Village Literacy

Adult Education in Northeastern Kenya

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Abstract

The underdevelopment of effective adult literacy programs in Northern Kenya is a problem that must be addressed to meet the needs of a changing generation of nomadic pastoralists. Existing programs must be reevaluated in order to increase their efficiency and incorporate the unique aspects of local cultures into their design. This paper explores the broadening definition of literacy and discusses how there are in fact multiple literacies in any given culture. Next, it examines the history of education in Kenya and the barriers that may be unique to adult literacy programs in Northern Kenya. Also, it examines how changes in development and culture of the people in Northeastern Kenya have impacted the educational practices and attitudes of the adults of that region. Finally, the paper blends effective literacy practices with traditional approaches to education in order to meet the needs of this diverse group of learners. When developing successful programs, it is vital that educators develop culturally sensitive programs that are holistic, emphasize community ownership and provide training for teachers.

Village Literacy: Adult Education in Northeastern Kenya

Education is as the heart of world development and human rights. Its importance lies in what precedes literacy: the words that are the expression of human thought. Its importance lies equally in what can then be done with the written word, which conveys thought across time and across space and makes the reader a "co-author" and active interpreter of the text. An oral society relies on memory to transmit its history, literature, laws, or music, whereas the written word allows infinite possibilities of transmission and therefore of active participation in communication. These possibilities are what makes the goal of universal literacy so important.

Frederico Mayor, Director General, UNESCO (as cited by Blake & Blake, 2002, 1)

Introduction

Fueled by the passionate ideas of men like Frederico Mayor, the literacy movement in the twenty-first century has been brought to some of the poorest and most remote communities around the world. Mayor spoke of literacy as the distinctive expression of human communication and the "heart of development and human rights." In recognition of education's value, the United Nations General Assembly launched the United Nations Literacy Decade in 2003, and it marked the beginning of a decade that sought to eradicate illiteracy through making education available to all (2002). As the decade that promised progress in literacy closes, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has reported that literacy rates have risen from 81.4% to 84.1% between 1995 and 2010, leaving approximately 775, 408, 031 illiterate adults remaining globally (UNESCO Institute of Statistics). Despite the gains attained in this decade, significant work remains to be accomplished. Data from half way

through the decade revealed that "equitable opportunities to acquire and use literacy are not available to certain groups, such as indigenous populations, nomadic communities, marginalized young people, rural people, prisoners, migrants or people with disabilities. Providing appropriate ways to learn literacy is essential" (Richmond, Robinson & Sachs-Israel, 2008, p. 7). The under-reached groups are in need of further research and study in order to develop effective programs that will address literacy in these areas.

One such group is located in Northeast Kenya, the home of several nomadic tribes who have poor access to education and have seen little growth in the previous decade to improve adult literacy. Literacy rates in Kenya are estimated to range between 61-74% (Richmond, Robinson & Sachs-Israel, 2008). Immense regional differences in literacy rates remain throughout Kenya particularly in areas with more remote and impoverished populations. The Kenya Country Team (2008) reported that, while one district in Kenya has a literacy rate as high as 87%, the Northeastern district reported roughly 8.1% literacy rates. Such disparities call for continued research into the cultural developments in Northern Kenya that have caused it to be resistant to the growth of education among adults so that future literacy programs may be improved. As the twenty-first century continues to progress, adult literacy educators in nomadic & underdeveloped communities must seek to make literacy an accessible tool capable of both strengthening and transforming the society into which it is being introduced.

What is Literacy?

It is first essential to understand what is meant by the teaching of literacy and its importance in society before looking at the development of effective adult literacy programs in Northern Kenya. Blake & Blake (2002) recognize that the pursuit of literacy

is so complex and prone to change based on circumstances that a distinct definition

would be impractical. They noted that literacy programs are comprised of a blending of

the academic and functional skills that vary depending upon the needs and developments

of the society. Defining literacy as merely the ability to read and write underappreciates

the intricacy of a field that encompasses a vast body of knowledge and skills. UNESCO's

(2003) expert meeting defined literacy as:

> The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and
>
> compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying
>
> contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling
>
> individuals to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and
>
> potential and participate fully in community and wider society. (p. 21)

As literacy students gain access to basic literacy skills, such as reading and writing, the

opportunity allows them to benefit from the information in the context of their society.

Once the door of literacy has been opened for an individual, the extent and purpose to

which it is used varies considerably.

