

**CHAPTER. ONE**  
**INTRODUCTION**

## **I INTRODUCTION**

**A. WHAT RFLP IS :** This study has been about the Rural Functional Literacy Project (RFLP), which is one of the several parallel programs offered by the government to educate adults under the broad policy of National Adult Education Program (NAEP). The Indian government formulated a three pronged policy under the NAEP, which was - 1. preventive, 2. curative, and 3. progressive. The first, the preventive aspect was to offer programs known as Non-Formal Education Centers for dropout children to enable them an opportunity to complete their education. This was with a hope to prevent a further increasing the numbers of illiterates in the nation. The second, the curative aspect was to offer programs known as Adult Education in the centers, more specifically named as RFLP, for those who were already illiterates to literatize them. This was with the hope to decrease the number of illiterates and increase the number of literates in the nation. The third, the progressive aspect was to offer programs known as polyvalent Adult Education, which was to offer programs in various industries for more and quality outputs. Hence, the NAEP (National Adult Education Program) is a general expression for all the programs which are being offered to the various segments of the Indian society. In other words, NAEP is an umbrella program under which many programs operate for the masses.

**B. WHAT ADULT EDUCATION IS :** Adult Education is difficult to describe and almost impossible to define because it is found in so many different forms under sponsorship of a wide variety of institutions and agencies. The expression 'adult education' is generally used to designate all the educational activities that are designed specifically for adults.

Internationally, there are many possible definitions of adult education for a large number of adults in the world today. There are two meanings - 1. denotative and 2. connotative. The former denotes that it is education for adults.

The latter connotes that the education which the adults have missed in their lives.

For many individuals who received incomplete education, it is the complement to one's education - be it professional or non-professional. For those whom it helps to respond to the new demands which the environments make on them, it is the prolongation of education. It offers a further education to those who have already received a high level of training. It is also a means of individual development for anyone who is willing and able to do so. One or the other of these aspects may be more important in one country than in another, but they are all valid definitions. Such adult education programs through providing a second chance have proved to be a useful complement to education and may be an important alternative to the formal system (Shah 1981).

Perhaps, two or three illustrations for clarity of the concept are in order. In USA, USSR, Germany, and other developed countries, and not to exclude Japan, adult education also means extra classes being offered to those who are professionals in their fields. For example, if a medical doctor or a dentist wishes to expand his knowledge in humanities, such as economics, or political science, or history, etc., he/she could enrol himself/herself in one of such unitary courses, to expand his/her knowledge, however, limitedly or briefly in that particular area, without having to go through the whole curriculum for economics, political science, or history professional training.

Another example is, if an engineer wishes to learn something about physiology and anatomy, one could enrol in such a single course, to expand his understanding of health, without having to go through the whole medical curriculum of doctors.

The third example will be, if conversely, someone from the area of humanities wishes to learn something about physiology, or physics, or chemistry, or biology, or other science courses, he could enrol himself in such selected units of courses, to expand his horizon, without having to go through the whole curriculum for professional doctors, physicists, chemists, biologists, or other scientists.

Adult education is informal education as opposed to the formal education.

1. INFORMAL EDUCATION : Learning by adults may occur in two types of setting - 1. their natural social setting, 2. everyday experiences of living whether at work or when spending a leisure time. By and large, such activities, however, produce learning by chance or accident. While every day activities provide unparalleled opportunities, such learning is casual, ineffective, uncertain, and inadvertent. The natural social setting provides opportunities to learn. This may be referred to as informal learning.

2. FORMAL EDUCATION : The second setting in which learning by adults occurs is the formal instructional setting where the element of chance is minimized. This setting comes into being when an educated agent designs a sequence of tasks using specific learning procedures to help an adult to achieve a mutually agreeable learning objective.

Besides the informal education, and the formal education, there is a third dimension to the concept of education, which is known as the 'non-formal' education. Non-formal education can be defined as an educational opportunity to those who cannot or could not benefit from formal education. Particularly, in a country like India, it is linked with the process of development in an integrated and dynamic manner.

