

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF ADULT BASIC
EDUCATION IN KANSAS

by >214

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CHAPTER I

I. INTRODUCTION

Nearly half the world's adult population is illiterate. An awareness of the high illiteracy rate is reflected in the enormous efforts of organized education which is carried out to curb the steady increase. UNESCO estimates show that in 1970, of 2,335 million adults, 810 million were illiterate.¹

In the United States the goal to eradicate illiteracy has been one of highest concern, not only because of the financial burden which it causes, but because of the great loss of potential manpower to society. The great advancement of knowledge and rapid technological development demand that more and more adults undertake supplementary education. At the moment there is a great need for workers to be retrained in new skills. However, this creates a major problem because a great number of them are lacking elementary education.

According to the 1970 U.S. Census, there were over 5.7 million (5.3 percent) adults 25 years of age or older with less than five years of schooling.² Of these, 13 percent had completed the eighth grade. Nearly every state has enough illiterates or functional illiterates in its population to justify a program of adult basic education. Although Kansas ranks high on the national literacy scale, number 4 with 0.9 percent illiterates, there are

¹"What is UNESCO?", UNESCO Information Manuals, (8th ed.; Paris: UNESCO, 1970), p. 29.

²U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1970), p. 11. Series P-20, no. 207. Educational Attainment, March, 1970.