Research report

Linking literacy and numeracy programmes in developing countries and the UK

Edited by David Barton and Uta Papen
Literacy Research Centre
Lancaster University
September 2005

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Literacy incorporates numeracy except where specific reference is made to numeracy.

Foreword

Ursula Howard

Literacy and numeracy for a better world

I am delighted that NRDC is publishing this report. It is a timely intervention in a critically important issue of our times. Ours is a small world; we are all no more than a day away from any country, yet we are still worlds apart:

Within the shared aims of the Millennium Development Goals – to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015 – there is recognition of how interlinked poverty is with so many other factors. High on the list of these is low literacy and numeracy. The goal is that every child in every country should have access to primary education by 2015, and that long before then, girls should have the same opportunity as boys. The challenge is massive. But, in their 'Rough Guide to a Better World'[1], DfID estimates that through development work over the past 30 years adult illiteracy in the developing world has been cut nearly in half, from 47 per cent to 25 per cent. This is good news, but also reveals the scale of the challenge, especially for women. Put another way, one in five of the population cannot read or write well; the vast majority are in developing countries and an estimated two-thirds are women.

As is now well known, the developed world also has major literacy and numeracy problems and all the United Kingdom (UK) countries have developed major strategies to address them. In Europe, the Lisbon goals[2] were set in 2000 to ensure that everyone in European Union countries should have the 'key competences' to survive and flourish in the economy and society of the future.

With so much activity and a real commitment to supporting men, women and children in communities across the world, it is a good time to think how we can best address problems – together. This report makes a strong case for much closer working links between the UK and countries in the developing world. Often, it is expected that the knowledge and skills of the developed world can help other countries - we offer expertise and others learn. This report suggests we can also benefit as much from others' expertise as they can from us. Family learning is just one example where there is a long record of good initiatives in developing countries from which we can learn. There are many others explored in this report.

The need for dialogue and mutual learning was immediately apparent at the NRDC meeting held in December 2003 from which this report arises. Supported by DfID and held at the Lancaster Literacy Research centre, the symposium brought together researchers, practitioners and development professionals from across the world.

The spirit of the event was one of sharing values and principles and thinking hard about practices and their applicability to vastly different contexts. Participants came from across the

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1 Wroe, M & Doney, M (2004), The rough guide to a better world (Rough Guides).

2 In March 2000, EU heads of state and government agreed on an ambitious goal: making the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

developing world: India, Nepal, Jamaica, Namibia and Uganda. There were also people working with ethnic minority communities in the 'developed' world, such as Canada. In addition, there were people working on literacy and numeracy with developing countries, including World Education in the United States (US) and the UK and literacy and numeracy professionals in the UK with long experience of working in developing countries across five continents. This report demonstrates the diversity and vitality of basic education throughout the world – notwithstanding the urgent need for better resources and support.

I hope this report is enjoyable, thought provoking and stimulates debate and action to support the momentum we now have to work towards a fairer world by shared approaches to policy as well as supporting and learning literacy and numeracy initiatives across the world.

Introduction

David Barton and Uta Papen

This report draws on the wealth of experience of adult literacy and numeracy work in developing countries[3], bringing together projects from different parts of the world to see what links can be made with literacy work in the UK. The purpose of the report is to present and discuss these experiences and to examine their relevance for policy and practice in adult basic skills in the UK. The broader aim is to promote international exchange in the field of adult literacy and to contribute to the development of practice in Britain.

The report makes recommendations for policy and practice in adult literacy and numeracy worldwide, with special recommendations for work in the UK.

Since the 1950s there have been waves of interest in adult literacy work in developing countries. Given the relative lack of success of the high profile United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) programmes of the 1960s and 1970s, there was less interest and political support for adult literacy in the 1980s and early 90s from governments and international donors. However, the past decade has seen a reversal of this trend with the emergence of a range of new initiatives and programmes. The World Bank has renewed its commitment to adult literacy, commissioning a number of studies aimed at assessing the state of the sector and examining the prospects for new programmes. The UK Department for International Development (DfID) has been particularly active in developing and supporting new approaches to adult literacy. Amongst others, DfID has developed new initiatives that relate literacy to livelihoods and has supported the development of new approaches to work in the area of post-literacy and continuing education, focusing on the production of learner-generated materials and 'real' materials. International charities have continued supporting this area with new initiatives. Notably, ActionAid, a UK-based non-governmental organisation (NGO), has developed a new approach to the reading and writing of adults known as Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques (Reflect), which is now used in more than 50 countries in the developing world. Similarly, in the US the NGO World Education is supporting projects in Africa and Asia, developing an integrated approach to literacy and numeracy development.

Whilst much of this work has strong links with the UK, the US and other industrialised countries, few attempts have yet been made to draw upon the 50 years of experience in developing countries when considering adult literacy and numeracy issues in countries such as the UK. However, some productive links have been made. For instance, the Reflect approach has been tried out in Canada and is being piloted in work with refugees and in urban regeneration programmes in the UK. World Education is applying some of its lessons to literacy work in the US. Another area of particular relevance to the British context is where there has been cooperation between language and literacy work in the Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean projects in the UK. There have also been strong indigenous organisations, such as Nirantar in India, described below, which have not originated with international agencies.

This report is based on a research symposium that brought together these innovative

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3. We are using the general term 'developing countries' rather than 'less economically developed countries' (LEDCs). We also use the terms 'South' and 'North' to refer to developing and developed countries respectively.

developments to engage in a dialogue between countries. 40 invited participants spent three days working together at the Literacy Research Centre at Lancaster University in December 2003. The participants are listed in the appendix. Discussion focused round a small number of case studies complemented by some overview papers. This report is based upon the presentations and the discussions.

Peer review

This report was read and critically peer reviewed by Mary Rhind, Highland Council; Nitya Rao, University of East Anglia; Linda Sidorowicz, Leicester Adult Education College and Wendy Altinors, Leeds Metropolitan University.

The structure of the report

Section 1 presents a summary, a deeper analysis of themes, conclusions and recommendations. The main body of the report starts with a paper in which Alan Rogers draws together DfID's experience in literacy, going back to projects in the 1980s and including an overview of DfID's current involvement. Then Roshan Chitrakar describes the Community Literacy Project Nepal, a DfID funded project which consciously applied new views of literacy to an adult literacy programme. This is followed by Lindsay Howard, a DfID Education and Training Adviser based in Malawi, who reflects on the effectiveness of DfID's approach in practice and the role which changes in policy have had on practice on the ground.

Turning to ActionAid's Reflect approach, David Archer outlines what it can offer English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) work in the UK. Then, Desiree Lopez presents a case study where Reflect has been used in ESOL classrooms in Canada. Juliet Millican provides a short commentary on her experiences of Reflect in practice.

The next section contains a set of case studies from a range of countries. Simon Kisira describes the work of Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) – a national organisation in Uganda. Malini Ghose describes how literacy work is built into the activities of Nirantar, a resource centre in Delhi concerned with gender and education. His paper includes a description of LABE's family literacy project. Beans Ngatjizeko describes the National Literacy Programme in Namibia, raising issues about language. Elaine Ferguson provides details of the Jamaican High School Equivalency programme for young adults who did not complete secondary education. Liz Millman makes the link with Jamaican student in the UK, outlining how they can be supported in the context of the *Skills for Life* strategy.

Then Jane Mace provides a short reflection on how to resolve the tensions between community development and educational empowerment. Phyllis Thompson of the Development Education Association gives a short reflection on how practitioners from different parts of the world can learn from each other. Anna Robinson-Pant raises issues about the whole questions of transfer between contexts, identifying what was significant in an example of successful transfer. Finally, Cristine Smith draws on her extensive experience with the US-based NGO World Education to suggest ways of translating experience from literacy programmes in Asia and Africa to the US context.

Section 1

Summary of main themes

This section summarises the main themes and issues that emerge from the papers and discussions during the symposium. We have grouped these under four broad headings. Each heading covers questions and issues from different contexts that were dealt with at various points during the symposium.

Theme 1: research can inform policy and practice in adult literacy. More particularly, this theme is concerned with how theoretical understandings of literacy, notably the social practices view of literacy (Street 1993, 2001; Barton 1994, Gee 1996, Barton and Hamilton 1998), can inform the design of programmes and materials. The CLPN (see section 2.2) was designed on the basis of the social model of literacy and it explicitly aimed to develop the practice implications of this approach. It was set up at a time when the UK Department of International Development (DfID) was dissatisfied with existing approaches to adult literacy in development and DfID supported the CLPN. This is a case of research informing practice and, indirectly, policy. The project's successful implementation has had an effect on DfID's policy in the field of adult literacy and numeracy. It has contributed to a readjustment of DfID's policy towards greater recognition of the diversity of literacy practices and the need to develop literacy programmes on the basis of a thorough understanding of literacy uses in communities. CLPN and some of the reports and studies that were carried out at the time of its implementation have also been influential in promoting an 'embedded' or 'contextualised' form of literacy provision, which is now being promoted by DfID and other multi-lateral agencies and donors.

Theme 2: integrating skills with economic, solid and political concerns. The second theme develops from the first. It deals with new approaches to the delivery of literacy and numeracy programmes that integrate the teaching of skills with the social, political and economic concerns of communities. Much conventional adult literacy and numeracy provision has been criticised for not leading to any substantial social and economic benefits for individuals and communities. While the history of adult literacy policy in developing countries bears witness to the various attempts that have been made to integrate literacy teaching with work and income-generating activities, none of these have been very successful. Many have followed a narrow approach that focused only on economic development and neglected the political and social conditions of underdevelopment in communities and countries. Reflect was developed in the 1990s with the explicit aim of teaching literacy and numeracy as part of broader efforts to stimulate local development and to address the social and political concerns of communities, replacing centralised, curriculum-led forms of provision. The Reflect approach has been adapted successfully to a broad variety of contexts, going beyond literacy and numeracy programmes.

Theme 3: the third theme covers the role of different languages in adult literacy programmes. This is a common concern in many developing societies, the majority of which are multilingual. The main question is what language(s) or dialect(s) to choose for adult literacy, and how the choice of language relates to issues of power and status and to the significance of local knowledge and experience for the curriculum. While this is a theme that was

mentioned by almost all presenters, it was a particular concern in the reports from India, Jamaica and Namibia.

Theme 4: the fourth and final theme is about the possible transfer of policies, approaches and tools between contexts, including movements from North to South, South to North, and between countries of the South and those of the North. Again, this was part of the original concern of the symposium, which explicitly aimed to promote such exchanges. What emerged from our discussions is that there are a variety of forms of transfer. Transfer is not only an issue of funding and support for programmes in the South (as in the case of the National Literacy Project in Namibia (NLPN) (see section 4.3, or the CLPN, section 2.2), it is also about transfer of ideas between policy, practice and research within and across countries. Where, when and how have governments and NGOs taken up the findings from research in other settings. How often have they commissioned studies to support their work? What is the relationship between research and practice: how are concepts developed by researchers communicated so that they can be taken up, developed and transformed into workable strategies that encourage new ways of learning and teaching?

1.1 Discussion of themes 1–4

Theme 1. The role of research in informing policy and practice
The social view of literacy (also referred to as the New Literacy Studies – NLS) started as a research model. However in recent years, researchers and practitioners have begun to develop the policy and practice implications of the approach (see for example Prinsloo and Breier 1996, Rogers et al. 1999, Rogers 1999, Hamilton 1999, Papen forthcoming). A small number of projects were set up, their main concern being to understand the role of literacy and numeracy in learners' lives and to develop curricula and teaching materials that connect the learning of new skills with people's existing uses of reading and writing (see CLPN, British Council 2001, Millican 2004). It is interesting to note that the majority of these interventions were set up in developing, not – as one might have expected – in industrialised countries, the home countries of most of the researchers who originally developed the new approach. This phenomenon provided part of the rationale for the symposium, our aim being to examine to what extent the experiences from these projects are relevant for the UK context. The main example we discussed at the symposium is the CLPN, although other experiences and initiatives were referred to and are included in the papers and reflections that are published in this report.

The discussion of the CLPN and the social view of literacy more broadly brought up a number of issues, each of which we will briefly present here. The first of these refers to what a social practices approach means in terms of the curriculum and content of a literacy programme. In the case of the CLPN, two principles guided the choice of topics and areas learners worked on. First, it was decided that literacy and numeracy should not be taught through separate classes, but should be 'embedded' or 'contextualised' in the work of existing community groups and projects. Second, ethnographic-type research into existing literacy and numeracy practices preceded the start of the intervention and provided the basis of any decisions regarding the content of learning. In practice, the 'embedded' approach can lead either to joint programmes, linking for example literacy with health, agriculture or savings groups (as in the examples form World Education, see section 5.4) or it can lead to a form of provision that can be characterised as 'literacy comes second' (Rogers et al. 1999). The latter is a model used by Nirantar in India (see Nirantar 1997) in parts of their literacy work with

women. The question of what to do first and how to link up educational with non-educational (i.e. more developmental) interventions may appear to have little relation with the ethnographic approach supported by the social view of literacy, but programmes such as the Community Literacy Project in Nepal have shown that this is not the case. The ethnographies of local literacy practices that were carried out in the early stages of the programme went beyond identifying and describing existing literacy and numeracy practices. They examined the role of reading and writing in the local economy and in existing development initiatives. While the main aim of such an analysis is to identify those practices that are most relevant and which would be most useful to develop, ethnographies of local literacy practices may also reveal areas where literacy is not a priority, but where other skills and efforts would best serve the community's needs.