The NAEP (presently AEP) organized and implemented by the Government of India comes under the purview of non-formal education programs. Philips Coombs, after a considerable study, came to a conclusion that, non-formal education of the right kind and at the right place, if tied properly is instrumental to deal with rural poverty (Coombs and Ahmad, 1974).

Economic development of a country is possible only through development of 'human faculty' of the citizens (Chandrasekhar 1976). It is the human factor which contributes 50 per cent of the economic growth. This is true of many developed countries. Thus, it is paramount to promote the efficiency of an individual which will be tantamount to promoting human faculty. Planning can only create facilities for economic development. But the utilization of facilities depends upon the will and the capacity of the human ingenuity to use those facilities. It is this aspect which was one of the reasons of the failure of the community development programs which were initiated in 1954.

Knowledge through literacy bestows imagination, risk taking, and enterprising acumen, all of which constitute the groundwork for economic growth. The country's developmental activities which consist of welfare programs will have their full benefit only if the people are educated. While determined efforts should be made to universalize elementary education upto the age of 14 years, educational facilities must be extended to adult population to enable them to develop their potentiality.

In a democratic country, every citizen has a fundamental right of education. The impact of socio-economic programs will be felt only when educational awareness is created among the beneficiaries regarding the object and utility of the programs (Ministry of Education 1979).

Illiteracy and poverty are everybody's burden  
Let's work together to remove this burden.

Gandhiji (Ash, 1968)

To bring India as a nation in the front rank with other advanced nations, the foremost thing to do is to elevate the literacy rate of its citizenry. This can be achieved only through educating its masses, particularly those in the rural areas, which still remain undeveloped and if at all some development has been made, it is far from satisfactory. 'A journey of thousand miles begins with the first step' is a wise saying in Chinese. Adult education programs are of great importance towards successful 'Universalization of Elementary Education' in India, as well as to secure 'intelligent participation of the people' in all schemes of national development to make the democratic process visibly workable with stability.

There can be no panacea without attempting to educate the already existing millions of illiterate populace, if not highly, at least functionally through the non-formal adult educational programs. While getting the masses of illiterates to obtain formal education may theoretically sound good, but pragmatically it will be an impossibility. Putting an adult illiterate through a formal system of education could be a long grind for him to complete his education. By the time, he does so, he may be too old for placement and productivity and possibly become a misfit in the society. Therefore, opening channels of non-formal adult education to educate them to some extent functionally to be productive in perpetuity, and to conscientize them with the value and importance of education seems to be the only answer.

Thus, understanding the value of education by women-folk, with whom children stay most of the time, is extremely important. Such objective can be accomplished by imparting

functional literacy and education to the women through the non-formal adult education. Once the womenfolk realize its value and importance, they can be inspirational to their children, who in turn most likely will aspire for education. Madam Indira Gandhi in the inaugurating address to the 7th All India Muslim Educational Conference in New Delhi on March 30, 1984 said:

You have all heard the saying;  
 Educate a boy and you educate one person;  
 educate a girl and you educate the whole family  
 (Ministry of Education, 1984)

How so true is the late Prime Minister's statement as curative of the present problem as well as preventive from the future recurrence of illiteracy. The government has therefore since the independence of the country included programs of literatising the masses in its five years plans and other plans such as the '20-Point Program' of the Prime Minister and the 'Minimum Needs Plan', etc.

Though the nation has been paying increasing attention to the education of children as well as adults since its independence and considerable work has been done in that direction, especially in elementary education, the illiterate population in the country has been numerically increasing. This is so because the population has been growing simultaneously and a large number of those enrolled in schools have also been dropping out.

The reasons may be various, obvious one of which is that out of a necessity to maintain the family, a poor child has either not go to school; or if he has started as a very little boy, he has to quit and go to work to earn and contribute his share of maintaining the family; another may be, and

most likely it is that the mother does not realize the value, importance, the long range dividends and the rewards of the child's education. Conscientizing womenfolk about the rich dividends of a child's education is paramount. The government of India seems to have realized it. Therefore, its policy of emphasis on educating women is very apparent in its revised policy and is clearly indicated in the Kothari's Review Committee report, in the 16th point of the Prime Minister's new 20-Point Program in the Minimum Needs Program, and specifically so stated in the RFL Project.

