kolkata metropolitan city area as it was an intensive enquiry including visit to adult education centres, individual interview with learners, instructors etc. The study was limited to age group 9 to 35 years.

1.9 Operational definitions of the variables

1.9.1 Achievement of the learners

Literacy is the vehicle of education. According to UNESCO, “A person is literate who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his every day life”. In this study,
achievement of the learners was measured according to the evaluation norm given by National Literacy Mission (NLM).

1.9.2 Teaching learning method, media and materials

Teaching learning method, media and materials is a channel through which instructors or teachers in non-formal education can make their instruction more scientific and effective. In this study teaching-learning method means use of lecture method, sentence method, question-answer method, repetition (drill), active participation and creating learning environment in the literacy centres. Teaching-learning media means use of radio, tape recorder, television, video films, songs, dance, recitation, games and sports and teaching learning materials means printed books, (primers), exercise books, pencils, blackboard, chalk, poster, newspaper, map, chart, globe and also playing materials etc.

1.9.3 Socio-economic background of the learners

Socio-economic status is a study of individuals position within the social relationship. It influences individual’s relationship with others. It includes prestige, influence and respect. It is also known as social class, social status or socio-economic background. Generally it is a crude global measure comprising ratings on income, education, occupation and culture level of the family.
1.9.4 Need and interest of learners

In this study, learners' need and interest means learners' desire or willingness to learn, their interest for further study, causes for attending the centres, their motivation and also their parental eagerness to sending their children to the literacy classes.

1.9.5 Instructor's background and knowledge of the subject matter

The instructor is a grass-root level worker, plays very significant and important role in imparting literacy achievement. In this study instructor's background means the information of the instructor in regard to their socio-economic background, nature and duration of training received by them, method of teaching, instructor's knowledge about non-formal education, adult education and literacy.

1.10 Chapterization of the report

The details of chapters in this report are as under:

Chapter One is the introductory chapter. It includes title, background of the problem, objectives of the study, hypotheses, methodology, limitation of the study, collection of data and definition of the variables.

In Chapter Two, review of the related research studies and project are presented.
In Chapter Three, sample, the tools and their administration and scoring, collection of data and statistical treatments are presented.

In Chapter Four, presentation of data, analysis and interpretation of results and discussion are presented.

Chapter Five presents summary, conclusion and recommendations.

Bibliography

Appendices – which separately presents:

Appendix One

- Literacy Achievement Test

- Interview schedule and observation taken in the classroom to assess the teaching-learning method.

- Interview schedule and observation taken in the classroom to assess media and materials used in teaching-learning process in the literacy centres.

- Interview schedule on socio-economic background (income, education and occupation) of the learners.

- Interview schedule on learners need, interest to attend the literacy classes.

- Personal profile of the instructors and their knowledge about literacy.
Graphical representations

Appendix Two

Display of photographs of literacy centres