The CLPN most clearly reveals how understanding the significance of literacy and numeracy in people's lives and the role of specific literacy practices in the economy, in social and political life can form the basis for the development of local curricula that have direct bearings on people's existing activities (for example the work of forest user groups in the CLPN). However, the approach is not without its limitations and challenges and some of the issues the CLPN faces turned out to be of much broader interest and were shared by many of those who attended the symposium. Two of the issues discussed at the symposium are of particular relevance for current debates in the UK: the question of measurement of outcomes and of training of facilitators and local organisers.

Assessment
A social practices approach to literacy education has implications for how we measure the outcomes of any literacy or numeracy initiative. Assessment is an ongoing topic of debate in the UK, in particular in England where the implementation of the *Skills for Life* strategy has brought with it a drive towards quality enhancement, greater efficiency and greater visibility of outcomes, made transparent through national standards, a core curriculum and nationally set tests (see Lavender et al. 2004). However, if the aim of a literacy or numeracy programme is to support and expand learners' existing uses of literacy, the impact of such a programme should be measured on the basis of how, where and how successfully learners use reading and writing in their everyday lives, not only on the basis of autonomous skills, measured through tests. In other words, what is important is not only how learners perform in assessment tasks, but how they fare when dealing with the literacy and language related tasks of their everyday lives. To speak about tasks here may still risk missing the point, as a social practices view of literacy would certainly want to include literacy-related activities that are not task-oriented or functional (such as coping with money). Instead it would also want to know about how learners use literacy (and any new literacy practices they may have acquired) to serve their own individual purposes, whether or not these are work related.

A related topic of debate is whether and how tests – such as those used in the *Skills for Life* structure – can cover changes such as increased self-esteem. If they cannot, what is being lost by narrowly focusing measurement on skills changes? What is likely to be ignored are those changes that are of great significance to learners. These may be less important for funders. Lopez (section 3.2) suggests that learners may value changes which funders would not accept as viable outcomes. But even in such a case, one is inclined to ask whether such changes should not be looked at more carefully and given greater prominence in the publication of programme outcomes. League tables and statistical evidence are the core way of how many governments (not only the English but also for example the Namibian) present the efficiency of their policies, but these can only capture any changes that are measurable

and countable. This links in with discussions in Britain about the wider benefits of learning (Feinstein et al. 2003) and the need to develop ways to accredit non-curriculum outcomes.

A further question is how to measure both individual as well as social/community-based changes. How could we for example capture improvements in the way a local forest users group manages its internal discussions and divisions or how a savings groups deals with the numeracy practices of planning its finances? In his contribution to this report, Roshan Chitrakar (section 2.2) describes some of these challenges for the CLPN.

Training of facilitators
Another key question for the social practices approach is teacher training and local capacity building. Since the social view of literacy invites a different approach to learning and teaching than 'conventional' curriculum-based strategies, teachers need to be made aware of the new approach and its underlying philosophy. More importantly, they need to share its basic premises. However, teacher training is an issue that cuts across the four main themes of the symposium. The lack of appropriate training structures for facilitators and local programme developers was mentioned by several presenters. While this is likely to be a problem for any kind of programme, it is particularly salient for innovative approaches such as the CLPN or Reflect (see below theme 2) which heavily rely on models and perspectives developed by outsiders and that may be alien to the practices of teaching and learning facilitators and learners are likely to be familiar with. The question of teaching materials is often directly linked to teacher training. Locally produced or 'tailor-made' materials are frequently suggested; however, in practice part of the reason why some projects revert to the use of primers and externally produced textbook may very well be teachers' inexperience and rejection of such materials (see Millican 2004, Papen 2005). This may include rejecting the use of locally produced or 'found' or 'real' materials (Rogers et al. 1999). Other approaches, however, seem to have found a way around the problem of materials and teacher training. Part of the reason for the success of the Reflect approach may be its focus on training and its use of materials that do not rely on technical or linguistic expertise, but which are easy to prepare and partly produced together with the learners.
Chitrakar's paper also addresses the related point of how to develop alternatives to the heavily time-consuming approach of conventional ethnography and how to avoid too much reliance on external consultants to do this. If facilitators and learners themselves are to be involved in this kind of research, they need to be briefed and be encouraged to use the ethnographic approach in a way that suits their own context and interests. The CLPN met with criticism by local stakeholders, who were concerned with the time spent on what were regarded as preliminary investigations, but not the 'real' intervention. Such concerns are shared by many, including policy-makers and planners in the UK who, confronted with an issue of scale, tend towards standardisation. The recent drive towards a national curriculum and national standards in England may in part have been fuelled by such concerns. A more general issue for the social practices view of literacy is to what extent its ethnographic approach can be used on a large scale and what it's role can be in teacher training.

Theme 2. The need to integrate teaching of skills with social, political and economic concerns of communities
Literacy programmes in developing countries have often been criticised for teaching reading and writing as 'autonomous' skills, failing to take account of the social and political contexts of learners and for their inability to produce significant results in terms of social and economic development (Abadzi 1996, Street 1999)**.** There is a history of failure associated with

functional literacy programmes. The limited success of such programmes (as exemplified by the World Experimental Literacy Programme in the 1970s, see Rassool 1999) has been openly acknowledged by donors, providing agencies, educators and researchers and has provided the impetus to develop new forms of intervention. The 'autonomous' model of literacy (Street 1993) has informed most large-scale literacy programmes. This not only led to a common focus on work and income-related concerns or economic development, it is also responsible for the lack of awareness or willingness among providers to tackle the social, cultural and political realities of learners' lives. In the 1980s, with the influence of Paulo Freire, a more political concept of literacy (one that in some ways moves closer to Street's ideological model) became influential and shaped the policies of several large-scale national literacy campaigns.

Reflect owes part of its philosophy to the legacy of the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire (1921-1977). Its explicit aim is to integrate the teaching of literacy, numeracy and language skills with deliberate efforts to not only discuss learners' social, political and economic conditions, but to develop initiatives to transform these. Reflect was developed partly in reaction to the failures of curriculum-based literacy programmes that presented learners with irrelevant content and remained isolated from any development efforts that were going on in their immediate environment. At the same time, Reflect can be seen as a countermovement to a different type of 'integrated' literacy initiatives that became prominent in the late 1990s. By and large, such projects (see for example Lauglo 2001, Oxenham 2001, World Bank 2001) showed more similarities with the work-oriented and functional programmes of the 1970s than with the more political character of Freirean-inspired literacy programmes. Increasingly, in the 1990s, literacy interventions were shaped by the policies of neo-liberalism, by the goals of human resource development and economic productivity. The idea of combining literacy with livelihoods stemmed from this agenda and presented a deliberate attempt to overcome the limitations of 'isolated' (i.e. education only or general) literacy programmes. However, the understanding of 'embedded' or 'contextualised' literacy, in these livelihoods initiative foregrounds economic activities and related vocational skills (Papen 2002). Reflect, which from the outside might fit the label of 'embedded' models, rejects the narrow economic focus of many livelihood programmes. Embedded here does not only mean embedded in economic initiatives, but connected to the range of social, cultural, political concerns of communities, thereby avoiding treating literacy, or skills, as mere technical issues, but addressing the political aspects of development. While Reflect circles (as the learning groups are called) are often the springboard for new local initiatives, these by no means have to be income-generating projects. This is relevant for current discussions in Britain, where embedding is central to provision and can mean the embedding of reading and writing skills in vocational training or in community-based or leisure-oriented courses.

One of the main means through which Reflect achieves its purpose is by organising the teaching and learning process in ways that are strikingly different from conventional educational practice. First of all, as already mentioned, there is no pre-designed curriculum and the facilitator does not approach the group of learners with a set of ready made materials. David Archer's paper (section 3.1) briefly describes the Reflect methodology. As he explains, the starting point for any learning is the analysis of learners' lives in a broad sense and the visualisation of these through the use of diagrams, matrixes, flow charts and other techniques. These visual materials provide the basis for any teaching of reading and writing skills that will follow. The facilitator's role is to identify the main terms and concepts used in the discussion of the diagrams and charts and to transfer these onto cards and sheets which can then be used for the more focused coding and decoding work. This way of working does not require the use of any materials brought in from the outside (e.g. primers or textbooks),

but it could include the use of 'real' (authentic) texts (section 3.2).

Power is a central concern in the Reflect methodology and this is perhaps most visible in the relationship between facilitators and learners and between an individual circle and the larger programme or initiative it is associated with. What will be the content of each circle's work is decided by learners and teachers. There is a high degree of diversity and flexibility. Reflect's ability to adapt to local circumstances and to be responsive to individual groups' concern is widely regarded as one of the strengths of the approach. It presents a powerful alternative to curriculum-led literacy programmes and their more stable and uniform agendas. Whether, to what extent and how a curriculum can actually be used as an effective tool for literacy and numeracy programmes was a matter of much debate at the symposium. It was evident from the experiences discussed and the views of those present that there is currently a strong tendency among literacy workers in developing countries to abandon uniform curricula and to try to develop materials at regional or best local level, if possible with and by learners. The work done by Nirantar in India (see section 4.2), is another example that illustrates the strength of locally developed curricula and materials.

The National Literacy Programme in Namibia could be cited as the counter example to the critique of curriculum-based interventions. It is a large-scale, government-run adult basic education programme that has undoubtedly been successful in improving the literacy, numeracy and language skills of many Namibians. However, as Ngajitzeko points out, there are ongoing discussions in the ministry responsible for the NLPN about the need to decentralise the programme structure and to increase regional and district-level involvement in the production of teaching materials. From the onset of the programme, there have been complaints about the cultural inappropriateness of some of the textbooks and the linguistic errors made when translating text originally written in English into the local languages (see Brown et al. 1999).

Desiree Lopez' report (section 3.2) on the use of Reflect in a Canadian ESOL programme further highlights the strengths of the bottom-up process of curriculum development that characterises the approach. She describes an ESOL initiative in Calgary, which aimed to provide a place for those women who, due to various personal and social barriers, did not access or had been expelled from state-run ESOL courses. The Reflect approach was used as a means to develop participatory and learner-led classroom practices that were able to integrate any issues the women faced. This enabled the programme to take up a variety of concerns that went beyond supporting women in dealing with day-to-day issues such as the need for interpreters when visiting health services, but tackled some of the underlying causes for the difficulties immigrant women in Calgary experienced. In this way, Reflect's aim to integrate the learning of new skills with a critical analysis of existing conditions, leading to efforts to change these, was achieved. Crucially, this required the groups to develop their own curricula which were highly relevant to the women's needs and interests. The development of visual materials was an important part in this project, but was complemented by other methods, for example women's story-telling and work with authentic materials such as prescription labels.

To move on to a different issue, our discussion of the Reflect approach triggered a debate over the significance of images and multimodal texts in the contemporary world. Reflect's strong focus on visualisation techniques moves literacy instruction away from a sole focus on the written word towards the role of images, lay-out and other visual aspects in texts. Lindsay Howard (see section 2.3) pointed out the importance, but also the complexities, of using visual means in development messages, an issue which is often been discussed as 'visual literacy' (see Rogers et al. 1999).

The Reflect methodology is of course not without its limitations and challenges. A central concern is how learners' progress can be assessed and measured (see theme 1). A further issue, but one which was less debated at the symposium, is how to build bridges for learners to move into more mainstream education and training provision, if they desire to do so. With regards to assessment, Reflect and CLPN face similar issues. Both approaches have in common the fact that they integrate learning in the community process and they face the challenge of how to capture any changes that happen not at individual level, but in communities and community-based groups and initiatives. This is likely to be a concern for any form of specialised or integrated literacy programme, including, for example, the work done by World Education in Nepal and Mali (see section 5.4).

Theme 3. The role of language in adult literacy policies
To anyone familiar with the history and current context of adult literacy policies in developing countries it will come as no surprise that language issues were central to many of our discussions at the symposium. The majority of countries of the developing world are multilingual and the question of which languages or dialects to use in adult literacy programmes has always been highly controversial. It touches upon not only pedagogical, but also political and economic issues. However, multilingualism is not only a reality in the South, but is equally central to education policies in the countries of the North. With increasing numbers of people migrating between countries and regions, the multilingual character of societies such as the British has become more pronounced. Accordingly, the language question was a concern for all experiences and projects discussed at the symposium.

The fundamental question is in what language or languages should adults be taught? Or, to phrase it differently, what languages or dialects do they want to be taught in? We approached the question from various angles, some of which took us back to the issues discussed under the previous two headings. Talking about locally produced or tailor-made materials immediately raised the question of which language these will be written in. Depending on the philosophy of the programme in question, this is likely to be a local idiom or a language of wider communication. When authentic or real materials are used, these are more likely to be written in the official or national language of the country in question, and this may in many cases be a language of foreign origin.