II RATIONALE, NEED, AND IMPORTANCE OF STUDY: While having had a bird's eyeview followed by survey of others' researches on the National Adult Education in general, and of North Arcot district, in special, this investigator found that though some evaluative studies have been made on the National Adult Education Project, only quantitative aspects like the number of illiterates, number of men and women attending the centers, number of dropouts, etc., have been reported in them. Vital aspects, such as, the appropriateness of the RFLP centres; qualifications of animators; the extent to which the women, Scheduled Castes, and other ethnic groups have achieved learning; how much the teaching-learning process had affected their behavioral patterns through the syllabus as prescribed by the RFLP are inconspicuous by their absence from the reports.

Unlike the earlier studies, this investigator intended to investigate the qualitative aspects, such as, the achievement levels of the adult learners in Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Social Awareness, Functionality, and if any problems existed in the RFLP program. This study is intended as an indepth study to stress on such aspects.



North Arcot district is one of the most drought stricken areas in Tamilnadu. Except for small scale industries, such as, bidi manufacturing, hardly any modern technologically advanced heavy industry exists in this district. Because of the economic and agricultural backwardness of the district, most of its population (80%) is illiterate. This district has more rural areas and is without a city worth its name. While the Government has resolved to wage a clearly-conceived, well planned and relentless struggle against illiteracy to enable the masses an active role in social and cultural range' (Ministry of Education, 1979); to ignore a weaker segment of a society, such as, this North Arcot district is intrinsically an incurrance of injustice to it by the stronger segments of the society. Ignoring a weaker segment of the society can be an economic liability to the stronger segments of the society, in particular to its adjoining areas, and aggregately to the Tamilnadu State.

Whenever, such situation exists, some corrective methods should be adopted to alleviate such a condition. Information obtained through the investigation of this very backward district should be made available to the planners of RPLP to enable to adopt alleviative devices to correct it. So, the investigator became interested to study how effectively the RPLP has been working in this backward district.

A huge amount of money, which being one of the scarce resources, is being invested in the RPLP in Tamilnadu. For worthwhileness of such investment, realisation of the set objectives of the project should be the ultimate. The process for realization of such objectives of the project is neither mechanical nor automatic; but an orchestration of the program through careful planning, organization, research, evaluation,

and feedback. Research and evaluation of the project will help in identifying strong and weak points of the project; and thereby provide a scope for a feedback and an effective improvement of the project.

So far, there has been no reported study to examine the various aspects of RPLP. Perhaps, this is the first study of its kind in Tamilnadu. There is a real need for objective and systematic evaluation of the project. The results of such study will provide the administrators the scientifically obtained information. The results will help them to formulate or revise policies and to modify actual operations of the projects. The present study is an attempt to provide such feedback information with a view of facilitating the effective implementation of the project.

**III STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM :** 'A Study of Rural Functional Literacy Project in North Arcot District of Tamilnadu' was the problem selected for investigation.

**IV SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM :** The present study attempts to investigate the literacy, awareness, functionality levels of participants of the Rural functional Literacy project of 1983-84 year in North Arcot district of Tamilnadu with an emphasis on some selected variables pertaining to them. The problems of the RFLP faced and as perceived by the instructors, supervisors, village leaders are other aspects included in the study.

**V OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :** They are as follows:

- A. To briefly survey the historical aspects of adult education in Tamilnadu.
- B. To construct relevant tools 1. literacy tests, 2. interview schedules to assess awareness and functionality levels, and 3. problems check list

- C. To assess the learning outcomes of RFLP in terms of performance of the learners in 1. reading, 2. writing, 3. arithmetic;
- D. To compare literacy levels of the RFLP participants with that of children of 3rd standard of the primary schools in the formal education system;
- E. To assess awareness and functionality learning outcomes of the participants of RFLP
- F. To find out the association between the literacy, awareness, functionality levels of the participants and their 1. age, 2. caste, 3. marital status, 4. income, and 5. occupations, and
- G. To identify the main problems of RFLP as checked by the animators, supervisors, and village leaders.