Literacy as Rooted in Social Environment

The complex nature of literacy instruction implies that literacy must manifest

itself differently as it adapts to various contexts. Barton and Hamilton (1998) wrote

extensively on how literacy is most appropriately placed within the social context of the

community and requires the assumption of multiple literacies to address the needs of

society. When educators recognize the relationship that literacy has within the cultural

context of a program, it is the first step in gaining a better knowledge of how to improve

and build instruction; therefore, the recognition of a broad understanding of functions of

literacy should not be overlooked. Bartlett (2008) notes that educators now recognize literacy as inextricably tied to its specific cultural location. Modifying the perception of literacy in undeveloped regions like Northeast Kenya provides motivation to educators and the community to reinvigorate literacy programs through improving literacy practices.

When implementing literacy programs in any community, educators must be sensitive o tits unique cultural environment. For example, training about computer skills is impractical in a community that does not have access to electricity. Likewise, instruction in reading is not helpful in a society that lacks printed resources. In cases such as those, literacy would need to be conducted along with the introduction of electricity or written material. Since often met by similar obstacles in rural communities, literacy programs need to be structured to give training, support and materials necessary to perform basic functions of society. Education is especially valuable when the community is going through a period of social change or experiencing a growth in new technologies. Bartlett (2008) argues for planners to design literacy programs within the context of the community it is being developed for because of the culture's individual impact on the meaning and function of literacy. One scholar writes that "literacy is not an agent: literacy is a tool variously taken up by students with their own histories and literacy ideologies" (Bartlett, 2008, p. 751). Therefore, since cultures vary greatly across regional boundaries a distinct standard of literacy is prone to misrepresentation but is, as Blake & Blake (2002) contend, often necessary for the sake of creating education policy and gathering of research. As educators work out a definition of literacy, it can remain hollow unless it receives substance from being placed within its social and historical context.

Literacy as a Tool for Political Empowerment

Education has characteristically manifested its political implications in its contributions to citizenship. Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, is known to have said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Quote of the Day, 2012) and there have been multiple social theorists that have purported the same idea. Most recently Ntiri (2009) writes that Paolo Freire has been the champion of encouraging political advancement through education. Despite a particularly Marxist perspective in his politics, Friere's contribution must be considered because of his significant focus on grassroots efforts to increase the number of literate adults throughout the world. Giroux (1987) notes that Friere used literacy explicitly as a tool for the advancement of social freedoms and the individuals "voice" (p. 20). Freire & Macedo (1987) say at one point that "it is impossible to…understand literacy…by divorcing the reading of the word from reading of the world" (p. 49). Although literacy programs are not always designed explicitly to engender political empowerment, they can gain support and organization from politicians who desire to see communities develop.

Literacy as a Cognitive Process

What other areas does literacy education then encompass? Bernando (2000), a cognitive psychologist, writes that literacy includes not only the ability to communicate through visual and written form but much more importantly through using those skills in a way that causes the learner to use higher cognitive processes. Literacy programs must be careful to teach their students to not only the basic facts but more importantly how to think critically about situations and how their newly learned information applies everyday life. For example, if a literacy program teaches an individual how to read yet

does not provide them with ways to integrate that knowledge into problem solving and new situations then the information they just learned is not as effective. The development of cognitive processes is a lifelong practice that is critical in adults and is another key aspect that demonstrates the complexity of literacy.

Literacy as a Preparation for Economic Gain

Another facet of literacy is the idea that it stimulates economic advancement among the impoverished and underdeveloped. As communities train their populace, they are more likely to be able to find jobs and keep them. Ntiri (2009) writes that "the yoke of illiteracy limits a nation's ability to change and mobilize human resources for human development" (p. 103). Often literacy is referred to as merely the training and skills needed to obtain employment and stimulate the economy. In the article comparing the relationship between education and poverty, Julius (2011) found that increased education does indeed lead to decreased poverty. In a communities in Northern Kenya, the hope is that with a greater increase in education amongst adults, the tides of poverty that weigh down those communities will decrease.