The choice between languages as media of instruction for adult literacy, more often than not is a matter of contention between learners and providers, or, as Malini Ghose (section 4.2) has indicated, can be a matter of debate between locally based facilitators and the external programme organisers. In the particular case Ghose mentions it was the external group of organisers who favoured the local language whereas the facilitator (supported by learners) opted for Hindi (see also Ghose, 2001). In the NLPN, language has equally been a matter of contention. The government implements a policy of mother tongue literacy (including nowadays 12 of the Namibian languages), but not all learners agree with this. Many, in particular in the urban areas, prefer to learn in English (the official language of the country) right from the start, as in their eyes mother tongue literacy is of limited use. A potential solution that is beginning to emerge in the NLPN is a 'dual language' approach which combines the development of reading and writing skills in the local language with instruction in spoken English. Ngatjizeko makes it clear that this change is the result of learners' demands, an indication of the power learners' voices can have even in a centralised, government-run programme. A similar dual language approach was used by the Older People's Literacy Programme (OPL) in South Africa, another initiative that set out from a

social literacy practices perspective and that has similarities with the CLPN. Incidentally, the OPL is another project that was supported by DfID. In the case of the OPL, the decision to opt for a dual language system arose out of the ethnographic-type research that had been carried out together with learners and teachers. In their day-to-day life, the elderly people who joined the project regularly engaged in literacy events that required the use of two or more languages (see Millican 2004). An example is collecting one's pension from the local pension office (which involves a written text in English but speaking in a different language). Dual language for these people was a normality not an alien phenomenon and this made the use of the approach in the context of the literacy classes less complex than one might have expected. There are no easy solutions to this complex issue and what works or doesn't work will have to be explored in each particular context. However, it is evident from existing experiences that learners' choices can be different from providers' expectations (see also Yates 1995).

Power is central to language in several ways. Different languages (and importantly different literacies) have varying degrees of power and status. In Namibia, English is the official language and to those learners who attend English literacy classes in the capital of Windhoek, it is obvious that those in the country who have power (that is who have jobs and a regular income) know how to speak and write in English (Papen 2005). The ability to understand the official language is crucial when dealing with state services, be it at the local or the national level. This is also a central concern for ESOL programmes in Britain or Canada. Immigrants need at least some understanding of the official language if they want to have access to and benefit from any support structures and services that may be available to them.

In many contexts, the official language also has substantial symbolic power. What is written in the official language almost automatically appears to carry a certain level of status and credibility that any body of knowledge contained in local language will find much harder to achieve. On the other hand, a less powerful language can be given status by having documents written in it and in this respect literacy programmes can play a role in promoting the status of local languages.

A related issue more directly concerns knowledge and access to information. The choice of language for an adult literacy programme is closely linked to what counts as knowledge within this programme. In her presentation at the symposium, Ghose recalled negotiations with learners and facilitators over the use of Hindi or the local language Bundeli. The debate revolved around the participants' desire not to be excluded from knowledge that is written down in Hindi. Their concern was that if the project used Bundeli (and thus would not teach them to read and write Hindi) this would automatically limit the range of knowledge and information they had access to, as they would only be able to read texts in Bundeli (for more details see Ghose 2001). Increasing people's access to information is a central aim of many adult literacy programmes and, as Ghose's example shows, this requires careful considerations as to what languages provide access to what kinds of information and knowledge. Ghose describes an initiative to produce a rural newspaper that is explicitly designed to bring relevant information to rural women with limited literacy skills and to ensure that their concerns are being heard and disseminated. The production of such newspapers provides ample opportunity for those involved to acquire a broad range of literacy and language-related skills. The ability to produce reading materials, as Ghose points out, needs to be 'democratized' and in itself is an important aspect of promoting literacy.

The choice of language may at first sight appear to be straightforward when talking about ESOL in England, parts of Canada or the US. As the name suggests, ESOL provides instruction in English for speakers of other languages. Government-supported provision in England or Canada (as in section 3.2) focuses entirely on the target language and there are few, if any, initiatives that combine work on the students' own language with the teaching and learning of English. In the British context, such initiatives used to exist (see for example Schwab 1994). Similar initiatives may still be around, but they have been relegated to the margins of state funded programmes. With regards to the teaching of English to speakers of Caribbean languages, it was pointed out at the symposium that ESOL teachers would benefit from knowledge and understanding of these languages, in particular in the case of English-based Caribbean languages (Creoles). Such knowledge without doubt would be an advantage for all ESOL teachers, but is of course difficult to achieve in practice, given the great variety of home languages represented in most ESOL classes. The City College Birmingham is currently developing an English for Speakers of Caribbean Languages (ESOCL) approach based on the national ESOL curriculum (section 4.5). This begs a more fundamental question: What status do learners' own languages have in ESOL provision? Should more be done to support and promote the use of these in and outside educational contexts? Who should be responsible for such provision and support? Does the recipient state have a responsibility in this or should it be left entirely to the concerned communities themselves?

Theme 4. The transfer of policies, approaches and tools between contexts
This final theme has several dimensions. To begin with, there is the question of transfer of ideas, concepts and approaches between countries and continents. In many cases, this will mean transfer from North to South. More often than not, such transfer is supported or made possible by the work of development agencies, international NGOs and bi-lateral as well as multilateral donors. In these contexts, transfer often takes on a particular form, when a specific project is set up locally in conjunction with external foreign support. The transfer of ideas and methods in these contexts follows certain pathways, many of which are pre-given and only open to limited change. It is likely to be a one-way system of transfer and this begs the question of what power the recipient end has to decide over what they would like to receive and what they can do with what they have received. Anna Robinson-Pant's contribution (see section 5.3) contains insightful comments on the issue of power not only when concepts are moved from North to South, but also in the opposite case. She is frank about the often ambiguous position of the individual consultant who is likely to have to take on the role of mediator (and perhaps translator) between the donors and external providers and the local community. This is not the say that transfer is not possible and desirable as the development of tools that can be used across contexts and countries has always been central to the work of international cooperation. However, those involved in such endeavours nowadays are likely to share the view that the recipe paradigm can only work if the recipient cooks have the power and the will to change the ingredients to adapt them to local tastes. Robinson-Pant confirms this when she remembers her most 'productive' and fulfilling moments to have been those when one-off transfer turned into a joint process of critique and transformation.

As an example of a South–North transfer, Robinson-Pant describes the use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in a school project in Norwich, England. This is a method which is regarded as originating from the South. Her account reveals that issues of power are important both in cases if North–South and South–North transfer. She shows how the school teachers in Norwich were challenged by the open-natured character of the PRA approach, something they were not used to from conventional teaching practice. Robinson-Pant's

examples (one from Nepal, the other from Norwich) raise the important question as to what really is or can be transferred: tools and instruments or philosophies and concepts? In the process of transfer, an instrument may easily become detached from the approach it originally came from. An approach, which has an underlying theory and philosophy, can turn into a mere instrument, open to be used for a variety of purposes and interests. If this is so, when have we reached the stage where an idea has been completely corrupted by an agenda that is contrary to its original aims?

The Reflect approach is undoubtedly a particularly successful case of South-South and more recently also South-North transfer (see sections by Lopez and Archer). How then did Reflect manage to preserve its original ethos while spreading through a large variety of contexts and countries? Can an approach such as Reflect, transferred across a network of structures at local, national, regional and international level guarantee that the original idea is maintained in the variety of guises in which the Reflect tool nowadays appears? Should that even be the goal? Or, is the strength of the approach its flexibility and adaptability to a variety of contexts and purposes? Turning to the adaptation of Reflect for ESOL work in the UK, the most obvious question is how a methodology that is rooted in a participatory and critical approach to literacy and development can be adapted to be used for a system of ESOL provision that is part and parcel of a nation-wide centralised structure with a common curriculum, national standards and national tests? This is an important issue to Reflect as they develop their work in the UK.

Many of the above issues regarding the transfer of ideas and approaches between countries are equally applicable to the movement of ideas and approaches from research to policy and practice. In the current climate of policy-making at national and international levels, the need for research informed policy and practice is widely recognised. Equally, there is widespread interest in closer links between research and practice, between academics and practitioners, both in the North and the South. However, it is reasonable to assume that any existing networks and initiatives are more advanced in industrialised than in developing countries – see the Research in Practice in Adult Literacy) (RiPAL) network in Canada and Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPaL) in the UK – since communication is usually a lot easier.

Several of the initiatives presented at the symposium provided interesting examples of the opportunities and pitfalls that are likely to be encountered in any such endeavour. The most interesting case is the role of DfID, which in recent years has supported a number of innovative literacy programmes and has commissioned several research studies. This reveals the organisation's willingness to not only promote new approaches to adult literacy but also to re-examine and critique its own policies in the area (see Rogers' and Howard's papers). One of the most striking insights that emerge from an analysis of DfID's work is its recognition of the limitations of the 'one-size-fits-all' approach, as in Rogers paper, and its acknowledgement of the multiple nature of literacy practices on the ground. Roger's paper shows how the organisation through its support of innovative projects, which explicitly aimed to put into practice a social view of literacy, has gradually changed its own policy. As a result, DfID has adopted a view of literacy that differs not only from what other donors and aid agencies promote (including for example the World Bank and UNESCO), but also from the current policies in Britain. The reasons for these differences are not easy to explain and any explanations are likely to be built more on speculation than real insight. However, looking at DfID's work over the past 10–20 years it is obvious that the organisation has long-standing ties with researchers and has repeatedly commissioned studies as well as invited researchers to work as consultants on its projects. Furthermore, as can also be seen from Roger's paper,

DfID has organised a series of internal conferences and seminars that have served as points of reflection and revision of its own work. The DfES has not as yet acted in this way, although the NRDC has as its aim to provide precisely such a forum for reflection and development of new policies.

It would however be wrong to paint too simple a picture of DfID's ability as a government organisation to take on board the views of researchers and to continuously revise and adapt its practice. Lindsay Howard (herself working for DfID) raises important questions as to how concepts such as multiple literacies can really be taken up in policy and practice on the ground. How much diversity is acceptable, she asks. How many different literacies can an intervention accommodate? The CLPN and some of the other projects listed by Rogers provide interesting answers to these questions and shows how flexibility and diversity can be built into an intervention and can help to overcome the shortcomings of a centralised uniform programme. However, this may be more problematic when working at a bigger scale. The question then becomes not only what is politically acceptable but also what is technically, financially and logistically feasible. Such concerns have regularly been expressed about any successful small-scale projects which use a participatory and flexible curriculum. The argument is that such initiatives work well when remaining low scale but that a similar approach cannot work when dealing with a large population. But are there any experiences to show that this really is the case?

An important question to ask with regards to the influence the social practices view of literacy had on DfID's policy is to what extent a change of words on paper – such as the one that is clearly visible in DfID's statements on literacy – translates into a change of policy on the ground. There cannot be a single answer to this question. One factor that stands out though is that DfID has been willing to provide funds for projects that explicitly draw on the theories of the New Literacy Studies. This in itself is indicative of at least some degree of change.

1.2 Conclusions

Throughout the three days of the symposium we discussed issues and concerns regarding the state and development of adult literacy, numeracy and language policies in developing and developed countries. For many of us, one of the most striking outcomes of our debates was the many similarities that we found between programmes and policies in the South and those in the North. These are similarities in the 'problem' and its scope, similarities with regards to organisational matters and funding, similar concerns about content and curriculum, about materials and assessment. The latter, to take just one example, without doubt is a major concern in the UK, but is no less important for practitioners and providers in Namibia, in India or Uganda. Funding and long-term commitment for adult literacy, language and numeracy education is a common concern across countries and continents. Many new initiatives may have emerged in recent years, but funding for adult literacy, language and numeracy can nevertheless not be taken for granted. It is often of short-term nature and the support the sector receives from non-governmental organisations is not always matched by adequate state funding.

The second main outcome of the symposium, which we would like to highlight here, is the wealth of experience that developing countries have to offer with regards to adult literacy and basic education. This is amply evidenced by the contributions to this report. The papers published in this report also reveal the ability and willingness of many programmes in the

South to experiment with new approaches and to adopt new techniques, an openness to innovation that has much to offer to policy-makers and practitioners in Britain and other countries of the North.

1.3 Recommendations

The list of recommendations that follows summarises the main issues that were identified and discussed by the symposium participants during the meeting. In addition, several of the papers contain more specific recommendations. Firstly, we make general recommendations that are applicable to literacy and numeracy policies in developing as well as developed countries. From these recommendations we draw out specific ways in which they relate to the current context in England.

Recommendations based on the experience of developing countries:

It is important to keep open debates about the goals and purpose of adult language, literacy and numeracy work
Debates on the goals and purposes of adult language, literacy and numeracy work are made explicit in some programmes. This includes reflection on what people already do with literacy, what part it plays in their lives, but also what literacy can and cannot do to help people fulfil their aspirations. Such discussions need to be part of any programme. Reflect is one approach which provides space for critical reflection as an integral part of literacy, language and numeracy teaching; this can lead to an understanding of literacy as broader than autonomous skills, but, rather, as social practices which are part and parcel of people's lived realities.

It is important to broaden the concepts of literacy and numeracy which underlie current policies
Comparison of experiences in many different contexts drew attention to the need to review and develop the concepts of literacy and numeracy that inform policy and practice. Broad understandings of literacy and numeracy are needed which take account of the multilingual and multicultural environment of contemporary societies and the global connections between individuals and societies. Such concepts should cover aspects such as reading and writing 'texts' of various kinds (including visual texts, numerical information and electronic texts), managing one's life, communication (including speaking and listening) and decision-making and the ability to access and engage with various forms of knowledge (including science and technology).