VI VARIABLES STUDIED : The following variables, namely - A.Age, B.caste, C.Marital status, D.Family income, E. Occupation were considered in this study.

VII HYPOTHESES : They were formulated as follows -

- A. ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RFLP PARTICIPANTS AND SCHOOL CHILDREN
  - 1. READING SKILLS - There exists no difference in the achievement of reading skills between the participants of RFLP and school children of third standard.
  - 2. WRITING SKILLS - There exists no difference in the achievement of writing skills between the participants of RFLP and school children of third standard.

3. ARITHMETIC SKILLS - There exists no difference in the achievement of arithmetic skills between the participants of RPLP and school children of third standard.

#### B. ON LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT

4. AGE AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT - There exists no relationship between the age and achievement of literacy skills of the participants.
5. CASTE AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT - There exists no relationship between the caste and achievement of literacy skills of the participants.
6. FAMILY INCOME AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT - There exists no relationship between the family income and literacy achievement of the participants.
7. MARITAL STATUS AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT - There exists no relationship between the marital status and achievement of literacy of the participants.
8. OCCUPATION AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT - There exists no relationship between the occupation and achievement of literacy of the participants.

#### C. ON AWARENESS LEVEL

9. AGE AND AWARENESS LEVEL - There exists no relationship between the age and awareness level of the participants.
10. CASTE AND AWARENESS LEVEL - There exists no relationship between the caste and awareness level of the participants.
11. MARITAL STATUS AND AWARENESS LEVEL - There exists no relationship between marital status and awareness level of the participants of RPLP.

12. FAMILY INCOME AND AWARENESS LEVEL - There exists no relationship between the family income and awareness level of the participants of RFLP.
13. OCCUPATION AND AWARENESS LEVEL - There exists no relationship between the occupation and awareness level of the participants of RFLP.

D. ON FUNCTIONALITY LEVEL

14. AGE AND FUNCTIONALITY LEVEL - There exists no relationship between the age and functionality level of the participants of RFLP.
15. CASTE AND FUNCTIONALITY LEVEL - There exists no relationship between the caste and functionality level of participants of RFLP.
16. MARITAL STATUS AND FUNCTIONALITY LEVEL - There exists no relationship between marital status and functionality of the level of the adult participants of RFLP.
17. FAMILY INCOME AND FUNCTIONALITY LEVEL - There exists no relationship between the family income and functionality level of the participants of RFLP.
18. OCCUPATION AND FUNCTIONALITY LEVEL - There exists no relationship between the occupation and functionality level of participants of RFLP.

E. ON PROBLEMS IN THE EFLP CENTERS

19. PROBLEMS CHECKLIST - The ranking of problems faced in the organization of RFLP centers would not agree between the animators, supervisors, and village leaders.

# **VIII. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE MAJOR CONCEPTS :**

- A. **RFLP** : Rural Functional Literacy Project means program adopted in imparting of literacy, numeracy, social awareness, functionality mainly to women and particularly to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other adult illiterates within the age range of 15-35 years.
- B. **ADULT** : A person who has come into the stage of life in which he has assumed responsibilities for himself and usually also for others; and who has concomittantly accepted a functionally productive role in his community. This is a general definition.

The word 'Adult' is defined in the present study as the person whose age is 14 plus and is enrolled in the attendance register of RFLP center.

- C. **LITERACY** : Rogers has defined 'Literacy' as the degree to which an individual possess mastery over symbols in their written form or is able to encode and decode them. 2. Roy and Kapoor have defined 'literacy' as the ability to make use of the skills of reading, writing, and simple arithmetic. 3. Literacy in the present study is taken as skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic.
- D. **LEARNER** : A learner is a person who has been in the live register of the RFLP center at the time of data collection.
- E. **PARTICIPANT** : Sometimes interchangably used as a synonym of 'learner'.
- F. **ANIMATOR** : This refers to the teacher/instructor who is in charge of teaching in an RFLP center. One who animates and imparts the necessary knowledge and skills to the learners.

