CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many decades, educators have argued about the concept, the meaning and the use of the term 'adult education' and terms related to it. Many countries have had no concept of adult education as a distinctive sector of education. It did not begin as ideas looking for education. Most adult education began as a response to perceived practical needs and for large part of history it has been slow to develop.

For the most part adult educators have derived their ideas of what education is about from the formal provision of school and higher education. The majority of them had no other model. Their function has largely been seen as compensating for and supplementing initial education, adult education being seen as a marginal activity. Different countries described educational provision for adults from many different perspectives. For example from the perspective of class, such terms as 'education populaire' "popular education". In terms of functions such terms as .... "vocational education", "trade union education", "social education", "citizenship education" described the concept. From the perspective of initial education, terms used are "further education", "continuing education".

Many concepts closely related to adult education are non-formal, informal, life-long learning, life-long
education, continuing education and recurrent education. In some countries the term non-formal education has been used as synonym for adult education, but this is not fully acceptable since the term can be used and should be applied equally to children and youth. In an earlier period in North America the term informal education was applied almost as an equivalent of adult education but that usage has almost disappeared.

The term "life-long learning" is used internationally but still lacks a commonly accepted definition. Life-long learning refers to the process by which individuals continue to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes over their life-times. Gross (1977) says that life-long learning means self-directed growth. It means understanding yourself and the world. It means acquiring new skills and powers - the only true wealth which you can never lose. It means investment in yourself. Life-long learning means the joy of discovering how something really works, the delight of becoming aware of some new beauty in the world, the fun of creating something, alone or with other people.

"Life-long education", although used often as a synonym for "life-long learning", should more properly refer to the organised provision of opportunities for persons to learn throughout their lives. Delker (1974) makes the distinction between adult learning "as a major continuing
mode behaviour" and adult education as the organised and sequential learning experiences designed to meet the needs of adults. Likewise according to Faure et al. (1972), life-long learning is the habit of continuously learning throughout life, a mode of behaviour, whereas life-long education is "the principle on which the overall organisation of a system is founded". Dave (1976) integrates the characteristics of the concept into what may be the most satisfactory description. Life-long education seeks to view education in its totality. It covers formal, non-formal and informal patterns of education and attempts to integrate and articulate all structures and stages of education along the vertical and horizontal dimensions. It is also characterised by flexibility in time, place, content and techniques of learning and hence calls for self-directed learning, sharing of one's enlightenment with others, and adopting varied learning styles and strategies.

Continuing Education is another broad term about whose meaning there is little agreement. Thomas (1981) provides a very broad definition. It is a system(s) of education which includes formal and non-formal education; that is defined with respect to various parts and agencies (elementary schools, secondary schools, colleges and universities) in terms of specific educational objectives to be fostered, rather than in terms of ages or circumstances of learners. The system is available to persons of any age, part time or
full time, voluntary or compulsory, and is influenced by a mixture of private and public resources.

A much more restricted definition of this concept has been given by Houghton and Richardson (1974) in terms of its function. The envisaged function of continuing education is that of rounding off the individual's education, of providing further education or of restraining, so that, for example, the individual can always meet increased or new professional demands.

In early 1970's another term came into use, first in Europe: "Recurrent Education". It was conceived as a comprehensive educational strategy for all post basic education over the total life-span of the individual in a recurring way, i.e. in alternation with other activities, principally with work, but also with leisure and retirement. Another definition has been offered by Houghton and Richardson (1974). Recurrent Education is a life-long process consisting of a discontinuous, periodic participation in educational programmes aimed at gradually dissolving the blocks of compulsory education and working life.

These definitions overlap and may be modified in the near future.

One of the principal objectives for which education has been offered to adults has been to teach them to read, write and use numbers. There were active campaigns to this end in the
eighteenth century Europe. In many developing countries the drive for literacy is adult education. Until that is successful, the scope for other educational activities among adults is seen to be severely limited. The value of being able to read and write does not lie in itself, but in other skills and knowledge to which it opens the way. Where the letters are not perceived to be of utility or interest, there is no incentive to become literate, or if one has certain level of literacy, no intention to maintain it. This as well as economic and organisational difficulties of mass educational campaigns is a major reason why illiteracy remains a significant problem throughout the world.

Bhola (1990) links literacy to survival and says, that linking literacy with survival is not exaggerating or hard-selling literacy. He goes on say that survival, of course, means to outlast, to remain. Survival has a normative ideal and has many aspects. It is not mere existence but a life of acceptable quality. Survival is also economic survival, social survival, political survival and cultural survival.