Family and community-based and integrated programmes often work better and are more sustainable than isolated programmes
Approaches that promote family- or community-focused and 'integrated' forms of literacy were outlined in some of the initiatives presented at this symposium. Experiences in Asia, Africa and the US suggest that such 'organic' approaches work better than 'generic' literacy, language or numeracy programmes. The integration of literacy and numeracy as part of co-operative, mutual and voluntary organisations and social enterprises can have a strong impact. People in social organisations and local enterprises have a range of problems to solve and challenges to address, which improving basic skills can help. However, communities, local enterprises and organisations need to feel some ownership of programmes; and adult literacy, numeracy and language education works best when delivered through proper

partnerships between providers and local groups. Community development needs to complement individual achievement.

Literacy and numeracy can be critical ingredients of learning between individual adults, families and communities in situations of conflict or post-conflict.
A number of initiatives in African and Asian countries demonstrate the power of learning in family and community settings, in which literacy and numeracy learning are combined with approaches which aim to help resolve conflict and support the rehabilitation and reconciliation of communities which have been at war or affected by internal conflict, including refugees and displaced groups. A lesson for the UK is the potential usefulness of such approaches for work with offenders, people with serious health problems, socially disengaged groups and refugees and asylum seekers.

Longer programmes have more long-term effects
There is frequently a conflict between the desire and need to serve as many learners as possible and the concerns for how much is possible in how little time. With limited funding, there are always pressures to produce short-term and tangible outcomes. However, experiences in many countries have shown that money is better spent on longer programmes than on short-term efforts that result in impressive short-term outcomes, but with little long term change. Questions still remain about how long a programme has to be in order to make a visible and sustainable change in learners' lives.

Authentic materials work best
The importance of authentic (or 'real') materials in adult literacy, numeracy and language teaching needs to be stressed. This starts in teacher training and teacher trainees should be given suitable space to learn about and try out use such materials. Questions remain about how centrally-designed and locally-derived curricula compare with regards to how successful they are in addressing learners' needs and interests.

Practitioner networks are an essential part of training and professional development.
Too many practitioners carry out their work in isolation and know little about other work going on in their country, in the region they are part of, or in other parts of the world. There is a need for more practitioner networks as well as practitioner-researcher networks. Such networks should first be developed at local levels and could then link up with networks elsewhere, including across countries. Researchers need to be included in these networks as research in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and language teaching has much to offer to practice. Efforts need to be made, however, to convert findings from research into renewed educational practice that is sustainable. Researchers and practitioners need to work together to develop research-informed practice.

Assessment of learners and programmes needs to be broad
It is essential that learners' own priorities and their own understandings of their progress are taken into account when learning is assessed. Wider benefits of learning are identified as important by many learners and learning can make a real difference to many aspects of their lives and those of family members. There is a need to support research that identifies learners' understandings of their own progress. On the basis of such research, qualitative indicators for programme outcomes should be developed and any indicators for programme outcomes should include qualitative and ethnographic data. At the same time it is important that testing regimes do not distort the teaching and learning of language, literacy and numeracy.

Linking literacy, gender and empowerment
There were repeated reports from African and Asian countries, of the importance of linking literacy and numeracy initiatives with support for women's economic activities and their participation in public life. In many countries women's literacy is a critical concern. Education programmes for women can support women's wider involvement in the social and political life of their communities, and can provide women with important knowledge about health, income-generation and other aspects relevant to their own and their families' lives.

The application to adult literacy, numeracy and language policies and practice in the UK

Many of the above recommendations clearly apply to current issues of policy and practice in England and the rest of the UK. Often they give support to specific directions which policy is going, for example in the greater emphasis on embedded provision; or they emphasise particular aspects, such as family and community based literacy and numeracy provision. In other areas they contribute to aspects which are already being widely debated, such as the strong testing regime (see Lavender 2004), or they raise issues, such as overall goals and purposes, which need to be debated more in Britain. Whilst the context of the UK is distinct, it is our belief that a great deal can be learned from the accumulated experience of work in developing countries over the past four decades.

Family and community literacy and numeracy learning, including informal and embedded learning could be extended. This approach to literacy and numeracy has been a cornerstone of literacy in many countries. This has lessons for the UK. Here, we are also finding that family learning has been successful. In developing countries, the concept of family and daily life in families often embraces a larger, more extended family group. This could be successful in many UK communities, including work with ESOL learners.

The techniques used in several countries, linking literacy and numeracy to conflict-resolution and related reconciliation initiatives could be explored in the UK to look at the possibility of working in this, or appropriately tailored ways, with some groups of learners, including socially excluded and disaffected groups, offenders and people with behavioural difficulties or mental health issues.

Informal, embedded and 'organic' forms of literacy, numeracy and language could be further developed within the voluntary sector, the cooperative and mutual sector and social and cultural enterprise in the UK. Interesting initiatives have already been carried out under the Adult and Community Learning Fund in England, e.g. with credit unions to support financial literacy. Learning literacy and numeracy in meaningful contexts can also foster, here as in developing countries, a sense of social and community belonging, and support people in developing their local economies. Greater purpose, and sustainability can be achieved by organisations which are supporting the learning of their members and users. In addition, such organisations can offer a rich source of volunteering and networks to support educational initiatives. Literacy and numeracy are thus linked to strong social values, and to the aspirations of people to develop and transform their lives, their communities and their economic prospects.

Practitioners and policy-makers in the UK can benefit from knowing more about practices and experiences in developing countries. Information about literacy programmes in developing countries should be made more accessible to practitioners and policy-makers in the UK. This report is a first step in this process of information dissemination and the NRDC could have a

further role in this through supporting seminars, training materials and networks.

Finally, it became apparent during the symposium that UK policy on supporting adult basic education in developing countries has developed quite separately from policy within the UK. There is little dialogue between DfID and DfES, the two government departments responsible for these policies. Again, the NRDC could have a role in initiating dialogue at the policy level as a way of exchanging information between the departments on their respective approaches and policies.

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Section 2

The work of DflD in adult literacy in developing countries

DfID experience of adult literacy

Alan Rogers

It is important to state at the outset that this is a personal statement and does not carry any official recognition. I have sought the help of others including some now or formerly inside DfID, but they are not in any way responsible for any statement in this paper.

The background may help to explain the nature of the paper and its limitations. I was asked by DfID Malawi as part of a consultancy into literacy communication and development programmes to "take into consideration DfID experience in literacy". Within the space and time limits of that consultancy, I prepared a paper, consulting others. During the NRDC Symposium, I was asked to circulate this paper. I have done so and received several valuable contributions to make it more complete. But it remains my own – partial and personal. It is based on a review of as much material as I could find available in the public domain, several interviews, many individual enquiries (many of which failed to yield fruit), and direct experience of some of the activities listed. It must be held to be provisional; a more in-depth study would pay dividends.

Some years ago, adult literacy was located within that part of ODA (the UK Government's Overseas Development Agency, the forerunner of the Department for International Development) that dealt with social development, but during the 1980s it was transferred to the section dealing with education.

ODA formerly had a Development Communications Support Unit that raised awareness of the importance of non-literate communications in development, but I have been unable to access an evaluation of the work of that unit. Apart from that, until very recently, DfID experience has been concentrated on the 'education' approach to adult literacy learning.

I divide the experience into three sections:

- programmes that DfID directly funded and ran in association with local agencies and consultants;
- programmes that DfID funded in whole or in part but which were managed by other agencies; and
- research activities.

Direct programmes

Kenya 1980s: ODA participated substantially in the new National Adult Literacy Programme of Kenya, particularly by the provision of motor cycles for field level workers. The campaign appeared to have spectacular successes at first but then faded fast; and within a short time none of the motor cycles was found to be working. The government made no provision for their maintenance or replacement in due course. The experience deterred ODA from engaging in national adult literacy campaigns for several years although support for some small scale interventions continued (Macharia personal communication). A project identification consultancy in 1993 decided to focus on girls' secondary education rather than adult literacy.

Ghana 1990s (Street personal communication; Yates 1995): this programme specifically set out to work in 15 local languages rather than in one of the national languages. The key lesson seems to have been that material initially prepared in workshops in English or one other major language cannot easily be transferred into appropriate material in another language for a different cultural group simply by translation, for it will reflect the culture of the region in which it is prepared (e.g. material prepared in Accra, even when translated into a different language, reflected the culture of the capital rather than the smaller market towns or more remote rural, pastoral or fishing cultures). Locally or learner-generated materials (LGM) would appear to be a more effective way forward (this lesson was successfully applied to agricultural development, see Carter 1999). Diversity rather than uniformity is the lesson which the DfID Ghana project seems to offer.

Nigeria 1990s (McCaffrey personal communication; Omolewa personal communication; Digby Swift personal communication; Nigeria 2002). DfID supported a community-focused adult literacy programme as part of the Nigeria Community Education Programme in south-east and north-east Nigeria (including nomadic clans); each project was located in a different and distinct cultural and linguistic context with very different previous experiences of education. The programme drew on past experience of literacy programmes, the theories of New Literacy Studies and the Reflect approach then being trialled (Cottingham and Archer 1996). The people who attended the literacy classes determined the curriculum so that it addressed the literacy and numeracy skills they required in everyday life in their communities. This was achieved by discussion and dialogue between participants and facilitators through a nine stage process of identification of needs, prioritisation of goals, identification and development of materials. The most important lessons from the adult literacy element in the Nigeria Community Education Programme can be summarised from its report, although this is written by internal consultants to the project, not by an external evaluation team:

> "The Community Education Programme was particularly successful in linking adult education to community development. This was because the methods used to teach adults were rooted in the communities' needs.
>
> The traditional method of teaching literacy is to have a standard textbook containing vocabulary and content considered suitable by outside experts. The adult literacy instructors then progress through the textbook until the class is able to memorise the words in it. In the Community Education Programme, instructors were trained in a completely different method known as Learner Oriented Community Adult Literacy (LOCAL). When they used the LOCAL method, they found that most of their students learned to read very quickly.

> Facilitators were asked to identify what the participants needed literacy for and to bring materials related to these needs into the classroom. Materials included voter cards, hospital cards, driving licences, birth certificates, receipts and other material used in daily life. These are sometimes termed 'real materials'.
>
> The LOCAL approach [also] draws on the cultural traditions of the communities. It uses the actual words of the learner, who reports a life experience, tells a story or relates a piece of local history. The instructor writes the words down and the learner reads them back" (Nigeria 2002).

76 small books in six languages written by participants and facilitators were published. The key lay in the recruitment, training and support of local adult literacy facilitators. The objective was to develop the expertise and the training of national facilitators and subsequently local facilitators who would be able to continue training and supporting facilitators after the period of the project ended. In addition, training was provided for key local facilitators on the production of LGMs and on monitoring and evaluation. Once again diversity and participatory approaches led to a more successful programme of adult literacy learning.

Nepal 1997–2003 (personal communications; CLPN newsletters and reports): the DfID-supported Nepal literacy programme has developed what they call the Community Literacies Approach. This approach was inspired by the fact that traditional adult literacy programmes were not concerned with whether the literacy skills were being used but only with whether they had been learned. In association with a major local NGO (World Education Nepal), a resource centre was created and supported for five years and a diversified programme of activities in conjunction with different bodies and agencies was developed. The aim of the Community Literacies Project in Nepal (CLPN) was to increase the use of literacy in the community. The project was clear that there are many local literacies rather than one literacy. CLPN thus worked with a relatively small number of different bodies seeking to enhance the literacy component in their work – for example credit and savings groups. In some cases, there was no literacy instructor, nor any 'teaching-learning materials'; the work involved building up and spreading the literacy activities of the group to all of its members. One example of the work of this project was the insertion of literacy development into the existing activities of the new Forest Users Groups, groups of local residents (literate and non-literate alike) which were being established by the Nepalese Government in association with international development agencies in an attempt to conserve forests and utilise them more effectively with local community participation. Equally literacy elements have been included in legal literacy programmes. The programme is regarded as being very successful and innovative and it has a high international reputation, but it is not clear how far it has changed the dominant practice of literacy teaching inside Nepal. One issue which this approach to the development and spread of literacy through the community raised is how to measure the impact of the project in literacy terms which the donors and government agencies (for example, the Ministry of Education's Bureau of Non-Formal Education) involved in the CLPN expected rather than in terms of forestry enhancement or the increased awareness of legal rights or in other developmental terms (CLPN; Kevin Lillis personal communication; Maddox personal communication).

Literacy for Livelihoods (publications and reports): it was in one sense out of the CLPN that the literacy for livelihoods approach emerged in a search to link literacy with poverty impact. This was first articulated at a ground-breaking regional conference held by DfID in December

2000 in Kathmandu (DfID Nepal 2000) and subsequently in a series of seminars and workshops and reports (CLPN 2001; DfID Nepal 2001). In March 2002, DFID brought out a briefing paper on Literacy for Poverty Reduction (DfID 2002). The paper is keenly aware that literacy needs to be seen not as a uniform set of skills but as multiple and life- (or livelihood-) related. Again, a one-size-fits-all approach is seen not to be effective with adults. It draws together adult learning principles with literacy lessons to offer guidance for future programmes.

India 2003: despite the Government of India's acceptance of the fact that the Total Literacy Mission to India is ended and a concentration on post-literacy and continuing education, there is an awareness that further provision for adult literacy learning is needed. DfID is assisting with the development of a large literacy programme to be launched in four states of India. Each state is designing its own format for a literacy learning programme, taking into account a livelihoods approach. The contract to assist them to design the project was awarded to the National Council for Applied Economic Research with substantial experience of training and development programmes for small enterprises rather than to an educational agency, an indication of DfID-India's intention to break away from the 'literacy as education' model into a literacy for livelihoods approach. The result is likely to be a hybrid form of programme, but all the four states are committed to abandon the 'one-size-fits-all' kind of literacy learning programme and to develop a demand-led wide range of different learning programmes with different formats of instruction, different training of trainers' programmes, and different teaching-learning materials to meet the very varied literacy needs to be found within each area (Sudarshan personal communication; Sinha personal communication).

