CHAPTER –1

1. INTRODUCTION

In today’s world, adult education is an important and integral part of a nation’s education system and is paid due attention by national governments. Adult education has had a complex history. It is interwoven with the story of the struggles of the human family to achieve its individual and social aims. The intellectual, philosophical, sociological and economic ideas of national development have had a profound impact on a nation’s adult education policy and programmes.

The problems and purposes of education in general, and adult education in particular, have been somewhat similar in most countries. The solutions are, however, influenced by the traditions and culture of each country or nation.

Adult illiteracy is a universal concern. The form of adult education in industrialized countries is different from the one in underdeveloped countries. Although the problem of adult illiteracy does exist in the industrialized countries, the highest illiteracy rates are found in the underdeveloped countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. In the absolute terms, a total of 799 million people in the world are illiterate, of which 33.8% are in India, 11.2% are in China, 2.3% in Indonesia, 6.5% in Bangladesh, 6.4% in Pakistan and 39.8% in the rest of the world. (Source: 2000-2004: Statistical Annex, Table 2, 1990-1994: National Estimates provided to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics).

Each national adult education or literacy programme has its own specificity and has grown under different political and historical conditions, resulting in a unique programme. In practice, literacy initiatives have come to be differentiated as campaigns, programmes, revolutions, reforms and gradual political cultures (Bhola, 1988). The uniqueness of these adult education
programmes will be understood better if these are studied in the background of their educational traditions.

As early as 1936, Kandal, a pioneer in comparative studies, stressed the investigation of nationalism and national character as a historical background to actual conditions. He emphasised the necessity of a historical approach to the study of the determining factors. He stressed that the chief value of the comparative approach to the study of educational problems lay in analysing the factors that have caused them and in a comparison of various systems, the reasons underlying them, and finally comparing the solutions attempted.

Each nation has inherited its own specific adult education system. According to Hans (1986) individualisation of a nation regarding the problem of adult education and its solutions attempted is a complex result of historical and geographical situations, religious and social movements, political philosophy of the government, and traditions and culture of the nation. He further stresses that linguistic features of a country, the nature of its programmes, various controls over the system of education and the socio-physical environment are also among the major influences which shape the individuality of the national education system. These factors are equally relevant to the individuality and specificity of the national adult education systems.

The present study entitled, “Adult Education in India, Indonesia, Thailand and China - a comparative study” has emanated from the concepts of pedagogy of adult education, its international sharing and reaping mutual benefit

1.2 THE PROBLEM: ITS EMERGENCE AND JUSTIFICATION

Independence came to each of the selected countries viz. India, Indonesia, China and Thailand around the same time in late 1940’s or early 1950’s. These countries on getting independence faced the problem of illiteracy and how they eradicated it to some extent can be seen from the literacy rates of these countries in 1951 and then the levels achieved by each by 2001 in Table 1.
Table 1: Literacy Rates of Selected Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Indonesia</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>53.7*</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>84.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1947


It can be seen that during the 1950’s all the four nations selected for comparison had very low literacy rates varying from 10% to 20%. In the last 45 years or so, there has been a large variation in the achievement of literacy, with India having about 65.3%, Indonesia 87.3%, Thailand 97.5% and China 84.1% (in 2001).

The present study is intended to analyze the various factors underlying differential literacy activity in the specified period (1945-2005) in these countries. It is not a group of case studies in the sense that it is not confined to merely descriptive information on education in different countries. It is a comparative study of the theoretical perspective of adult education. In this context: (I) interconnections will be made between the political ideology and the adult education policy; (ii) its programmes; and (iii) results.

The present study entitled “Adult Education in India, Indonesia, Thailand and China: “A Comparative Study” has a historical context of inquiry.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the concept and purpose, definition, policy and the practices of adult education in the selected countries and the interconnections between the prevailing political ideology in the countries.
To analyze and identify the similarities and dissimilarities in the
differential growth of Adult Education in countries under consideration.

To analyse the relative role of primary education and adult education in
achieving adult literacy in the selected countries during the years 1945-
2005.

To compare purpose, policy and programmes of Adult Education of the
selected countries in general and especially on issues like gender, area of
location and language.

To critically analyse the factors associated with successful outcomes and
problems of adult education in different national settings.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The landmarks identified in the study are of significance. They provide
rich knowledge and acute understanding of the adult education programmes
undertaken in different countries in different forms. The study attempts to
understand the differences and similarities in adult education and their
significance in the countries under examination and in other countries where the
findings may have relevance. A comparative study of adult education in the
countries under reference has also been attempted in the context of the
conditions and quality of adult learning, which in turn would also help in
improving the quality of adult education in these countries. The study would also
help in enhancing international cooperation and solidarity through adult
education while meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

The present investigation is significant, as no such study has so far been
conducted to the best of the researcher's knowledge. This view is strengthened
by a review of research undertaken in the field (Salamatullah and Bareth, 1984
and Surveys of Research in Education (Buch and NCERT, 1987). There exist
only studies of individual countries from the point of view of the Governments
concerned.
Chapterisation Scheme of the study

The chapterisation of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter-I Chapter-1 is devoted to Introduction of the theme, the problem: its emergence and justification, objectives and significance of the study.

Chapter-II Chapter-2 gives the description of Research Methodology in three phases, viz. Phase-A, Phase-B and Phase-C.

Chapter-III Chapter-3 relates to the Developmental Perspective of Adult Education the selected countries.

Chapter-IV Chapter-4 gives in details the historical Comparative Analysis of Adult Education Systems by selected Indicators, Concept, Purpose, Policy, Definition, Language of Literacy and Programmes.

Chapter-V Chapter-5 Summarises the Discussions in the Chapters-3 and 4 and highlights Implications for policy, planning and implementation of Adult Education Programmes.

Bibliography Related references reports, surveys and documents published in the area of research.

In this thesis Review of Literature has not been devoted a separate chapter which is in deviation with the conventional practices. The main reason for departure lies in the fact that the research studies have been incorporated in the main text of the thesis.