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History of Education in Kenya

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Traditional Education

The tribes of Northern Kenya have developed their own methods to train and transmit knowledge to upcoming generations. Johannes (2010) commented that "there is no society that does not educate its own population, either through indigenous or modern education" (p. 11). Although not strictly education in the way that is taught in the modern world today, Omolewa (2007) found that traditional methods provided for a better quality education than that of a modern system. The difference lay in that the goal

of traditional education was to produce complete individuals ready to face the world in which they were living. Often, modern education in traditional communities is criticized because the students are so removed from their culture that they cannot return to it. Cultures like the pastoral ones in Northern Kenya are governed by their own methods for passing down knowledge that does not incorporate the written word (Goldberg, 2010). As educators looking to create relevant curriculum and learning goals for adult learners, it is vital to learn how education was passed down traditionally and model it as much as possible. A scholar notes that basic elements of African traditional education include: oral language, music, dance, proverbs, myths, stories, culture, religion, elders, specialists, specific names, a holistic approach, integration of theory and practice, and traditional African science and technology (Omolewa, 2007). From this broad framework, educators can develop rich programs that convey knowledge in a culturally appropriate manner.

Modern Education

When Kenya gained independence in 1963, the initial vision of President Kenyatta was to create a country that had free access to education for all. Eventually, 80% of primary aged students were attending schools (Buchmann, 1999). This rate decreased slightly as the government used a cost sharing program in many schools where they would pay for the teachers' salaries and the local community paid for recurring expenses (Sifuna, 2007). Much of this explosive growth was difficult to regulate and its quality hard to guarantee. President Kenyatta and later President Moi supported educational policies that were politically popular but of questionable long term value (Buchmann, 1999). After a limited attempt in the '70s it was not until the late '90s that the Kenyan government successfully initiated free education for primary students in an

attempt to reach the nearly 1.6 million students not in education programs (King, 2007).

Although Kenya's progress in primary education of its people has been excellent, there

remains a large adult population that is illiterate and many more adults who have not had

the opportunity to progress to a point in school that they desire. Government programs

for adult education begun in the '60s and '70s were popular and fairly successful but

support for such organizations has steadily decreased and attendance and dropout rates

have increased (Bunyi, 2006). Kenya Country Team (2008) reports that in 2005 that the

Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) was formed by the government to

act as a institution to channel efforts and investments. Annually, adult education receives

only 1% of the money allocated to education, leaving it inadequately funded.

Kenya has been the recipient of an abundance of international intervention for

adult literacy. In the '50s UNESCO began what has become a primary role in the

education of adults from the most fundamental to complex (Jefferies, 1967). Through

their support of ventures like the Literacy Decade, better assessment organizations and

contributions to governmental policy making, UNESCO has played a huge role in

motivating the government and the people of Kenya (Richmond, Robinson & Sachs-

Israel, 2008). Non-formal education is a growing field of influence in the education of

adults but little data exists because of the informal nature of such projects (Bunyi, 2006).

Groups involved in such projects come from an assortment of religious, aid and business

backgrounds.

Barriers of Instruction

The growth of literacy in the past decade has suffered from cultural barrier of the

region. This paper deals with only two: language barriers and age barriers. Other very

real choices are the political and economic barriers that affect literacy. Language and age

barriers are two unique aspects to a literacy program that would not typically be seen in a

literacy program in modern education. They are also two areas in which there is much

debate and misunderstanding.

Language Barriers

      Indigenous or colonial language. The choice of which language will be the

primary language of instruction is a highly contested one among educators and others.

Local languages are appealing because of their abundance of meaning within the context

of a rural society but often lack the necessary materials needed to make the instruction

effective or valuable. Trudell & Shroeder (2007) contend, "The instrumental value of

schooled literacy is directly linked to its potential for facilitating success in that world.

Learning to read in local languages tends to be undervalued because it does not obviously

facilitate such access" (p. 174). Bunyi (1999) argues that indigenous language instruction

has been devalued by teachers, policy makers and the speakers of the language

themselves. Trudell (2009) writes that in non-formal education adults are least likely to

be fluent in an alternate language; therefore, the importance of using the mother tongue in

instruction is understandable. He also insists that western languages were originally

chosen over indigenous languages in Kenya because of colonial nation's political and

economic motivations instead of being based on what was best for the sustainable

development of the specific country. Ultimately, the choice of language of instruction is a

question that is "all about power" (Brock-Utne, 2001, p. 118). Bunyi (1999) points out

the indigenous African languages were used prior to colonization in Kenyan society and

should be incorporated more into education in the future. As adult educators it is

important to make the decision carefully in light of the community's desires, the goals of the program and the feasibility of the choice.