Egypt 2000–04 (Juliet Millican, Dona Williams, Brian Street, Hamdi Qenawi, Aisha Sabri; reports of workshops): the literacy programme was first identified during two consultancies to Egypt in 1993–2004 at a time when the Egyptian government was launching its new General Authority on Literacy and Adult Education (GALAE) but the programme was not launched for some years after that. DfID has been supporting a government-run agency for developing the curriculum and teaching-learning materials for a nation-wide programme by concentrating on tutor training in two areas of Egypt. One aspect which seems to have been developed is the use of 'real texts' as in Nigeria for teaching and learning literacy, and the encouragement of story-telling by the participants as providing texts for literacy learning. Again there seems to be an intention to develop a diversity of programmes. However, it is not easy to say what experience has been gained from this very large programme, for despite enquiry, no documentation has been made available and no reports have been issued which may be cited; the staff involved which have been approached have been unable to help by indicating the key lessons available to DfID. This is symptomatic of many DfID literacy activities. Reports on individual activities such as training workshops are not widely shared and are not built upon by succeeding activities; and no overall report has been produced and made available. DfID should require such reports and circulate them widely.

South Africa: perhaps the strongest influence to be felt on DFID at the moment is South Africa. Several projects have been supported by the British Council and DFID in that country, including two major developments in recent years which are influencing policy and practice in adult literacy and basic education not only in the region but internationally:

The Social Uses of Literacy Project (Prinsloo and Breier 1996): the clearest conclusion from this large-scale research and development programme was that different people and different groups have different literacy activities (tasks and needs): for example, the literacy activities

of taxi drivers are quite specific to that livelihood. Secondly, that learning literacy skills on its own will not necessarily lead to empowerment: women who developed literacy were often still confined to traditional work roles or low pay; something more is needed. The implications for adult learning programmes have been drawn out from these studies into a concern for starting where the participants are, with their concerns, and moving beyond these into wider issues of socio-cultural development. But the impact of these studies on the ground would seem to have been more limited than their circulation internationally (K. Lillis, personal communication.).

Muthande Project (Older People's Literacy) once again no formal report is available and enquiries have failed to provide information as to the key lessons learned; but anecdotal information indicates that important experience was gained from this programme, especially relating to multilingual literacy learning and developing learning programmes relevant to the immediate concerns of the particular groups involved. In particular, adult learning theory was apparently employed in this project; it would be good if this experience could be shared.

The UNISA-SANLI Programme: the South Africa National Literacy Initiative (SANLI) is a programme on a very large scale. It stands near the centre of the continuum between the educational model and the livelihoods model. Thus, part of the programme consists of a common literacy learning programme; it employs examinations and qualifications of equivalency with formal schooling. However, it has drawn major elements from the literacy for livelihoods model within it. Thus it adopts a diversified and contextualised approach in which the participants along with their literacy teachers play a part in determining the kinds of activity and learning they engage in and the kinds of texts they work with. Here the unique characteristics of the South African situation need to be taken into consideration – the climate of 'newness' which is lacking in other countries; the size of the issue of creating learning programmes for huge swathes of the adult population denied access to schooling through apartheid; the willingness to take long-term planning of adult learning seriously, etc. Among the key elements of this programme are the following:

- In UNISA, SANLI has a strong basis in a non-governmental agency and it therefore adopts a relatively flexible approach while at the same time maintaining a strong EMIS (Education Management Information System) data collection.
- Because of this non-governmental feature, a strong sense of commitment can be seen throughout all levels of the programme which it is believed can be maintained as the programme gets to scale.
- Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) is not envisaged as a short-term campaign to 'mop up' the problem but as a long-term and on-going strategy to develop adult continuing and lifelong education. So the literacy instructors have a potential career in adult basic education of several years of employment unlike most other countries where adult literacy learning programmes stand divorced from further continuing or basic education programmes.
- Probably the most important and innovative element in this programme is the DFID-supported UNISA-based programme of pre-service training of the literacy instructors. This is longer and much more intensive than in all other countries, even though many of the trainees are already of a higher educational attainment level than literacy facilitators in most other countries – for SANLI is able to make higher requirements for its literacy facilitators than most other national programmes. This training of trainers uses distance learning methodologies and consists of an initial one-year course leading to certification followed by on-going support, provided by UNISA on a cascade model. No other country has been able to work on a basis of long-term pre-service training of literacy facilitators for long-term employment, although every country has acknowledged that the short term

nature of the training programmes for the difficult task of helping adults to learn literacy has been one of the major weaknesses of the programme. However, more literacy instructors have been trained than have been able to obtain employment in adult literacy programmes.

■ This training seeks to equip the literacy teachers both to use the common literacy textbook and also to supplement this with other texts drawn from the immediate locality which the teachers learn how to survey; so that learning groups are encouraged to use many texts, not just the literacy primer.

■ The instructors are also trained in the encouragement of the learning groups to engage in other developmental activities of their own choice, so that the range of activities in any one area is very wide and demand-led.

■ The flexibility required to manage such a system is provided by a strong sense of partnership between UNISA, DfID-South Africa and SANLI.

DfID's inputs to this programme (apart from funding) seems to have been relatively small, for the approach of linking adult literacy learning with development pre-dated DfID's assistance. The discourse of livelihoods however seems to have come from DfID (UNISA reports; McKay personal communication; Payne personal communication).

There has been other assistance by DfID to literacy in South Africa such as the North Cape Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme but detailed information on the outcomes of that is not available.

Assistance with programmes largely run by other agencies

At least two major programmes have been assisted by DfID.

Reflect: this began with support to the "PRA, Literacy and Empowerment" project 1993–05 in Uganda, Bangladesh and El Salvador, which piloted the use of PRA for literacy learning in three different contexts. This led to the development of the Reflect approach. Groups are formed or existing groups adopted, PRA is used with them to identify their local community development goals, literacy learning is provided for those in the group who need it, using not a textbook (primer) but flashcards with words chosen from the development tasks being undertaken. This programme has been further refined and manuals have been produced; it has spread to many countries and regions. Several of the learning/development groups do not proceed to literacy learning, preferring to concentrate on other developmental tasks; and the transfer of the literacy learning into regular daily use is not always apparent. DfID assisted the publication of the action research report on Reflect in 1996 as an ODA education paper (DfID 1996). DfID has also provided support to scale up Reflect in Bangladesh in two phases since 1997, and this is ongoing. DfID is also providing the support for work linking Reflect and Information Communication Technologies in India, Uganda and Burundi from 2003–05. The key lesson from Reflect seems to be that starting with the priorities of the learning group (which may not include literacy learning among their main goals) and using participatory approaches can lead to locally owned development activities.

Commonwealth of Learning's Literacy Projects (COLLIT): from 1999 to 2002, DfID funded a second project linking literacy with communication technologies in India and Zambia through the Commonwealth of Learning and local agencies (for example, in India, the Indira Gandhi National Open University and the M. S. Swaminathan Foundation have been involved with two

State Resource Centres. The report on the website (Collit 2002) indicates very substantial and somewhat unexpected results (e.g. local groups using ICT for many different purposes not originally envisaged) but the precarious nature of the funding means that such innovations can rarely be sustained.

Other forms of assistance have also been undertaken:

Global Monitoring Report of UNESCO: DfID has been assisting with this, and it is hoped that the experience gained by DfID will feed into the Global Monitoring Report of 2005 on literacy education.

Literacy Assessment and Mentoring Programme (LAMP): most recently DfID has become interested in supporting the UNESCO Institute of Statistics in their search for better forms of evaluation of literacy and literacy learning through the LAMP Project.

Uppingham seminars: DfID supported two major seminars in this series, one on Literacy and Livelihoods (2000) and the other of Measuring Literacy (2003). The reports of these are on the Uppingham Seminars website (www.uppinghamseminars.org). It is hoped that some follow up activities will develop from the second of these, including a DfID seminar.

Research

DfID has commissioned several pieces of research on literacy. Among these are the following:

- A technical note on women's literacy developed in 1991. This important paper sprang out of a linking between the literacy and gender sections of ODA (DfID 1991).

- Two reports on post-literacy 1994 and 1999: Local requests to DfID to fund the printing of post-literacy materials such as 'easy readers' for adults led to research that suggested such approaches compartmentalised literacy apart from daily life. The key aim of all literacy learning was to help the literacy learners to use literacy in their everyday life, so post-literacy would seem to be more effective if it concentrated on the existing and new uses of literacy in the immediate context of the literacy learners (DfID 1994 and DfID 1999).

DfID also contributed to the support for long term research on Reflect in Uganda and Bangladesh. This was published by DfID (DfID 2003).

One final note needs to be added. DfID in London has been promoting a series of Seminars at which research and practice can be discussed. These have been most valuable. But they are not widely known, they are not capitalised upon and their findings are not published.

Conclusions

Several points stand out from this survey.

The first is that this survey is only partial. There are other DfID-supported programmes and projects which include adult literacy in them which have not been identified. There are the many individual consultancies examining adult literacy as a possible field of assistance which

do not result in active assistance. *It would be valuable if DfID would commission a more comprehensive survey than this superficial overview.*

What is clear is that ODA/DfID has in fact built up a wide range of experience over many years in the area of adult literacy, probably one of the largest among donor bodies. (Of the others, IIZ-DVV (Germany) has worked in adult literacy for many years and publishes widely in this field; SIDA too has much experience and has consolidated its experience with several full-time staff employed solely on literacy, often with a strong gender component, and a strong publishing tradition; and CIDA too has a high reputation for adult literacy).

It is also noticeable that DfID is perceived by other countries as being in a leadership role in this sector. For example, DfID was the only bilateral agency invited to speak on adult literacy at the last Education for All (EFA) Working Group meeting in Paris in 2003. Some staff appear to be supportive of the current NGO challenges to the World Bank's reduction of Education for All to Universal Primary Education, and DfID assisted in the opening up of the Fast Track Initiative to EFA investments as achieved in the Oslo Donor Consortium meeting in November of 2003. There is a solid basis of interest, extensive experience and substantial concern to be built upon, if DfID wished to play a leadership role in adult literacy.

There is also considerable interest in literacy as a part of development. For example, it is reported that the research reports on literacy are amongst the most popular of all the research reports to be issued. They have contributed to DfID's reputation in this field.

However, there are already many signs of the loss of institutional memory, especially since the experience gained in one country or region is not disseminated to other countries or regions. Few of the above programmes have published critical reports indicating the lessons (both positive and negative) to be learned. Earlier reports are not made available to subsequent consultancies, and there is no centre inside DfID where such collective memory can be stored – unlike the livelihoods section of DfID. And this means there is little critical reflection on the gains from all this experience. For example, some DfID projects have acquired considerable international exposure far beyond their impact on the ground in the countries or regions in which they are located. Such assessments can only be taken by a focal point which brings together the very valuable experience gained over so many years.

The following is recommended:

- that DfID should fund a comprehensive review of its programmes rather than this partial and impressionistic one and publish its findings as a major research report; and
- that it should create either within itself or in association with another body a focal point where the experience gained from literacy in development can be accumulated, reviewed and made available.

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Research in the Community Literacy Project in Nepal: an historical snapshot [4]

Roshan Chitrakar

Background

The Community Literacy Project in Nepal (CLPN) attempts to promote literacy among community group members by being responsive to their literacy needs. Tailor-made materials formed the basis for learning and using literacy in their day-to-day life. The project strategies included development of local human resources with the capacity to study and analyse the context of their affiliated groups and communities, identify literacy use, practices and related issues and most importantly the capacity to develop and implement creative literacy initiatives for the groups. They have been trained to identify, adopt or develop literacy learning materials that suit the group needs. Participating organisations are encouraged to carry out a critical analysis of their own institutional context, structure and practices, particularly from the point of view of gender sensitivity and the social inclusion of deprived and disadvantaged groups. A system of participatory monitoring and evaluation also forms an important aspect of the implementation of the literacy initiatives.

The recently completed series of review workshops revealed that:

- most of the participating NGOs have been reported by the groups and the facilitators that literacy learning using tailor-made materials (TMM) helped them to be able to learn and use literacy (e.g. the number of semi literate group members writing minutes of group meeting has increased in most groups; some non literate women besides reading/writing group related words wanted to learn writing letters or switch to higher level TMM);
- accomplishing groups' literacy tasks, e.g. writing of minutes, account keeping, understanding forest constitutions, writing applications or filling up forms in the office of the local government (such as citizenship certificate, land documents, etc.), contributing to local publications etc. and enhancing access to the contents of these materials by all (including the non literate participants) have been improved as a result of either targeted literacy learning or conscious literacy mediation (through, e.g. peer teaching or literacy support, coaching, mentoring, scribing and so on);
- discrimination based on caste and gender has reduced as a result of the integration of literacy initiatives in the social justice movement of some of the partner organisations; and
- semi-literate people (mostly women) mobilised for local good governance: they learned legal literacy and started helping community people with literacy tasks as community literacy scribes in local village development committees or municipality (in Dhankuta most of the CLPN trained scribes successfully completed the test and became certified scribes).