Streat (1990) says that literacy is not just a technical skill, neutral and universal across all societies; it involves fundamental concepts and values at the level of culture. Culture refers to basic questions about what is truth and what is knowledge and how they vary from one social group to another. The acquisition of literacy always involves some degrees of change for the participants at this level. It is
thus more a matter of personal identity, knowledge and power than of functional skills.

In the Indian context, The Adult Education Programme has three mutually reinforcing elements - Literacy, Functionality and Awareness.

LITERACY

It includes reading, writing and numeracy or broadly speaking basic education or basic literacy skills. Literacy may be imparted to the learners through specially designed teaching-learning packs that would include the basic features of national values, promotion of national integration, deepening of cultural background, equity of women, observance of small family norms, health care, conservation of environment and relevance of science and scientific temper for shaping the future.

FUNCTIONALITY

The aim of functionality is improvement of vocational skills for more productive use of time. It also includes skills to supplement one's income. It also includes the use of knowledge acquired through reading and writing to every day use.

AWARENESS

It is a significant element of the programme. It aims
at making the learners capable to understand the causes of their own deprivation and shape their own future through the inter-linking of learning, reflection and concrete action. The participants are encouraged to know about laws and government policies affecting them and in raising their general awareness about the same.

It will not be out of place to state that a person is literate if he has the ability to function or being in possession of a certain skill to perform. It is the ability to apply reading, writing and numeracy skills in a socio-economic situation required by a given environment. It is a useful communicative tool required for the survival of man faced with an ever changing technology. Besides the skills to communicate, it also includes the skill to perform and manipulate whatever tools required. A literate person has the ability to learn, re-learn, adapt himself to the changing environment and technology. In such a situation, he is able to master his destiny.

The target group of adult literacy are adults who are out of the formal education system as dropouts or who never have had the benefit of schooling. Since the target population is adults, the activity is pedagogical or androgogical. It focusses on the immediate needs of the learners. The traditional concept of literacy as the ability to write, read and use of numeracy skills with understanding is not adequate.
It is indeed life long education, skill development, development of attitudes and ethics, changes in behaviour, increased production, increased income and happy and prosperous family. It is short and intermittent through the non-formal education system. It is problem/objective oriented and tailored to meet the immediate needs of the target groups. It is flexible and under the control of the client and its methodology is pedagogical.

It may be concluded that acquisition of the skills of reading, writing and computation is not an end in itself. The acquired skills are means to realise other purposes notably economic, social, political and cultural. It can be argued that literacy is an independent variable, and the dependent variables comprise a range of functionalities. The range of activities is immense and some most important for developing countries like India are to be conceived in socio-economic context. Literacy may go hand-in-hand with human liberation in the broadest sense implying with health care, occupational training, productivity, efficiency and alleviation of poverty.

NEED FOR ADULT EDUCATION

Literacy is not just the process of reading, writing and counting but the only means of liberation of man and an essential instrument for all social change. Struggle for literacy is a struggle for justice, for a greater degree of
equality, for the individual's aspiration to play an economic, social and political role in society and for recognition of the right of all to benefit from development. It is this that makes the struggle against illiteracy so difficult which is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Illiteracy is often due to the marginalization of those human beings who are, the poorest, ill-fed and least well-cared for and whose ignorance hinders their personal development and participation in the tasks and benefits inherent in the development of their societies. They are marginalized because they cannot read and have little motivation and access to knowledge.

A number of studies in India and many other developing nations have shown a sombre relationship between illiteracy and poverty, low economic productivity, deprivation, large size families, high fertility rates, less full time births, high infant mortality, lesser participation in schooling process, lesser development of language and cognitive skills of children before going to school, their lower enrolment and higher dropout ratios besides their lower academic achievements.

Regarding illiteracy and poverty, the point is made internationally, nationally and locally.

Globally, the nine countries which Unesco identifies as accounting for 75.2% of the world's illiterates - India,
China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Indonesia, Brazil, Egypt and the Islamic Republic of Iran are all, excepting Brazil, among the poorest countries in the world according to the World Bank classification. The remaining 149 countries whose illiterates are 24.8% of the 1985 world total of 889 million, are concentrated in Africa, where 47 countries out of 50 have illiteracy rates above 25%, ranging from over 30-35% in Botswana, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Madagascar to 83-88% in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Somalia, and in Asia where in 23 countries out of 39 illiterates comprise more than 25% of the population, ranging from 30-40% in Kuwait and the Syrian Arab Republic to 57-86% in Afghanistan, Nepal and Yemen. These 72 countries are in the two lowest income categories, as Table 1 illustrates.