Languages known as colonial languages were introduced as part of the colonial system as a means of providing a neutral language in order to promote unity in the nation but often tend to pull individuals away from their roots. Jefferies (1967) proposed indigenous literacy as preferable because it of its reduction of complexity of the learning process for beginning learners but he does recognize that in some contexts it is preferable to learn a more commonly known and used language because it is much easier to find printed reading materials. Looking at how sustainable development is linked to education, Trudell (2009) explains, "The critical aspects of development are equally affected by language choice. For such critical thinking to take place, maximal comprehension of the issues is necessary, and this has direct implications for language choice" (p. 75). Muthwii (2004) found that, despite Kiswahili being the official language of Kenya, English remains more commonly used in schools and upper education in Kenya, because, it was argued that it would unite tribal groups, allow access to education internationally and avoid costly development of indigenous languages. As the debate continues, educators have begun to look at the benefits of using colonial languages as well as the feasibility of switching to another language.

Language's effect on instruction. Indigenous languages are often considered to be underdeveloped and therefore unsuitable for the use in formal academics but Bunyi (1999) challenges this idea and states that if such languages were used for literate purposes then they would progress in development out of necessity. Muthwii (2004) noted that a danger of learning to read in a language not one's own is that students and

teachers lack confidence in their command of the language. It is vital that instructors of literacy have a firm grasp on how to teach and what methods should be used in order to develop efficient programs. Often educators attempt to match reading strategies developed for English in the United States to reading programs in another language in Africa and the result is that reading programs are quite ineffective (Trudell & Shroeder, 2007). Educators must study the language in which they are placed to assess the validity of the reading strategies they are using. For example, Trudell & Shroeder (2007) suggest strategies for Bantu languages such as identification of phonemes, syllables and vowel length in the beginning of instruction; development of morphemes and phonological rules afterwards; and experience in using long series of syllables and grouping of word particles throughout instruction in order to develop instructionally relevant practices.

Age Barriers

      Adult learning theory. Unlike traditional approaches to literacy with children that use strategies that slowly build upon themselves in a linear fashion, Rogers (1999) states: "Adult learning theory…says that…learning takes place to meet an immediate goal and when that goal has been reached, the learning motivation ceases" (pp. 224-5). Abela (2009) reminds that adult learning theories have been developed, "To enhance adult learning and facilitate effective teaching" (p. 13). Henschke writes that adult learners should be allowed to participate in the direction of their education. Knowles (1998) identified six key elements related to adult learning that include: the need to know reasons, the learners concept of responsibility for decisions, the impact of the learners experiences, a desire to learn, an orientation towards functional learning, and an internal motivation to learn. As material is being developed for adult learners, it must take into

account the impact of how an adult learns best and what approaches are the most important.

Instructional changes based on age. In a study that looked at the long term effect of literacy programs throughout different regions of Kenya, Carron (1990) found that "the key issue, therefore, is to promote active literacy methods adapted to adult learners which could lead to quick results in order to sustain their interest" (p. 119). The development of effective programs for adults is essential to overcome the differences of learning at an older age. Comings & Soricone (2005) wrote in their formation of an adult literacy curriculum about the cognitive learning theory which identifies the use of long and short term memory in the process of literacy instruction and highlights the importance of repeating component skills. Rogers (1999) discusses how literacy instruction among adults is more effective when students are allowed to incorporate materials from their daily lives into the instructional process. If appropriate materials are not available or able to be used in a classroom then this strategy would need to be revised. Strategies targeted at increasing the effectiveness of adult learners are only beginning to be identified and should be implemented into an adult literacy programs.

Village Culture & Development

A key component in a literacy program is the relationship between culture, development and participation in education. Could it be that the lack of educational progress in many nomadic cultures is tied directly to misshaped goals of development? Is the goal of development to transform or strengthen a culture? Has education been structured so that it sets up a false dichotomy between gaining an education and remaining part of traditional culture? How have outside influences such as religion and

its emphasis on the written word affected the need for increased literacy? How can adult

literacy programs avoid the mistakes made in the past and what should they learn from

them? In what ways do traditional methods of education from outside developers,

government officials and local villagers need to change in order for literacy to make a

visible impact on the poverty and destitution of the region?

The Northeastern region of Kenya is comprised of various tribes that have

maintained traditions and cultures which make up their unique identities. The largest

tribes in this area include the Rendille, Samburu, Gabbra, Boran and Somali (Fratkin, E.