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4. This paper presents an overall reflection and general status of the project as it approaches to its final stage. The project will be concluded in six-month time – i.e. in 31 July, 2004. This is only a draft and should be used only for discussion purpose. It will not be appropriate to quote from this write up at this stage.

Research work in CLPN

CLPN has come a long way to be able to make whatever impact it has made currently. Interesting and varying research practices[5] have informed CLPN's approach to literacy programme development and implementation. Research studies have been conducted at least in three distinct ways since the implementation began in September 1998. It may be worthwhile to summarise the different approaches to research and draw interesting lessons. It made sense to me to have categorised the CLPN research according to the project timeline.

Initial stage (1998–2001)
Substantial time (September 1998–April 1999) was spent carrying out the initial two baseline studies in the communities of Dhankuta and Dhanusha districts where other development works were already on-going, e.g. community forestry, micro finance, or health related programmes. The main objective of the study was to develop an understanding of the literacy practices as to how literacy was linked to people's daily life. The field study was rigorous and the preparation of the report took a long time. The report presented a comprehensive ethnographic account of the social context and how literacy is linked with it. However, what it undermined was the need for teaching and promoting literacy among the community people. There was no recommendation at all for literacy acquisition or learning for community people. The highlights were on terms like literacy support, e.g. for improving written text (e.g. public newspapers displayed on walls, Forest Users' Group written documents, formats used in micro finance groups and health record forms) in order to enhance access of people to such materials and also to improve local communication practices. The baseline study recommended that the project should carry out further focused research on literacy needs and aspirations of women's groups and partner organisations.

Although it was not possible for the baseline study to propose a definite pedagogical process for literacy promotion, the spending of more than 50 per cent project time was felt by the on-lookers to be too much for the project to dwell mostly on research work and suggest further research without making a concrete headway towards promoting people's literacy status. The project was criticised for being more of a research or social mobilisation project. The rich and in-depth ethnographic baseline study needed to be accompanied by the indication that the target groups started getting the benefits. A clear direction toward this was actually lacking. In this sense the project in fact deserved to be criticised.

To implement community literacy programmes after the baseline study, we organised group facilitation training and supported the partner NGOs to follow up group facilitation activities – not much on promoting the literacy of the group members. We also organised the training (on illustration and visuals) for wall newspaper producers to help them with skills to improve the access of non and semi literate people to the contents of wall newspapers.

Issues and lessons
The project's ethnographic approach to the baseline study demanded academic research competency which was fulfilled largely by the involvement of overseas experts and to some extent the project co-ordinator. Attempts to transfer the skill was not successful as the need to fulfil the expected quality of the research process and product was typical of university-type

5. There could have been lack of academic rigor in some of such research activities as the project faced with the challenge of training and enabling literacy workers who were thus far heavily influenced by the traditional and rather deficit and autonomous model of literacy interventions.

academic work which lacked the sensitivity towards the local capacity. This raised the serious issue related to the ownership of the whole research process and its product. In retrospect I feel that we could have worked with the partner organisations to help them identify literacy issues in the overall social context without making the research a lengthy academic exercise and help them get on with appropriate literacy support programmes. We were too concerned about the quality and technical aspects of the baseline study report which in fact led the project to be unproductive in terms of developing creative literacy initiatives.

Mid-term efforts towards consolidation (2001–02)
It was only after the emergence of a conceptual model based on the understanding of the simultaneous interplay of literacy acquisition and use that the models of community literacy support began to take concrete course. In fact, there were two ways that came to the fore and could be put to use to address the literacy needs. To wit, a need was felt for conceptualising a tailor-made curriculum, particularly in livelihoods related sectors. Action research in specific groups and communities was initiated that led to the development of TMM.

The action research process involved formation of core research team consisting of five–six members representing partner NGO, group facilitator and CLPN staff who were primarily responsible for meeting regularly and compiling the tailor-made material as it progressed. In a wider group of the same stakeholders group-literacy-tasks were identified and the needs and ways to teach literacy related to these tasks were discussed. Actual teaching of literacy related to group tasks also took place. Contents and illustrations for the drafting of the TMM were decided based on these activities. The partner NGO provided feedback on the draft after they reviewed it. Then the TMMs were field tested and evaluated. The first such materials developed were in the field of micro-finance groups and vegetable producers groups run by women in Dhankuta.

The community literacy project documented the whole process of developing the set of tailor-made materials which eventually led to the development of a set of training materials (baseline or pre-TMM research, TMM implementation, revision or adaptation, evaluation). A number of training programmes for trainers from partner organisations and interested development programme organisers were conducted. The TMMs produced are made available in CD-ROM format so that the process of revising and adapting them in new contexts becomes convenient and simple.

Issues and lessons
The review of TMMs carried out by Shrestha and Maddox[6] in Bhojpuri speaking communities pointed out some critical issues. The TMMs specifically on the Savings and Credit group were not deemed useful by the participants, which proved that the training for trainers was not effective. This in turn led to the ineffective adaptation of the TMMs in a new context (different language group). The process of skill transfer is, therefore, not simple.

The review also noted some management issues pertaining to the lack of proper implementation of TMMs. Even more alarming was the observation that the improper management system invited corruption – a highly sensitive issue especially in the present conflict situation. The management and programme support problems cited were lack of field supervision, support and mobilisation, quality control in terms of TMM reproduction, top-

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6. Shresth, B & Maddox, B (2003), Summary note on A Review of TMM Impacts in Bhojpuri Areas of Rupandehi.

down needs assessment and failure of the programme to provide six months of tuition.

Although the reviewers attributed these problems to the poor programme management system, we also need to reflect on the extent to which the TMM development process promoted the sense of ownership. The process might have failed to encourage participants to consider the analysis of their wider social and institutional context in which such materials were developed and implemented. A participatory review and analysis of institutional arrangements, values and principles could have been an integral part of the development or adaptation of TMMs. Participatory monitoring and evaluation rather than a centrally controlled monitoring system could have complemented the spirit of TMM process.

The review by Shrestha and Maddox also pointed out that the participating NGOs were engaged in gender-biased practices that discouraged women from taking on new roles in the groups. However, this was an issue that the NGOs themselves should have picked up and addressed appropriately. The reason why this was not the case could again be CLP's weakness of lack of consideration of wider social issues while organising the TMM teacher training.

The field observation of the implementation of TMMs by CLP colleagues also revealed that the community literacy project took a total turn from the earlier social mobilisation approach to wholly literacy teaching approach. The issue should not have been "either social mobilisation or literacy". Rather we should have looked at the possibility of a balanced mix of both.

Quick and issue-focused research (preferably ethnographically informed) like the one Shrestha and Maddox carried out in Rupandehi seemed to provide important feedback. Therefore, more research must be carried out within a project like the community literacy project, but a conscious effort must also be made to find the required human resources locally.

Scale up phase (2002–04)
During this phase the project's coverage increased at least five-fold. A total of 24 districts now implement a community literacy project. In 12 districts CLP's partner organisations have creatively integrated social literacy activities in their programmes (e.g. micro finance, vegetable production, forestry, honey farming, pig or goat raising, social justice movement, local governance and so on). In another 12 districts, the women's education and income generating programmes of the Non Formal Education Centre have integrated a community literacy approach; They adopt or develop and use tailor-made materials for targeted literacy learning or mediation.

One of the critical aspects for an effective integration of a community literacy approach is the extent to which local capacity is available to facilitate the process of inquiring into the group literacy tasks and practices. The integration cannot be sustained if local stakeholders are required to depend on outside expertise for this purpose. The community literacy project therefore emphasised on development of local resource people who could support organisations and facilitators specifically to map out the social context in which the groups operate and to analyse the context as to what and how literacy is embedded in it. The analysis and understanding of embedded literacy in the social context informs the process of group facilitation so that it adopts appropriate literacy mediation or makes use of tailor-made materials for literacy learning by identifying, adapting or developing appropriate materials. About 24 such resource people have been trained who have started their support locally.

Obviously they should be allowed an initial period before their services could be adequately refined.

Issues and lessons
The key issue during this phase is the extent to which we have been able to ensure capacity growth of the local resource persons of community literacy. The capacity to do social mapping and context analysis that is informed by the principles of ethnography is critical. The challenge is to see that the skill of inquiring into the social context and the embedded literacy is effectively transferred to the resource persons. Continuity of support and follow- up training will be required for sufficient time frame which should definitely go beyond the current project period.

The project's emphasis on participatory monitoring and evaluation is a challenging task for the participating NGOs and the group facilitators especially as the practice so far had been for them to provide information on standard format without claiming its ownership. Building local capacity in this regard has been a challenging but important task for CLP. However, there has been visible progress that more and more groups monitor their own progress and determine as to why, what and how their group literacy issues should be tackled.

Final point – sustaining the approach
Sustaining the results of the project is all that is critical at this juncture. The project has taken a strategic approach to ensure this. The project supported the establishment of networks of literacy workers and development organisations both at local and central levels. Organised networks of civil society with government backing open up the possibility for the sustained mobilisation of the human and material resources developed during the implementation of the community literacy project. It can be expected that the sustained use of the community literacy products will certainly ensure social inclusion and promote community capacity required for local good governance and community development.

CLP has provided alternatives for the current constraints of the Non-formal Education Centre's literacy programmes: e.g. the estimated 40 per cent drop out in the current literacy classes will no longer continue if literacy learning and support programmes are carried out in the workplace rather than in a class disconnected with the real-life context. Similarly, the literacy learning and support materials are produced and used to suit the local context – use of TMMs. Community groups are stronger and much empowered as literacy needs for better functioning of their internal activities and promoting equity within the groups and between them and outside social context have been fulfilled through appropriate support mechanisms at the local levels.

The Ministry of Education and Sports Non-formal Education Centre is now a strong counterpart and is committed to mainstreaming the products and methods developed by the project. Discussions with government partners indicate that the government may be willing to link this type of literacy endeavour with the overall framework of EFA (Education for All) by drawing on the resources of the multi-donor basket funds. The potential for major reform in the field of literacy through a coordinated links between the government and civil society organisations is well realised. The authorities at both local and central levels are convinced that the project has made a good impact on the community lives and livelihoods. The NFEC authority is convinced that policies of literacy and non-formal education should be informed by the knowledge generated at the field level. Sustained consolidation of such a knowledge base will be possible through the formation and effective functioning of the networks of literacy workers and organisations.

The project is coming to an end in July 2004. Although the project has presented and activated some proactive initiatives as outlined above, there still is the danger that these initiatives can fade away over time if they do not become a priority literacy programme for the government in which the critical role of civil society is acknowledged and retained. The process of mainstreaming the project learning should be a longer term goal. Hence it will not be wise for the donor and the Project Steering Committee to off load the project products and knowledge-base entirely on to the government and expect that the approach will be naturally mainstreamed. The least that the donor can ensure is provision of adequate reserve funds for the literacy network to mobilise as and when studies of literacy practices in particular social context, on-the-spot support to practitioners, sharing of experiences and linkages need to be strengthened. The review of the networks' tasks, progress made and the subsequent impacts on the lives of the local people in the light of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals should provide sufficient ground to stretch the support of such funds for the desired number of years.

DfID, communication, literacies and development

Lindsay Howard

Introduction

Literacy is, and has been for decades, one of the key items on the aid agenda of international development agencies; and DfID is no exception. However, despite local, national and international efforts, figures from the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations (UN) agencies still show that approximately one fifth of the world's population is not literate. Why are international investments in literacy development apparently providing little in way of return? Perhaps such an inquiry should be prefaced with different, more probing questions: Whose view of literacy is being promoted? Is this singular global literacy ('the autonomous model' Street 1995) what the so-called 'illiterate' or marginalised communities need or even want? Are the international development agencies applying the lessons learned from the evaluations of their multi-dollar investments which consistently indicate that success lies with addressing diversity and meeting varied regional and social group's needs in terms of literacy use in their daily lives.

DfID, international initiatives and adult literacy

Since the Education For All (EFA) Conference at Jomtien 1990, governments, international agencies and non-governmental organisations have aligned themselves to the concept of defining human development goals with specific time frames and indicators. In September 1999, the WB and the International Monetary Fund decided that participatory strategies carried out by countries to reduce poverty should serve as a basis for foreign aid and debt relief. This approach led to the development of national Poverty Reduction Strategy papers which also develop indicators with time frames and statistical measurements of progress.

Where is adult literacy development in the web of targets within targets? Two of the six EFA goals (1990) make explicit reference:

i   to achieve a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women (EFA 4); and

ii   to ensure excellence in all aspects of the quality of education so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. (EFA 6).

However, in the decade between Jomtien and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), which reaffirmed the six EFA goals, the international community focused major education funding on universal primary education and literacy, by default, within formal primary schooling. This served to divert attention from the "basic learning needs of youth and adults" which the EFA Forum 1990 highlight as "diverse and should be met through a variety of delivery systems", (emphasis not in original).

In September 2000, world governments signed up to the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) whose education focus remained on achieving universal primary education. Only one

indicator relates to literacy: measurement of the literacy rate of 15–24 year olds, the other two indicators relate to measuring the net enrolment and the Grade 5 completion rates. There is no explicit reference to adult literacy in any of the eight goals despite links between female adult literacy levels and reductions in child mortality, mother and child health and gender equity. In the absence of a clear relationship between the EFA goals and MDGs there is a potential danger that the MDGs will supercede the EFA goals.

