

**ADULT EDUCATION IN INDIA, INDONESIA,
THAILAND AND CHINA - A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

A THESIS

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SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

The National adult education programmes of each country had their own specificity and have grown from different political and historical conditions resulting in unique programmes of their own. The uniqueness of national policy and programmes are best understood when these are studied in the developmental perspective in relation to political and social conditions.

India, Indonesia, Thailand and China were selected for the purpose of study. Independence came to each of the selected countries around the same time in the late 1940, except in Thailand, which had never been under any foreign rule. These countries faced the problem of illiteracy at the time independence. How they eradicated it gradually can be seen from the literacy rates of the countries in 1951 and then the levels gained by each by 2001.

All the four nations selected for comparison in 1951 had very low literacy rate varying from 10% to 20% except Thailand, which had 53.7% literacy in 1947. In the last 45 years or so, there has been a large variation in the achievement of literacy, with India having about 65.47%, Indonesia 87.3%, Thailand 95.7% and China 84.1% till 2001.

The present study devoted itself to analyzing the various factors underlying differential literacy activity in the specified period (1945-till date) in these countries. It is not a group of case studies, in the sense that it is not confined only to descriptive information on education in different countries. It is a comparative study of the theoretical perspectives of adult education. In this context interconnections were to be made between the political ideology and the adult education policy, programmes and success of adult education.

The problem entitled “Adult Education in India, Indonesia, Thailand and China-A Comparative Study” had a historical context of inquiry.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse 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.
2. To analyse and identify the similarities and dissimilarities in the differential growth of Adult Education in countries under consideration.
3. To analyse the relative role of primary education and adult education in achieving adult literacy in the selected countries during the year's 1945-till date.
4. To compare concept, purpose, policy and programmes of Adult Education of the selected countries in general and especially on issues like gender, area of location and language.
5. To critically analyse the factors associated with successful outcomes and problems of adult education in different national settings.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was planned to compare the development of adult education in India, Indonesia, Thailand and China during the last sixty years (1945-2005) by using historical construction and criticism. The Method adopted was comparative, interpretative, and analytical in nature. The critical analysis of the related indicators of adult education system given below of the selected countries was undertaken, as was evident from the historical analysis in the previous chapter which included: **concept, purpose, policy, definition, language** and programmes. In order to find associations with other indicators like, **gender differentials, social and community mobilization, and role of primary education in adult literacy, pedagogy and achievements in literacy** were also discussed.

A common factor in the countries selected was that they are Asian. All had been colonized by the nations, except for Thailand. All the countries had different political systems. India and China were among most populous countries. Indonesia and Thailand had smaller populations. India had a parliamentary democracy while China was a communist country. Those contrasts provide an interesting and informative comparison of

adult education system and the solutions attempted from time to time to solve the individual problem of adult literacy it can be seen in the backdrop of their respective social settings.

FINDINGS

All the selected countries were found to be similar in socio-cultural settings, with males being the head of the family and the extended family was an institution. A majority of the population of the selected countries lives in rural areas and agriculture is the chief occupation. Yet the selected countries were at a different stage of socio – economic development. China had centralized planning. In Indonesia the presidential decrees were important and were implemented as government laws. In Thailand and India five-year developmental plans were followed.

Adult education had a diversity of meanings attached to it in the selected countries. Primarily it was considered a second chance for education for those who could not get mainstream schooling. Adult education in these countries was for the down trodden, unreachable and disadvantaged group for whom popular primary education was not possible as these groups were socially, culturally and economically marginalized. The content of adult education was varied in the selected countries and consisted of literacy, development messages and employment-oriented skills. Keeping this in mind in the background, a discourse on the concept of adult education was discussed in the former chapter. The concept of adult education has been evolving, depending upon the literacy status of population, which in general determines the goals, targets, literacy levels, and the phase of development the country was going through.

Adult education in the selected countries explicitly comprises as basic literacy and acquiring desirable knowledge pertaining to civic needs, personal hygiene, and adopting political and occupational skills to become productive part of the system. It can be said that the adult education in these countries could generally be equated with adult literacy and the core concept remains related with productivity. This concept has been evolving for the last sixty years and was varying according to the socio-economic development and status of the country.

In India, adult education was planned as a community development programme though development of the individual was not directly associated with development of basic literacy-rather it was designed for societal development. Adult literacy was associated with socio-economic development and for self-reliance of the individual only in the last three decades. In Indonesia the concept of adult education developed from literacy for national development in the very first thirty years and concept of vocational education was added later. The purpose of adult education was integrated with out of school education. In Thailand, adult education was equated with educational activities for out of school youth and adults. Functionality was added to adult education in early 1970s and continuing education was added during the 1980s. It can be said that in Indonesia and Thailand there has been an integrated concept of basic education i.e. primary schooling and adult education.