M., Cultural Survival Inc., & Smith College, 2004). The land is a semi-arid desert that

experiences regular seasons of famine and drought. Besides the few towns that dot the

region, the majority of the land is comprised of open grazing land where the nomadic

pastoralists bring their herds of goats, sheep, cows and camel. Recognizing that there is a

wealth of differences between all of these tribes, this article will try to find certain

cultural items and values that are similar amongst them while still maintaining their

unique identities. Such knowledge is important because, according to Mace (1992),

literacy cannot be extracted from the social and political context in which it is situated.

The following can only begin to give a glimpse of the beauty and complexity of these

cultures in areas of their livelihood, religion and family but must be attempted to

understand how these features affect the success of literacy programs.

Livelihood

Traditionally, nomadic tribes in Northeast Kenya have survived on a pastoral-

based economy in which the majority of people depend on herds of animals as a main

source of livelihood. The ambition for sucess in this society is complex and often

interdependent; on one side, they need herds large enough to feed themselves, and, on the other, they need families large enough to keep large herds and together they create a mutually dependent system (Fratkin, E. M., Cultural Survival Inc., & Smith College, 2004). Recent developments in Northern Kenya include the creation of grazing boundaries, mechanization of bore holes, loss of water rights and alienation of land (Fratkin, 2001). These developments have led to factors such as population growth, increased tribal conflict over resources; drought and famine have caused people to turn from traditional work to wage labor. In addition to a change in their primary source of labor, the privatization of land and political turmoil that erupted due to poor administration caused society to alter significantly (Fratkin, 2001). Alternative lifestyles such as government jobs, health work, construction, etc. are often the result of the shift away from a pastoralist society. Fratkin, Nathan & Ross (2011) found that these opportunities should usually provide a more stable income and less risk of disease. Better access to clinics, more established markets, income security and improvement of the status of women are some positive aspects of the pastoralist transition to a sedentary lifestyle and also represent a shift in values within the society away from pastoralism. They also noted that the change in diet in the sedentary family has caused rampant malnutrition of children in many villages. Inevitably, these societies are continually developing; the goal of education should be to help prepare the people for that change and to strengthen the culture that already exists.

As these developments continue to come to these areas, Dyer (2001) noted that educational agendas needed to teach nomads increased productivity and economy in order to change their perceptions of the validity of education because they currently do

not connect literacy as being able to help their current livelihood. This is different than previous approaches to literacy in pastoral settings that was "designed not to enhance but to change them" (Johannes, 2010, p. 9). Educators must fight against the perception that literacy will lead to a loss of traditional family and cultural ties as has commonly happened in the past (Dyer, 2001) Instead education needs to be formatted to fit the expanding needs of this society so that they can continue to live the live they were used to and benefit from the knowledge coming in so that they can adapt to new developments encroaching upon them.

Religion

The impact of traditional religion to the way of life of the people in this area is profound. Khapoya (2010) found that deeply rooted in African society is a belief in religion and traditional beliefs. He notes that there are three basic beliefs that dominate traditional African culture: belief in a god or gods, belief in spirits and reverence of ancestors (pp. 49-54). Apel (2009) conducted a study of the Samburu tribe and found that their religion was closely intertwined with the very nature of what it means to be Samburu. Their families, marriages and lifestyle all are interlinked into their religious beliefs. The ties that bind these societies are strong and their identity to one another even stronger; as educators seek to bring in new knowledge and information they must do so in a way that respects what is already valued and treasured in society and work from there, not opposed to it.

Influences from outside have introduced religions foreign to the region. Christianity and Islam are two growing influences in the area. Christianity was spread into the region through missionaries beginning in the 50's and 60's. Apel (2009) notes

that Catholic and Protestant missionaries generally had two different approaches when

arriving. Catholics approached settlement in those regions as a long term commitment

and looked to change the religion and culture slowly. Protestant missionaries were more

urgent and stressed a complete abandonment of the local culture. Islam was introduced

primarily through the coastal trading town but has also spread from the North into the

region. Religion has affected education because it was in many areas the first means

through which learning was spread in these remote villages. Many of the early recipients

of education did not receive their education from government or aid organizations but

rather for the sake of being able to participate in the religious practices of their faith.