- G. **ACHIEVEMENT** : It is an accomplishment in reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. The performance of learners in literacy skills - reading, writing, arithmetic - is considered as their achievement.
- H. **AWARENESS** : It is the knowledge of self and the environments one lives in, which is in terms of the knowledge an individual has about 1. political, 2. health, and 3. legal, 4. agricultural & animal husbandry, and 5. social affairs.
- I. **FUNCTIONALITY** : It is operationally defined as the individual's knowledge about certain facilities in cooperatives/banks, post/telegraph offices, and other general facilities that are available.
- J. **SOCIAL FACTORS** : They pertain to the field of sociology. In the present study, such social factors are 1. age, 2. caste, 3. marital status, 4. family monthly income, and 5. occupation.
- K. **CASTE** : It is any of the hereditary Hindu social classes of the segregated system based on birth. The castes were categorized into SC, ST, BC, and FC on the basis of sociological criteria followed by the government of Tamilnadu, i.e. the respective castes were identified with the help of appropriate caste lists prepared by the government of Tamilnadu.
- L. **INCOME**: Based upon the information given by the respondents themselves, in this study, each one's monthly income was tabulated to include the total amount which the respondent's family had earned from all the sources, viz., salaries, food/cash crops produced by them, and the remittances received from the outside.

**M. LEARNING OUTCOME :** It is the level of literacy, awareness, functionality attained by the learners as a result of their exposure to the RFLP.

**IX METHODOLOGY :** This study can be classified as descriptive research inasfar as it will describe 'what is'. It involves the description, recording, analysis, and interpretation of conditions that now exist. This involves some type of comparison or contrast and attempts to discover relationships that exist between existing non-manipulated variables.

**A. LOCATION :** The study was made in three blocks namely - 1. Cheyyar, 2. Vembakkam, and 3. Timiri in North Arcot district of Tamilnadu State.

**B. SAMPLE :** It constituted 270 adult learners, 270 third standard school children (of formal school system), 50 animators, 10 supervisors of RFLP, and 50 village leaders in the blocks where the RFLP was being conducted.

**C. TOOLS EMPLOYED IN THE INVESTIGATION :** They were as follows -

1. **LITERACY TESTS** - reading, writing, and arithmetic were tailored to examine the adult learners' achievement levels and compared to the 3rd standard school children of the formal schools.
2. **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OF SOCIAL AWARENESS** was tailored to measure the adult learners' achievement level in social awareness.
3. **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OF FUNCTIONALITY** was tailored to estimate the adult learners' achievement levels in functionality.
4. **PROBLEMS CHECKLIST** was constructed and administered on ten supervisors, 50 animators, and 50 village leaders to find out if any problems existed in the RFLP.



The data collected were analysed by employing appropriate statistical techniques such as  $\chi^2$ , t-test and Kendall's Coefficient of concordance.

**X LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY :** As best as possible perceived by the investigator, this study has the following limitations:

- A. The study is limited only to the participants of RFLP of 1983-84 in North Arcot district in Tamilnadu. It does not include batches of the participants of the previous years of the RFLP in Tamilnadu.
- B. The study is confined to examine the relationships between the performances of the participants in literacy, awareness and functionality; and the selected variables - 1. age, 2. caste, 3. marital status, 4. income, and 5. occupation only. The variables could not be made exhaustive.
- C. Other aspects like the exposure of mass media, dropout rates, etc. were not included in the study.

#### **XI RESUME OF THE SUCCEEDING CHAPTERS**

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The second chapter deals with the historical aspects of adult education and RFLP. The third chapter is devoted to the review of the related research. The fourth chapter is on construction of tools of research and methodology. The details about analyses of data and interpretation of results are given in the fifth chapter. The last chapter, the sixth chapter gives a summary of the study including the findings, recommendations and suggestions for further research.