In China, the scope of adult education was defined as workers peasant education. It was also known as spare time education and included civil and political education apart from literacy. In early years it was for national reconstruction and meant to serve the socialist state. Since 1978, there has been a shift in the scope of adult education by opening of the Chinese economy to the world. Science and technology was adopted for economic construction and for raising the quality of workforce in a marketing economy.

It can be inferred that the purpose of the adult education differed in the countries studied depending upon the political system prevailing within the country and depending upon the socio-economic developmental of that country.

No distinct outline has so far been given to define literacy. Variation in definition of literacy exists in the selected countries. Going by the traditional definition of literacy it is ability to use language i.e. to read, write, listen and speak. We can say up to what standard or level 'literacy' varies among societies. Accordingly acquiring of national language forms criteria for literacy standards. Indonesia has defined a literate as anybody who can read and write using the Roman alphabet and do simple calculations and can function in Indonesia language or Bahasa. While some of the countries have related literacy standards to a certain level of formal education. One good example is that of Thailand which has defined literacy in relation to its formal education, it means at least 5-

6 years of schooling either in formal or non-formal stream. China has defined literacy as knowledge of 1500 characters.

Indian literacy programmes, have defined a literate person as one who can with understanding read and write a simple statement in his/her every day life. The Census Reports of India contain the definition of a literate person in terms of minimum reading and writing with an understanding in any language. It was not necessary for a literate person to pass any formal level of schooling.

It has been found that language of literacy means working knowledge of national language for national integration or the language of the majority such as- Thai in Thailand and Bahasa Indonesia in Indonesia. Each of the four countries selected for the study had addressed its adult education problem in its very own way depending upon its political system and its socio-economic stage of development. The findings of the study confirm that adult education has had a long history of entering into public policy in the selected countries. Adult education policy can be a part of the educational policy of a nation on one hand and part of the national development plan on the other.

Thailand has provided in this study an excellent example of integration of adult education as a whole into its main stream of national development along with its education policy. It has been successful in integrating it with primary education as well. Adult education programmes are planned in such a way that adult education includes basic literacy, post literacy and continuing education. Basic literacy is to be immediately followed by post literacy so that neo-literates do not lapse into illiteracy and the learnt skills were not lost. Continuing education is needed so that they could become independent in learning.

It is true and has been endorsed in this study, that there was definitely a close and established relationship between adult education and primary education of the country. If all eligible children during their early years were retained in primary school, and if quality education was provided to them to attain complete basic education, it would have strengthened the education system and there would have been no adult left without basic education. Consequently Adult education may not have been required in the form in

which it existed if required; the content of the adult education provided would be different.

It has been found that adult education included adult literacy and other developmental messages in varying degrees. Vocational education was introduced in all the countries.

Immediately after independence, India focused its attention on expanding primary education so adult literacy was neglected in the first three decades. On the other hand Indonesia and China immediately after independence planned massive adult literacy campaigns to make the masses literate. Thailand had been active in its adult education programmes, along with a strong integrated primary education. It raised its literacy level up to 89.5 per cent in 1980. At the same time the Literacy rate of Indonesia was equally high at 79 per cent. India and China encountered differential in achievement levels in literacy. India at 44 per cent in 1981 and China at 66 per cent by 1982. China could have achieved higher literacy rates but somehow due to an inactive period of adult education in 1966-1976, period of the Cultural Revolution when education came to stand still and all the cadres were sent to rural areas.

It could be seen that during 1977, with the change in the government in India, a nation wide adult education programme was launched for socio economic development. This created a demand for adult literacy at the national level. At the same time, Indonesia had already achieved great heights by organizing literacy campaigns and integrated primary education. The 'Kejar' programme providing vocational skills with inbuilt motivation along with literacy. The content of the programme was skill oriented thus highly useful for population. China, during the same time, opened its economy to the world and the adult education policy was changed accordingly. Thailand, too, made 6 years, compulsory primary education in 1977 which paved the way for near cent per cent literacy in 1990s. It became enviable for its achievement of almost universal literacy among adults and completion of primary school.

Literacy campaigns in Indonesia during 1961-1964 were planned to completely eradicate illiteracy from the country. It was according to presidential decree and was government's programme for which all the resources were mobilized. There was a

national commitment for the literacy and Indonesia managed to achieve 79 per cent literacy by then. It was noted that during these campaigns. PL, CE and primary school the expansion was not as demanded by the education system. Adult education emerged as an integral part of the national development system.

As observed Thailand planned work oriented literacy programs in 1970s about a decade earlier than Indonesia after achieving quite a high literacy rate.

6-year primary education was made compulsory in 1978 in Thailand this strengthened basic education for children and specially that of girl child.