Family

The family unit is generally an important aspect of nomadic society because

families function as a group to both produce and consume basic necessities. This tight

unity also extends into a strong clan dependence within the community (Apel, 2009). One

scholar writes that a fascinating example of how connected the culture can become is that

in one family unit often there are up to four different generations represented (Khapoya,

2010). The survival of the whole group is often dependent on them all working together

to provide for one another. Polygamy is a common practice among these groups as it

gives the ability of the family unit to increase its ability to assist each other but also

strains the land as the expanding population amplifies the need for food as well (Apel,

2009). As development and education comes into communities that have these strong

family units it is vital that they recognize the key role that they play in learning how best

to meet the needs of the community.

Another aspect concerning the family in this culture is the way in which power structures are organized. These family structures are strongly patriarchal in nature and the roles of those in society are gender based (Khapoya, 2010). The division of society into separate roles, Apel (2009) writes, have lead women in the Samburu culture to be intentionally suppressed physically, emotionally and sexually by men. This imbalance leads to extreme marginalization of women in many of these societies. The question of whether the goal of development is to transform or to strengthen a culture plays a large role in this context. In this case development and education could serve to increase the rights and value of women in this culture. Such an achievement would call for drastic change but may be able to strengthen the culture in the end.

Literacy Instruction in Nomadic Villages

The remainder of this study will focus on one essential aspect of literacy: culturally sensitive approaches to reading instruction implemented within a literacy curriculum. Literacy efforts can benefit from an emphasis on reading because it is an essential tool that unlocks the ability to do so much else in literacy. Educators can take advantage of patterns already built into the culture in order to develop more efficient and applicable methods of study and press their learners to expand beyond what they are comfortable with through time. Adult literacy programs that are looking to improve or build instructional methods and materials in nomadic regions of Northeastern Kenya will benefit through integrating locally based literacies with essential aspects of literacy learning. Comings & Soricone (2005) identified the four essential elements of a reading program as alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. As each of these components is established as the foundation of the curriculum of a literacy program, it

must be in the context of knowledge of how adults learn, how comfortable they are with

the language being used and in light of their cultural strengths and weaknesses.

Essential Components of Reading Development

      Alphabetics. Alphabetics is known as the study of identifying words and letters

to their sound. Comings and Soricone (2005) separates the study of alphabetics into

phonetics & word analysis. Tompkins (2009) explains that phonetics refers to the ability

to manipulate sounds in words as students read, meanwhile, word analysis consists of the

recognition of common and high-frequency words in a language and decoding of

unfamiliar words. Krudenier (2002) clarifies Tompkin's description and notes that

"While phonics instruction…is restricted to teaching grapheme-phoneme(letter-sound)

correspondences, word analysis instruction may also include other methods that students

can use to figure out words" (p. 42). Trudell & Schroeder (2007) remarks that an early

emphasis on phonological awareness, syllable recognition, and repetition of multiple

syllables in a word can all help to aid instruction specifically in Bantu languages of

Africa. A strong foundation in alphabetics is essential for future success in other

component areas of reading. Blake & Blake (2002) concludes that phonetic instruction is

best taught to children as they are developing their oral vocabularies, hence, failure to

internalize the sound-letter connections at this stage is often the cause of adults' difficulty

with fluency in reading.

      Fluency. Roe & Ross (2006) defines fluency as the task in which

"readers…identify words quickly and easily and [are]…able to make inferences

automatically when the text omits information" (p. 260). Instructors of fluency,

Krudenier (2002) concluded, use a combination of guided oral readings and independent

readings as the most effective instructional practice. Roe & Ross (2006) suggested that teachers use such strategies as teacher modeling of fluency, performances of scripts and repetition of rhymes or episodes. Fluency builds on the alphabetic skills learned and greatly encourages comprehension because the mind can focus on the meaning of the text rather than simply discerning the sounds.

Vocabulary. Another key component of reading is the accumulation of both oral and reading vocabularies. Krudenier (2002) understand that vocabulary, "Consists of the individual words we understand or know the meanings of" (p. 72). Adult learners are at an advantage in this area compared to most beginning learners because their oral vocabulary is typically much greater than that of young learners unless they are learning to read in a language that is not their first. Vocabulary acquisition techniques are quite frequent and easy to apply to adults. Roe and Ross (2006) describe over 15 different techniques including categorization, use of comic strips and cartoons, dramatization, use of context clues, and construction of word webs to only name a few. Comings & Soricone (2005) describe how adult literacy materials can be constructed so that they draw vocabulary from everyday aspects of the adults' life in order for it to be most readily learned. As literacy instructors, vocabulary instruction is an area that has potential to respond well when incorporated with practical knowledge of the community the people are from.