In the national context, a similar juxtaposition of poverty and illiteracy is found.

At the sub-national level, the coincidence of high illiteracy and high poverty rates is even more striking. In the State of Tamil Nadu, India, the districts which have a greater than 50% literacy rate are: Madras (66%), Chinglepur (50%), Coimbatore (52%), Nilgiris (54%), Thanjavur (50%), Tirunelveli (51%) and Kanyakumari (68%). These are regions which also have high per capita incomes derived from well-developed manufacturing industries and agriculture. Similarly, in the district of Kaira in Gujarat, where dairying has become a way of life for the peasants of the district, the literacy
Table-1: Illiteracy and poverty among various countries and regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No. of illiterates (millions)</th>
<th>Illiteracy percentage</th>
<th>Per capita income 1986 (US $)</th>
<th>Rank among 129 countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>1810</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Republic of Iran</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East and Central Africa (27 countries)</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest and East Asia (10 countries)</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America(21 countries) and Caribbean</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


rate is a high 82%. In contrast, the districts with large numbers of people living in poverty - Ramanathapuram (52%), Pasumpon Muthuramalingam (56%), Pudukottai (53%), Kamarajar (50%), Periyar (50%) are those with low literacy rates of between 42-53%. Other areas with low literacy and large numbers living in poverty are five districts in Orissa, eight districts in East U.P. and seven districts in Bihar.

Thus the rather close connection between illiteracy and poverty at all levels - global, national and sub-national is a fact.

The problem of illiteracy, in fact, must be seen first and foremost in terms of inequalities; between individuals, between specific groups or categories of the population, between clearly defined areas within a given country and between countries themselves. These persistent inequalities and the resultant frustrations engender tensions which in turn underlie conflicts, the more so in that unequal access to knowledge goes hand-in-hand with unequal access to well-being. Illiterates are therefore outcasts socially, economically and politically. They are 'marginalized' because they cannot read; and they cannot learn to read because they are rejected. By the same dialectic, illiteracy is both a cause and a consequence of poverty.

This inequality of access to knowledge, like the unequal distribution of wealth, is all the more disheartening,
not to say appalling, in that the progress made in modern science and technology and the resulting social and economic improvements have only served to widen the gulf which divides the privileged and the non-privileged. The enormous advance in the communications media, which has reduced the dimensions of our world, has made the inequalities existing between States and within States more flagrant and more intolerable.

What is the use of asserting that all men 'are entitled without distinction to equal protection under law', if the illiterate is incapable of using that protection in the same way as an educated person? The illiterate cannot be aware of the texts and documents so widely used in administrative and legal procedures today, he cannot understand to the full such accusations as may be levelled against him or such questions as may be put to him; nor can he verify the accuracy and impartiality with which his replies are recorded. In these circumstances, he must rely wholly on third parties to ensure his defence with no possibility of checking on their efficacy, even though his life and liberty may be at stake.

It is meaningless to guarantee the freedom to choose the people's representatives and to declare that the will of the people must be expressed through 'universal and equal suffrage' in a world where the legislation of certain countries still preserves distinctions between the literate and the illiterate, and where millions of men and women cannot exercise
their right to vote with a full understanding of the realities involved because they can neither read nor write. Even if literacy does not necessarily ensure an increased participation in political institutions, it does at least provide the individual with the means for such participation. Even when illiterates take part in the political activities of their community, it has become more and more difficult for them to hold positions of responsibility within the institutions concerned. Beyond the local level, moreover, participation in political institutions is virtually impossible for illiterates. Literacy does not of itself create a just and egalitarian society, but it does, at least, provide the means for participation. In brief, effective participation in democracy requires knowledge of written texts which alone can provide the information and facts needed to illuminate the issues of debate.

Giving an individual or social group access to reading and writing means giving them the possibility of political expression and the basic instruments required for their participation in decisions affecting their existence and their future. Literacy is an essential pre-condition for the effective exercise of most of the rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. An illiterate may know nothing of the law which is supposed to protect him just as he is unaware of the guarantees set out in the Universal
Declaration concerning, for example, marriage, employment, and participation and verification with respect to the management of public affairs. In this connection, incidentally, it must be stressed that to be 'literate' certainly means being able to read but also means being able to understand what is read. The individual who reads without understanding is still illiterate.