In order to provide basic literacy, three phases are recognized namely Literacy, post literacy and continuing education During first the phase of literacy, 3R's were acquired directly through instruction or interwoven through primers (especially prepared for adults) The role of the instructor, the right place for teaching and learning of adults, and the available time of the learners along with high motivation played an important part for the success of this phase. During this basic phase of learning of nine months, due attention was given to the level of adult teaching by the support of graded primers in order to attain the same level of learning as was attained by a child who completes three years of schooling. Adult psychology was expected to be at the core of this teaching-learning process. The post literacy phase of literacy had partial guided learning and had different literature from the graded primers. In the basic literacy phase adequate practice is provided to prevent the neo-literate from lapsing into illiteracy. In continuing education phase the learner is made independent in learning. All these phases are to be implemented continuously.

Thailand strengthened its PL & CE activities during the last thirty years and integrated vocational skill training with Adult Education and the Primary education System. This was incorporated according to the national human resource need.

In earlier years of planning in all the countries except India, adult education consisted of basic literacy there were problems of planning of PL and CE and vocationalization of adult literacy programmes. In India still PL & CE had been a problem in NAEP (1970-80) and NLM's TLC (1989-2000).

Indonesia, introduced an innovative literacy programme, the Kejar Package in 1977 in order to make adult education functional and employment oriented. The training through non-formal education, Post literacy and continuing education was also strengthened

Yet in another attempt to bridge formal and non- formal education, there were efforts to equate the knowledge or skills acquired by adults with that of children with formal schooling, by making them pass a test. Both Indonesia and Thailand implemented adult education through equivalency programmes. China did not lag behind and developed a parallel adult education system for industry workers and farmers and for general education. While In India the stress was still on 3R's and very few passed primary education. It may be that India stressed basic literacy because it could not raise the literacy rates.

Thailand undertook literacy campaigns from 1983-87. The campaigns covered 75 per cent of its targeted illiterates and rest was covered by Functional literacy and continuing education.

China strengthened its 9-year primary education and adult education. It had realized the goal of a 9-year primary schooling in 65 per cent of its national population. It achieved a literacy rate of 66 per cent in 1982, which rose to 84 per cent in 1995.

Thailand and Indonesia have achieved nearly cent percent literacy by 2002. China had achieved near cent percent literacy in the 15-45 yrs of age group. Where as India lagged behind in primary education as well as in adult literacy. Still 33 per cent illiterates come from those who dropped out of school.

China's literacy programmes targeted literacy for working groups and farmers. They were easy to organize. They planned flexible classes in terms of spare time school, seasonal schools and night schools. The kader were motivated to teach adults. There was a strong political will in the system. It was rightly said for China, "Education must serve as socialist construction; the socialist construction must rely on education" Thus the cardinal guidelines put forward by the state government of China had been the fundamental motive for all forms of education at different levels including adult education.

On the other hand India's Literacy Campaigns although democratic in nature, were bureaucratic in implementation as they were dependant upon the district collector's good will in taking the campaign forward in the district. The campaigns were mostly successful where there was history of public movement; hereby predicting the success rested on an already existing factor of people's mass movement or participation as in Kerala (India) and China.

As has been studied the real difference was made in literacy by strengthening of primary education in China, Thailand and Indonesia.

In India all the adult education programmes were voluntary in basis, while in China teachers were committed party cadets. They were part time or full time teachers and senior grade students. In Indonesia the government mobilized the people for literacy campaigns.

India reduced the learning period to 200 hrs under improved pace content of learning (IPCL) to attract and retain more learners in literacy class. In India during 1947-77 most of the adult education programmes were limited in scope and reach. During 1978-80 a nation wide Center based programme was launched. It lacked in people's participation. The literacy rate of India was low. It was felt that a lot of resources were needed in terms of instructors and trainers in adult education. Though it worked for basic literacy component but was not successful to a large extent. This programme brought the Adult Education to the national agenda. Govt. in power showed the political will.

As reflected in the study all the selected countries targeted productive population as clientele for adult education programme. The special groups like women, disadvantaged groups were also involved. In India the target group identified was 15-35 years, while in Indonesia it was 7-44 years and priority was given to younger productive work force between 10-25 years. In Thailand adult education was for those who had completed less than 4 years of primary schooling and were between 14-50 years.

Mobilization of adult illiterates and of society is a challenge for the countries. Motivation and enrolling the illiterates to the adult education class is a serious task and his/her regularity in attending the center has been a problem. The question of meeting

their daily needs and earning is their prime concern. Therefore vocational skill training has been tried for motivation of the illiterates.

In India NAEP was center based and there was a significant gain in literacy rate. But the overall mass participation was not there. In NLM, under TLC there was an impressive environment building and mobilization of all the sections of the society but as far as adult literacy was concerned it was not effective as it should have been. Rather it created a demand for primary education. Still education or basic literacy was viewed and linked with jobs. Parents wanted their children to be well placed in the main system and they wanted to educate their children to get jobs and learn skills. As on the other hand they themselves were not interested in literacy. They thought it would not add to their earnings any way.