The lack of synergy between EFA and the MDGs may have stimulated the UN to declare a Literacy Decade in February 2003. "... universal literacy calls not only for more and better efforts but for renewed political will and for doing things differently at all levels: locally, nationally and internationally" (UNESCO 2001:2) and "Literacy is central to all levels of education, especially basic education, through all delivery modes – formal, non-formal and informal." (UN 2002:4) Despite the specific reference to basic education, the priority groups listed are the non-literate youth and adults, especially women, out of school children, and children who may attend school but receive a poor quality or fragmented education. Although this may be an attempt to redress the balance, large development agencies, like DfID are politically committed to achieving the MDGs and it is difficult to understand how they could allocate sufficient resources to literacy programmes that have no direct inference to an MDG.

Literacy and development

DfID is an international development agency whose overall aim is, as stated in two White Papers, to eliminate poverty through the achievement of the MDGs.[7] Whether development is interpreted as increased economic growth or of meeting human needs, education has a role. The former group's view of education in development is: education ensures literacy and literacy ensures development ('autonomous' education model) while the human needs' view is that education, including literacy, enhances the ability of the poor to meet their basic needs ('ideological' social model). The prominent role given to literacy, means it has become a magic wand allegedly capable of: reducing poverty; empowering people, especially marginalised females; providing access to human rights; increasing self esteem and improving access to education, information and decision making processes.

Literacy: singular or plural?

Over the decade, the concept of literacy has expanded and stretched to serve different political, social and economic agendas. There is a shift in the discourse of development agencies, away from the autonomous model that posits literacy as neutral and universal, a set of mechanical encoding and decoding skills that can be acquired in classrooms; This is changing to a view of literacy as a social practice that recognises that the ways in which people engage in different reading and writing tasks are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being. Literacy, in this view, is thus always contested and integral to a particular world view because it is learned through use and is therefore always a social act. (Street, 2001:7).

The debate around literacy, development and poverty reduction ensues with new queries: Is literacy an essential pre-requisite for development? What does it mean to be literate today?

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7. The new Secretary State, Hillary Benn has just reconfirmed this vow. (Intranet communication February 2004).

Are people literate if they can read the Bible in Chi-tumbuka, a local language of Malawi? Can literacy empower people if they are not literate in the language of power and/or are not exposed to the critical dimension of literacy learning? (Rogers 2002: 4; Howard 2003a).

DfID's adult literacy initiatives: singular or plural approach?

Tracking DfID's major literacy initiatives over the past 25 years, Rogers (2003) indicates how programmes reflect the organisation's shift in policy towards adult literacy development. For example, the majority of DfID's literacy experiences,[8] until 1990 related to adult literacy classes with primers based on the 'educational' or autonomous approach to literacy learning. The shift towards Literacies for Livelihoods is visible through initiatives over the decade:

Time	Country	Description	Lessons learned	Comments
1990	Ghana	Adult literacy programme in 15 local languages	Materials prepared in English or a national language cannot be made relevant to another cultural group through translation.	If locally generated materials are essential for local achievement, what does this mean for (inter)national publishers & booksellers?
1990	Nigeria Community-Focused Adult Literacy Program	Small projects each located in a different cultural and linguistic contexts with different experiences of education.This programme looked specifically to the New Literacy Studies[9] & the Reflect approach then being trialled[10].	■ the importance of local trainers ■ learner participation in the decision-making process of content and method ■ the acceptance of diversity	DFID milestone: the education approach to literacy learning gave way to a new method: Learner Oriented Community Adult Literacy (LOCAL) which drew on the cultural traditions of the community to address the literacy and numeracy skills each group required for their daily lives.
1994	South Africa	UNISA/SANLI[11] highly diversified & contextualised approach. Participants and literacy teachers together determine the learning in which they will engage and the texts with which they work.	■ Long-term training of literacy facilitators for the Adult Basic Education program ■ Long-term strategy for ABET for life-long education	Lies midway on the continuum between the educational and livelihoods approaches to literacy learning.

8. 1980s Kenya: National Adult Literacy Programme is a prime example.
9. Street 1995.
10. Cottingham and Archer 1996.
11. UNISA is a non governmental agency that provides qualifications through distance education programmes in South Africa and SANLI is the South African National Literacy Initiative.

1996	South Africa	Social uses of literacy A large-scale of the different social groups in independent South Africa.	■ different people and different groups engage in different literacy practices and their literacy needs are tied to those practices. ■ the development of literacy skills does not equate with empowerment: more is required.	Highlighted that literacy uses of a Cape Town taxi driver are very different from those of a rural midwife in the Eastern Cape. Courses need to be structured to meet different needs.
1997–2003	Nepal	Community Literacies Project (CLPN) The goal was to "enhance communicative practices of disadvantaged groups by linking literacy learning to existing literacy practices in local communities and people's own motivations for learning."[12]	■ Need to resolve how to measure the expected literacy outcomes, as distinct from the livelihoods' enhancement, to meet the agreed indicators of the MDGs.	CLPN's question "*Literacy for What?*" prompted DFID to talk of 'Literacy for Livelihoods'. Hailed as a major milestone but unresolved issue of measurement brought closure to the program that was working with a million plus people.
2003 on	India	National Literacy Mission. It grew out of CLPN and DfID supports the work in four states and all are committed to developing a demand-led, wide range of different learning programmes.	Ongoing.	Contract for project design was awarded to a non-educational agency: seen as a move to the Literacy for Livelihoods approach.

DfID and the role of literacy in livelihoods

DfID produced a background briefing paper entitled "Improving Livelihoods for the Poor: the role of literacy" (2002) as a result of two key DfID conferences on Literacy that can be directly traced to CLPN: Kathmandu 2000 and Harare 2001. The paper reflects the shifting discourse in that it waves the magic wand both for the concept of single literacy "Literacy skills provide a way out of the poverty trap." (DfID 2002:1) and multi-literacies "...enable marginalised communities to access not only the information they need, but also the different types of literacies that can enhance their education, social and economic well-being so that they benefit from a knowledge based economy that characterises an increasingly globalised world" (DfID 2002:2). However, the paper does not problematise the rhetorici.e. Questions of whose knowledge, whose language and literacies are not addressed, and we must now ask ourselves whether we have internalised the rhetoric to such an extent that we no longer "hear" it? There is also an implicit, continuing focus on the stakeholders reading/receiving texts as more important than writing/producing their own texts; this is a focus that in central Africa is often attributed to the missionary influence: "If people can write they can write their own things down; if they can read they can only read what others have written." (Clammer 1976).

The briefing paper's major contribution has been to provide a set of core principles that highlight the need for a multi-dimensional, cross-sectoral approach for integrating literacy

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12. Maddox(2001).

into future DFID programmes. These are to:

- respond to demands of the poor through consultation to discover what and how they want to learn;
- listen to the voices of the poor and contextualise literacy tasks within their daily lives and aspirations;
- place more emphasis on locally produced materials;
- ensure better trained facilitators;
- build on strengths of what people already know and do;
- increase the quantity and quality of support at every stage;
- ensure that the poorest: the women, the orphans, the vulnerable are reached;
- integrate literacy with other development activities: literacy comes second;
- celebrate diversity in action: recognise lives and livelihoods are complex and dynamic; and
- abandon one size fits all: embrace different programmes for different people for different purposes.

However, despite the discourse, the action of the WB, DfID and UNESCO [13] still seems located within an individual, technical view of literacy. Indeed, renewed demands for quantitative measurement of literacy for international comparison assumes that literacy skills can be separated from social practice without consideration of purpose, language and competence. (Kell and Rogers 2003). If DfID's discourse is 'online' then what stops the action? Is it only the apparent rigid adherence to economic focused, evidence based indicators of success required to access funds for achieving global targets? Or is "the looking backwards and forwards"[14] a timely warning that we may be throwing out the baby with the bath water? Does defining literacy as situated social practice necessarily mean its removal from the education arena? Do evaluations not rather point to a removal from the *western schooled education* arena: and re-focus on using the indigenous what, how and where for building literate environments?

Recognition that the motivation, interest, even need for literacy lies within different groups' social practices does not mean that they do not have to *acquire* certain skills/competences to perform in literate ways. Furthermore, teaching and learning literacy only through existing literacy practices will not transform or empower people; they also need a critical dimension and this cannot be left to osmosis. People learn best when supported by more knowledgeable others.

Another key question is how far are international development agencies aware that they could use their core business, communication, as a vehicle for building literate communities within different target groups? However if Hashemi's claim (1995:107) is still valid that they "have moved to the point of participatory consultation in designing their work but still retain control over the parameters of interaction" and have "never had a sustained faith in the ability of the poor to bring about their own transformation", then is this another reason for the reluctance to shift from teaching mechanical skills and the literacy first approach?

The remainder of the paper looks at DfID's opportunities for adult literacy enhancement within the situated social context of Malawi with examples from the sectors of Sustained Livelihoods (SL), Social Security and Justice (SSAJ) and Education and makes

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13. "Literacy is no longer seen as a singular concept but rather as plural 'literacies'...within any community there will be a range of Literacies; understanding what these are, and how they are structured, is important for negotiating whether and how literacy may be acquired". UNESCO Global Monitoring Report 2002:60.
14. Title of paper by V Mackay at Literacy for Empowerment Conference Harare, Zimbabwe September 2001.

recommendations for DfID and other agencies in future.

DfID's core business, in pursuit of the achievement of MDGs, in Malawi, is communication. It:

■ transmits and receives a wide range of diverse messages to different stakeholder groups;
■ engages in participatory grass roots activities that enable the key stakeholder group to be heard and to exercise their rights of accountability; and
■ ensures information exchange within and across stakeholder groups.

DfID's key stakeholder group is civil society in general, but especially the poor, vulnerable, orphans, marginalised, disabled, etc. in accordance with the global MDGs and the national Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans. Four other target groups are identified as important whose roles are largely to sanction or facilitate the work at the different levels. These are:

■ senior management personnel in relevant national ministries, organisations and institutions;
■ local or regional-based development agencies, NGOs, foreign personnel, consultants;
■ host country nationals often in administrative support roles; and
■ DfID personnel working in the country, the region and UK .

However, the key target group is the very group who are not likely to be literate and if the conclusion reached by Rogers et al. (2003), in a Malawi Literacy Survey, is accepted, then much of the communication excludes 50 per cent of the population. Furthermore, for all target groups except those in the last category, English is a second, third or even foreign language and as accessing or making meaning depends on the interplay of several factors (the format, the subject matter, the cultural relevance, the world knowledge and the receiver's personal experiences), the proposition, the intention and the activation of appropriate 'scripts' may not be possible. Continued failure to make sense is likely to alienate the group from engaging fully, or at all, with that source. People always have choices about what to see, read, interpret, write, act upon, forget or ignore!

DfID, like other development agencies, in communication with their key stakeholders tends to:

■ select text over utterance;
■ select English in preference to local languages for printed texts[15];
■ be unaware of the need for different modes of communication for different groups;
■ assume visual texts communicate better in non-literate communities;
■ assume translations from English to a national language meet all local needs;
■ communicate as if literacy were neutral and universal;
■ prefer to use computer generated texts whenever possible to expand their own competences and gain prestige; and
■ accept that achievements/outcomes will always be based on empirical evidence that is best measured in statistical terms.
   (Mbunda 1997:183 ; Roy-Campbell 1998:16; Brock-Utne 2000).

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15. In Malawi few, if any, texts from other DfID sectors have been translated into a local language; not even Chichewa, the other official language with English.

Why?

Print and increasingly graphic technology is the mode through which DfID personnel are educated; it is internalised as the way of learning and is the highest valued mode for communication in western societies. Furthermore, DfID personnel are required to operate through these modes for purposes of record keeping, evidence of performance, as well as to ensure accuracy and consistency of message. In Malawi, English is one of the two national languages, arguably with higher status as an international language, it is the mother tongue of DfID personnel. This means it is the vehicle through which they encode their culture and identity and through which they process information and acquire knowledge. This puts DfID in a strong position for negotiating and managing partnerships for those who hold the word, hold the power.

The emphasis on goal achievement measured via international quantitative indicators means that, for Africa, external/western standards take precedence over national/local standards which means western language is used for record keeping and reporting.

Print and visual communication

In the west, the roles of distribution between language and image are changing. Print alone used to carry the message. This closed authoritarian style implicitly argued for uniformity: all 'received the same accurate message'. Although print still carried the message it was illustrated by a visual and then the visual carried the message and the print acted as commentary till finally there is visual only: one image, from which different verbal messages can be derived. Each shift is a different form of social control, for those who use the valued means of communication competently have power. Different texts, just like different languages, impact on the formation of the reader's subjectivity and identity as well as on their understanding of how to 'read' a text as different 'readers' are habituated to different 'reader-friendly' practices.

As print becomes increasingly subservient to image, we attend to words as they relate to images. (Kress 2001; Kress & Leeuwen 1996). Learners need to know that symbols (written marks) only have meaning when they can interpret the domain[16] which involves critical thinking, observing, analysing, synthesising, problem-solving, hypothesising and evaluating. Each domain has a design genre that the linguistic social group uses, not only to give messages in appropriate ways, but also to gain symbolic capital or prestige. However, learners have to want to engage in extended practice in the domain so that they can grow into the new socially situated identity because they see it as beneficial to themselves. The language used to master the domain must be the language of the domain. To become a competent practitioner learners must be exposed and socialised into the domain as used and valued by its gatekeepers.