With literacy, the individual acquires an undoubted social advancement. Literacy produces a categorical change; once literate, an individual ceases to belong to the illiterate category and enters that of the educated members of the community. His capacity is recognised and marked by social elevation. Literacy frees the individual from a sense of inferiority and from feelings of dependence and subservience. At the same time, it endows those groups which are underprivileged in respect of their social conditions and the exercise of power (more especially, minority groups and women) with a broader autonomy and greater influence.

In all societies, the right to work and the free choice of occupation are increasingly conditioned by the ability to read and write. It is a platitude that those who can neither read nor write are restricted to occupations requiring a minimum of qualifications and offering the fewest chances of promotion, and the greatest exposure to risks and hazards. On economic recession, it is the least educated
elements in the population who are the first to suffer unemployment. The ability to read and write will become increasingly necessary in order to find employment and succeed in the world of work.

A group of poor and illiterate people in the State of West Bengal, India, who were following an adult education programme ten years ago composed a prose poem on 'Why Should We Become Literate' and is reproduced below:

WHY SHOULD WE BECOME LITERATE?

... We agree to join the classes if you teach us how not to depend on others any more

... Can literacy help us live a little better? Starve a little less?

... Would it help us know how to raise our yield, and increase our income? And from where could we borrow money on easy terms, and what benefits would we get from the co-operatives?

... Will the programme teach us how to take care of our health, and become strong? If it does, then we shall all come. They say that there are laws to protect and benefit us.

... Would literacy help us to know these laws? Would we know the laws that have changed the status of women? And the laws that protect the tribals among us? We want a straight answer...
OVERVIEW OF LITERACY

According to a Unesco estimate, in 1990 nearly 963 million people in the world are illiterate of which 921 million illiterates are in developing countries and 42 million illiterates are found in developed countries. Globally, the total of 963 million illiterates in 1990 is thus by-and-large the same as in 1985 and will only decline slightly by the year 2000. In relative terms, if the number of illiterates is compared to the total adult population, the illiteracy rate will continue to drop, reaching 22% by the year 2000.

The world figures, which reveal the magnitude of the problem of illiteracy in the world, disguise in fact great disparities. The amount of illiteracy in developed countries is less than 5% of adult population and can be considered negligible. It is, therefore, preferable and more appropriate to concentrate the analysis of illiteracy on developing countries.

In 1990, 678 million illiterates, i.e. 70% of the world's total are in East and South Asian developing countries. If these two sub-regions are considered separately, East-Asian countries will experience a drop in the number of illiterates and the rate of illiteracy to 24% in 1990 and 17% by the year 2000. This evaluation is based on
demographic trends and the development of school system in China, which because of its size, is predominant in this sub-region.

In South Asia, where demographically important countries are to be found, one out of every two adults will be illiterate, despite a significant decrease between 1985 and the year 2000, the illiteracy rate of 46% will still be higher than in all other regions.

Sub-Saharan Africa in 1990 has 139 million illiterates, representing more than 14% of the world's total. Concerning the adult population, here too as in South Asia, one out of two adults is illiterate. However, by these trends, this region's illiteracy rate will experience the largest decrease: 40.3% in the year 2000 as against 59% in 1985.

In Arab States, there are 61 million illiterate adults and they account for only 6% of the world's total, and they represent nearly 50% of the adult population of their group of countries. This rate too should drop shortly by 38% by the year 2000.

In terms of perspectives for the year 2000, these figures indicate that though the illiteracy rates will drop to a relatively low level in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in East Asia, the magnitude of the problem will persist in other regions (South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States).
In case, we consider, 102 developing countries collectively, in 48 of these, the illiteracy rate exceeds 40%. Of these 48 countries, twenty nine are Sub-Saharan countries and 4 heavily populated South Asian countries.

The ten countries whose number of illiterates is estimated to be over ten million alone represent nearly 73% of the number of illiterates in the world.

Table-2. Ten countries making up 73% of illiterates aged 15 and above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Illiteracy rate in 1990(%)</th>
<th>Number of illiterates (millions)</th>
<th>Proportion of world total(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Republic of Iran</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total(ten countries)</td>
<td></td>
<td>702</td>
<td>73.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td></td>
<td>261</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World total</td>
<td></td>
<td>963</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of Statistics, Unesco.
The aforesaid Table-2 indicates that despite best efforts on the part of the Government for the last 3-4 decades, the largest number of illiterate persons aged 15 and above are in India and the nation must make efforts to wipe out the shame of illiteracy from the country by launching mass campaigns with renewed vigour and vitality.