Comprehension. Krudenier (2002) proposed that reading comprehension consists of the integration of the knowledge of phonics, fluency and vocabulary to ascertain the meaning of the written text. Roe & Ross (2006) supports the use of a variety of instructional strategies to aid students in their comprehension of texts. One strategy they

suggest is the use of semantic mapping, which is a visual display of words arranged based upon their relationship to one another. In the context of an adult literacy program, Trudell & Schroeder (2007) believed that reading comprehension was much more difficult in a language in which one is not fluent. Often in this context teachers focus more on rote reading and oral production over comprehension. Although by no means ideal, the teaching of reading to adults is a laborious and exhausting process that takes commitment and endurance to the end.

As adults learn to read, adults form unique challenges and difficulties that exceed that of children. Support for this lies in research by Mellard, Fall & Woods (2010) in which they conducted a study on reading comprehension in adult learners. They hypothesized that adult learners typically would be better at comprehension, if learning in their native language, because they would be able to utilize their prior knowledge of context and vocabulary when reading unknown texts. After completion of their research, adults with low literacy were found to function more like children when it came to comprehension because of their dependence on word recognition skills in order to find the meaning of a text. This correlates with what Blake & Blake (2002) first observed in alphabetic skills of adults and confirms that instructors of adults must use a differentiated approach to teaching that pulls from all available learning strategies and knowledge of adult's culture and language in order to successfully teach independent adult readers.

Blending Traditional Education Methods Into Adult Literacy Programs

Education in Northern Kenya has traditionally been entwined informally into the entire culture. The introduction of modern education led to increasingly formal education being taught in rural schools. Adult literacy programs can benefit by learning to integrate

traditional practices with modern techniques for the sake of creating a program that is culturally relevant and educationally sound. Literacy programs should identify key elements of traditional education that are great assets to the community so that they may be further studied and implemented into the curriculum. Blending traditional methods of education from rural communities into literacy programs creates a more efficient environment for the creation of literacy materials that are culturally sensitive and efficient in their application.

Mobile Schools. A means through which literacy programs can adapt to the nomadic lifestyle is through the creation of mobile schools in rural communities. Currently the concept has been implemented in remote areas of Kenya for grades 1-3. Johannes (2010) found that grades K-3 were received with enthusiasm as a means through which to bring education to pastoral settings without disrupting their lifestyle but that the downside is that teacher quality is low, the program lacks creative methodology and the curriculum is only loosely followed. Such programs are new and the results from them are only beginning to be reviewed yet their unquestionable ability to adapt to the movement of adults in a nomadic environment.

Singing. The value of singing in these cultures is another cultural tradition that is still highly valued in the community. Educators can take advantage of this rich heritage and use opportunities to integrate the reading, memorization and singing of songs in their programs. Floyd (2001) remarks that music can be a way of influencing the culture in dramatic ways. Music was used to remember past deeds and as a motivation to younger warriors bravely to create a name for themselves. Educators can use music as a tool with which to create more effective lessons and instructional activities. The integration of

music and reading promises a program that is focused on meeting the needs of the community in Northern Kenya is one of the many advantages to literacy.

      Storytelling. Reaching back into the nomadic's culture rich history of transmitting culture through the use of oral communication is a rich heritage that these people have. Pfahl &Wiessner (2007) declares that "stories are teaching vehicles that transmit wisdom and understanding of indigenous cultures" (p. 9). As an option for African education systems, Bunyi (1999) says, "I believe African education today has much to learn from the pre-colonial nonschool education which was solidly anchored in the culture and everyday experiences of African society" (p. 340). When teaching adults to read, storytelling is easily paired with reading and helps to facilitate better comprehension if the story is already familiar with the reader. Pfahl &Wiessner (2007) notes that stories benefit a group of adult learners because they allow for the creative expression of the imagination in terms of problem solving and ideas of what alternatives lie in the future, they build relationships and formulate shared experiences among learners as they share their own story and hear that of others. Dawkins & O'Neill (2011) remarked that storytelling is a key aspect that helps students acquire fluent literacy skills and correct understanding of grammar. Although not children, adult literacy programs in rural communities can recognize the advantage that their strong oral vocabularies will help to learn quicker. The teaching of reading allows these groups to experience a wider range of stories beyond their own culture and the ability to read accounts of their own history recorded by others.