Throughout China's literacy programmes target was literacy for working groups and farmers. They were easy to organize. They planned flexible classes in terms of spare time school, seasonal schools and night schools. The cadres were motivated to teach adults. There was a strong political will in the system. It was rightly said for China, "Education must serve as socialist construction; the socialist construction must rely on education" Thus the cardinal guidelines put forward by the state government of China had been the fundamental motive for all forms of education at different levels including adult education.

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Media always plays an important role in motivating people and in turning issues into to a mass movement. All the four countries used media extensively for furthering the reach of literacy programmes. China developed a programme for literacy through television. In India, the Traditional as well as modern media was used for environment building and mobilization of the people successfully.

In all the four countries illiteracy was found to be more in rural areas rather than urban areas. This has been a burden for all the four nations more especially India and China as in all the countries the majority of the population resides in rural areas, and are not easy to reach. The rural urban disparities in adult literacy are large. In India target oriented programmes for disadvantaged groups, females in rural areas were needed.

About 80 per cent of the population lives in villages. According to 2001 census 80 per cent of the urban population is literate. It can be well assumed that rest 20 percent population was migrating from the villages and living in urban slums. There was cent percent literacy in urban areas except in urban slums. 40 per cent of the rural population was found to be illiterate and 20 per cent of the urban population (most of which is in urban slums) were illiterate. In China, too 86 per cent of the total illiterate population was rural in 1998.

Women were less literate than men. Only 88 adult women were considered literate for every 100 adult men. All the countries had put special efforts to raise female literacy. India raised about 15 point percent in literacy of women between 1991-2001. During the same period literacy rate was increased by 11-12 per cent for males, but still there was a big gap in the literacy rate between men and women of over 21 per cent. Female literacy in Indonesia had decreased the gap on literacy between the genders to 9%. Thailand has reduced the gap to mere 3 per cent. China has a gender gap in literacy of 8 per cent. Women have been identified as one of the key targets of the literacy programmes in the selected countries. It was observed that in all the countries because the girls and women were engaged in household chores and farm work and they belonged to poor families their attendance in the primary schools was found to be low. All the selected countries are multi-lingual. The choice of language of literacy was a question of policy, curriculum and methodology. Thailand and Indonesia are particularly interesting and instructive for this comparative study of adult literacy in the last six decades. Thailand is country with a cultural homogeneity due to prevalent common religion of Buddhism. Modern day Thailand is a in the midst of a social and economic transformation involving major shifts towards non agricultural employment, increased urbanization, improving standards of living and increasing education levels among its population.

POLICY, PLANNING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have implication for policy, planning, implementation and research support. What India could not achieve was higher literacy rates comparable

to Indonesia, Thailand, and China. Appropriate policy planning, implication and research support could realize the same.

Primary system of education needs to be strengthened and streamlined. The movement of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) needs massive support so that education for all is ensured to Children up to eleven years of age by 2007 and up to fourteen years of age by 2010.

If these targets are achieved by the stipulated period of time, India would compete with other countries in attaining literacy levels.

India in no case was lagging behind in terms of formulating policies in this regard but the greatest Lacuna was witnessed in implementation of policy and planning.

It would be worthwhile to examine and work on the feasibility of Integrating Adult Education with the Education System as done in Thailand. There have been gender differentials and area specific differentials in attaining literacy rates, girls by and large suffered in their educational pursuits mainly due to ignorance on the parts of parents, poverty geographical hazardous like North Eastern States of India and other hilly areas, special thrust will have to be provided to cater to the needs of adults deprived of early education facilities for which provision of funds will have to be made differentially as contrasted from other areas.

Rural and Urban divide has been witnessed in terms of literacy rates in India which also needs to be bridged on the same fashion, as other countries included in this study have done.

Equivalency programmes will have to be inbuilt in the system of adult education programs for appropriate implementation of adult literacy programmes and compulsory primary education community support and mobilization will play a pivotal role for desirable results.

The instructional materials to be developed for adult learners must invariably be used for better understanding and assimilation of knowledge. Instructional material if developed in regional language will take care of the cultural variations with a concern for national integration.

In the adult education programmes it would be worthwhile to include the component of vocational education right from the initial stage of adult literacy, functionality needs to be treated as a core for adult learning. Government's commitment and community participation may be ensured before initiating any programme related with adults or their lives.

For effective planning research work needs to be re-enforced in areas where deficits have been identified like gender differentials, dropouts, consolidation and lapsing into illiteracy, of the ways of empowering women and village panchayats to activate the progress of adult literacy.