Collaborative learning. At the heart of the tribal society in Northern Kenya is a focus on community and society. Taylor, Abasi & Pinsent-Johnson (2007) considered how instruction focused on community goals affected literacy programs and found:

The issue of learning relevance becomes more important since literacy instructors are now faced with developing instructional approaches that help students meet their goals—at home, at work, and in the community—using materials that mirror how literacy is used in these environments. (5)

Education is passed down from one generation to the next and through the entire community. Adults naturally tend to maintain their motivation and interest through leaning with their peers, therefore, collaborative education intentionally places students into groups that discuss, analyze and apply the knowledge they are acquiring to their entire lives.

General Recommendations For Future Literacy Programs

Holistic education

Based on research and reflections of the society in Northern Kenya, an adult literacy program would benefit from a holistic approach to education. Holistic education is part of a subset of philosophical theory of personhood Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi & Liaghatdar (2012) consider holistic education to encompass the instruction of the students be within the framework of a larger unifying idea of "interconnectedness" (p. 179). In areas where the value of education is often in jeopardy, it is vital that adult literacy programs are designed to be well rounded, able to adjust to the diverse needs of the community. Reading can be shown to be applicable to many aspects of life as well as essential to open up opportunities than would have been unavailable formerly. When

implemented across the entire literacy program, a holistic approach provides more meaningful and constructive education.

Community Ownership

Another area in which community literacy programs can be enriched is through putting control into the hands of the members of the community. Robinson & Gfeller (1997) discovered that literacy programs need a balance of both who controls them and what serves as a motivator for the people. Often literacy programs are funded and directed by outside organizations such as government and non-government organizations. Although often necessary at first, an important step in creating a sustainable literacy program is to train up leaders who can be making decisions and giving input into the program as soon as possible. Local communities need ownership over their own programs as a means of ensuring that the program stays focused on the individual context of the area and continues to be relevant to the needs of those learners. As adults take charge of their own education, Friere's implications of literacy being a key step for the empowerment of rural communities is shown be the truth about one of the primary functions of literacy. Adults in the community then can help to make decisions about what language should be used in instruction, how best to organize the programs and what learning goals should be set. Ideally, the local leaders will need to partner with outside interventions in order to receive the necessary funding, materials and instructional aide needed to run a successful program.

Teachers and Training

A final element of a successful program in a rural community is one in which the training of teachers is developed into the program. Frank Laubach coined the term in the

Philippines in his strategy of "each one teach one" (Inglis, p. 81). According to his model, the students who had just learned the information where then responsible to go out and teach others. This is a way in which education can be spread cost efficiently to a greater number of people in rural communities. It is important that such an approach to education is monitored and made sure to retain its quality throughout the period of instruction.

Conclusion

Raising awareness for the need for further research and implementation of new strategies and programs as a result of new ways of developing literacy programs for Kenya is the goal of this article. To create momentum and a vision for change in an area that needs creativity and passion on the part of its instructors is a reason to create material that is easy to use and adapted for the location it is being used in. Literacy instruction is difficult work requiring instructors to stay motivated and confidant in the student's ability to achieve. Progress in worldwide goals for the continuance of literacy can only come at the expense of hard fought battles in areas such as Northern Kenya.

Instructors must remember to develop understanding of a culture's needs and unique challenges when developing educational programs. Like in the case of Kenya, looking at such factors as educational backgrounds, language age and most significantly its culture all affected the development of the vision for literacy instruction. Finding creative ways to implement cultural practices into the curriculum can enrich the education and produce individuals who are not separated from their culture but rather better able to contribute to it. Remembering to look at education through the eyes of the

people through which it is being adapted to can give an educator understanding of what developments are necessary and which areas are able to enhance the structures that exist.

Finally, adult literacy is in need of pursuing sustainable growth in a land of limited resources. A major concern in the coming year will be how to increase access while continuing to improve the quality of adult education programs. Working with already established institutions such as the mobility of nomadic culture can be a way in which education can reach broader spectrums of people before with education in order to sharpen the minds and strengthen the livelihoods of students in literacy programs. As literacy is brought to more and more of the people in these communities it will continues to improve the lives of all it reaches.

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