In Africa, through western education systems, western forms of verbal and visual communication predominate and are being reinforced as a result of the global power of western mass media and are exerting a 'normalising' influence on visual communication across the world. Therefore, a decision to enhance literacy through the use of literacies in

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16. Domain is used loosely here as the site/area of the discourse.

people's daily lives must take into consideration the complexities which relate to the above, in terms of which language for literacy is in demand, and consequently, which culture. If it is literacy in a local language, can this be economically, politically and culturally supported by international agencies and if literacy in English, how can these shifting means of communication be harnessed for effective use in the predominately oral cultures of the poor in Malawi?

Making meaning across cultures

Whatever language and whether print or visual, problems accrue with texts if the content is too deep, insufficient or excessive and when it is developed, for example, at central headquarters or in culturally different environments or in urban or academic settings by mainly educated males for interaction with rural poor/marginalised females. Then, if texts are not mediated, especially in cross-cultural environments, they can be misinterpreted at many levels. For example, the format may be unfamiliar, the intended help culturally alien or the graphics misinterpreted or there is a cultural difference in receipt of message It is worth noting that most texts combine print and visuals and difficulties tend to accumulate with texts that go to the stakeholder group so perhaps there should be more texts coming in for DfID's response: demand not supply-led.

Implications

How then should DfID and other development agencies approach adult literacy? What should adult literacy programmes include? Should communities develop ways to talk about visual texts and should non-western communities develop ways to talk about western texts? What should be taught as writing? Should all programmes contain critical literacy dimensions? Are we in danger of moving to a uniformity of diversity? What social changes are occurring: can we understand them in relation to larger social, economic and technological changes in the west and what are the implications for Malawi?

Recommendations for development of literate environments

As social acts, programmes should:

- combine negotiated livelihoods content with literacy/numeracy content derived from, but not limited to, the livelihoods content and the social context;
- ensure cadres of instructors are trained in both livelihoods and literacy or engage two cadres to complement one another;
- use active, participatory instruction that includes a critical dimension to literacy learning and employs androgogy;
- assess what is needed to ensure an environment that enables training in a livelihood to result in higher productivity, incomes and/or well-being;
- conduct qualitative and quantitative research and use the evidence for decision-making for improvement;
- work with established groups of people that share a common purpose, build from the grass roots up to enhance the voice of the poor; and
- ensure immediate, clear and concrete benefits for engagement.

Implications for development agencies and policy makers

■ Commission ethnographic surveys to map traditional means of communication and incorporate use into developmental literacy activities.
■ Be demand-led: LISTEN to what the people want literacy for and in which languages, when ACCEPT then SUPPORT to reach demand.
■ Recognise multiple languages, literacies and scripts to meet current & future needs of individuals, groups and institutions.
■ Design, implement and evaluate programmes that marry theory with practice, i.e. use knowledge about how adults learn and communicate in general and specific contexts.
■ Use traditional non-literate communication strategies and combine with modern strategies to achieve two-way communication with the key target groups.
■ Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems by incorporating qualitative and quantitative approaches. Write literacy indicators in ways that measure the use of literacy skills in daily life such as those being developed to measure poverty in local environments.
■ Incorporate a literacy strategy into national and local planning frameworks.
■ Ensure sustainable budgets over realistic time frames.
■ Encourage local participatory methodologies for literacy integrated programmes that recognise power operates at all levels through networks (Foucault 1980:98).
■ Support the development of locally generated materials (LGMs) that incorporate indigenous knowledge and indigenous ways of doing (Howard 2003) and train local facilitators in their use.
■ Provide a professional development programme in language, literacy and communications as a priority for all DfID staff.

Where from here?

■ " ...[we] should provide assistance to all those who are having difficulties with the practice of literacy in real situations" (DfID 1999:82). However, five years on DfID is even more entangled in the web of targets within targets and the tension between policy formulation and delivery on the ground at grass roots level. Are development agencies, like DfID, "talking the talk but failing to walk the walk"? But can we walk the walk if we have not accessed enough of the critical information for decision making: I believe that the political shift away from promoting and funding large English language programmes for development[17] was a good move, however, DfID policy still tends to sway towards development/economic growth being integrally linked to western knowledge and ways of doing through western language. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be enough professional, linguistic understanding or the motivation for diverse strategies to support the building of an indigenous knowledge base, ways of doing through local/national languages as the foundation stone. I conclude with various voices from the African development partnership that bear witness to where we are:

African voice

> "As long as African countries continue to educate the continent's future leaders primarily through foreign languages, they will remain dependent. Education for liberation and self reliance must begin with languages that do not impede the acquisition of knowledge." (Roy-Campbell 1998:16).

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17. Clare Short made this break when she became Secretary of State for International Development (1994).

DfID voice

"…enable marginalised communities to access not only the information they need, but also the different types of literacies that can enhance their education, social and economic well-being so that they benefit from a knowledge based economy that characterises an increasingly globalised world" (DfID Briefing paper 2002:2).

Independent researcher voice

Will cultural conditionality which is already implicit in much donor funding become as explicit in the next decade as the economic and political conditionality has become in the eighties and early nineties? If so how will this prejudice the development of local cultures that the poor and the marginalised bring from their communities? (Little 1992:90).

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Section 3

The Reflect approach to adult literacy in developing countries

3.1

Adapting "Reflect" to regenerate ESOL in the UK
David Archer

This short article outlines how the Reflect approach to adult learning offers a way of strengthening and expanding English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) practice in the UK. Reflect can play a key role in linking the learning of ESOL to wider processes of social integration and community cohesion. The Reflect ESOL process will give refugees, asylum seekers and other marginalised groups a greater voice in their local community, challenging stereotypes, confronting social exclusion, racism and isolation. Learners will gain English language skills alongside other skills, enabling them to participate in the national economy, become active citizens and access their basic rights and entitlements.

Although literacy and language skills are important, they alone will not change people's lives. Refugees face a multitude of barriers and prejudices in accessing services and meeting their daily needs in an unfamiliar environment. They need to know how to access and use information, not just how to read it. They need to develop more than just linguistic confidence to deal with the complex power dynamics around certain situations. They should feel as entitled as anyone else to speak out where their rights are abused – as entitled as anyone to address problems for themselves and to propose their own solutions.

The adaptation of Reflect to ESOL in the UK is at an early stage but a strategic partnership is now being forged between ActionAid, the Refugee Council, the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education and a wide range of ESOL providers (whether refugee community groups or colleges).

Space for Reflect within current ESOL policy and practice

The introduction of a national core curriculum on ESOL in the UK gives rise to new opportunities for those involved in ESOL learning. Among other things, the curriculum hopes to address participants' short-term goals, their education and employment aspirations, their trauma and personal learning difficulties. The policy emphasises a learner-centred approach to ESOL. Providers and teachers are expected to be aware of the range of needs, skills and aspirations that each learner has and the implications of these for the learning process.

Reflect offers a practical and proven way of achieving this. By addressing the existing power dynamics between the teacher and the participants, Reflect can enable participants to use their knowledge, skills and creativity to their full extent. Materials recently produced by DfES for ESOL are very visual and this makes them learner friendly, but they are still prescriptive.

Reflect takes this one step further through enabling participants to develop their own rich visual materials related to their own immediate experiences. By linking language learning to the analysis of broader issues in learners lives Reflect can help break down the walls of the classroom, helping participants to develop and strengthen their language skills through practical use.

What is Reflect?

Reflect is an innovative approach to adult learning and social change that evolved from practice in developing countries. It is now used by over 350 organisations in more than 60 countries, in each case adapted to the unique local context. Awarded the UN International Literacy Prize in 2003, the approach challenges teacher or text-driven work, placing learners at the centre of their own process. It links the systematic learning of communication skills, to an individual and group process of empowerment and action.

Reflect draws on a range of participatory methodologies with the aim of improving the meaningful participation of people in their lives through strengthening their capacity to communicate – using whatever communication means are most appropriate (e.g. written, oral, visual, print media, etc.). Reflect draws on the philosophy of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and links this with practical methods and tools developed by *Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)* through the 1980s. Conceived by ActionAid in 1993 Reflect was developed in practice through simultaneous experiences in Latin America (El Salvador), Africa (Uganda) and Asia (Bangladesh).

> For the last five years, the *Calgary Immigrant Women's Association*, a local Canadian NGO, has used Reflect in ESOL with refugee communities, specifically women, who are currently underserved by the traditional system. Commenting on her experience of working with Reflect, Desiree Lopez (the programme manager) writes: *'from the beginning of the pilot phase, when all the staff primarily had conventional teaching experience we were astounded by the multi-dimensional effect that using* Reflect *tools had on our experience. Yes, participants increased their reading and writing skills in English (on average 87 per cent of participants increase in either their reading and/or writing benchmark within 10 weeks of part-time study and on average 70% move on to full-time study in mainstream programmes, employment or skills training programmes)….[but] working with* Reflect *opened it beyond that to look at additional issues around personal worth, community health, gender, illness, domestic violence, access and isolation and culture.'* Groups discuss topics such as family violence, poverty, the legal system, health issues, parenting, community resources, employment, family issues, child welfare, social service, immigration law, death and trauma, thus spreading the impact far beyond language learning. In its review, the standing committee on citizenship and integration of the House of Commons in Canada has recognised this as a good practice.

Reflect is now the most widely used participatory approach to adult learning in the world, adapted to hugely diverse contexts for example: for building peace and reconciliation in Burundi, strengthening bilingual education in Peru, improving local governance in India, deepening school accountability in Mali, promoting urban renewal in Nicaragua, challenging caste discrimination in Nepal, democratising refugee camps in Zambia. One of the examples of how Reflect has been used in language learning comes from Canada (see box).

In all contexts Reflect places participants at the centre of their own learning process. The teacher, who is called a facilitator, plays a catalyst role throughout the process in which s/he is an equal participant. The participants set their own agenda, identify their own issues, prepare their own learning materials (sometimes drawing on external information), and prepare and act on their action plans.
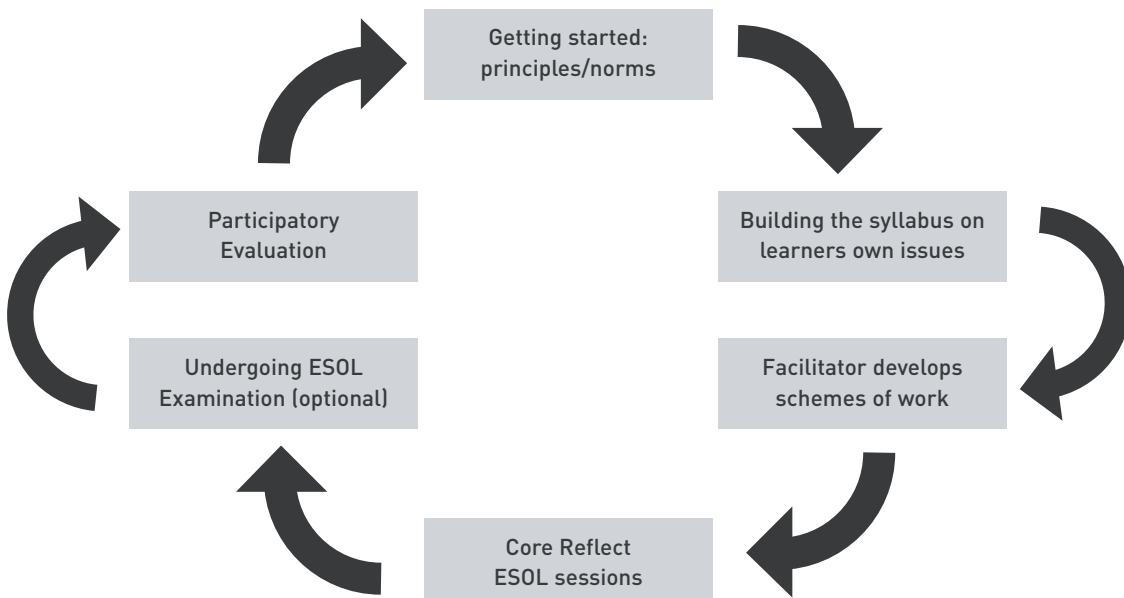
Underpinning the approach is a huge (and ever-expanding) range of participatory tools and techniques. Prominent amongst these are visualisation tools such as maps, timelines, matrices and diagrams, which enable participants to communicate their knowledge, experience and feelings without having to confront or feel restricted by literacy or language barriers. Each visualisation involves structured discussion on a critical issue in learners' lives, generating vocabulary which is always relevant and practical. The visual framing helps everyone to contribute actively even where people have different or low levels of literacy or language skills. Other participatory tools such as role play are also introduced to give learners the opportunity to rehearse real situations. The accumulated reflection and analysis on each issue leads learners to identify actions which they can take (individually or as a group) to improve their position and their environment. These actions invariably involve practical use of oral and written language – strengthening people's language use in practice, outside the classroom.

The Reflect ESOL process

Over the coming months the International Education Unit at ActionAid is intending to meet with individuals and organisations interested in collaborating with the Reflect ESOL project. We hope to work with those currently involved in ESOL to:

■ develop reference/resource materials for use by ESOL providers and teachers;
■ run initial and ongoing training courses for ESOL providers and teachers/facilitators; and
■ develop a Reflect ESOL network for continuing exchange of experience between practitioners, linking this to the International Reflect Circle.

Once core training has been provided and resource materials have been developed, the Reflect ESOL process will involve the following steps in each group / class:

Getting started: principles/norms

Building the syllabus on learners own issues

Facilitator develops schemes of work

Core Reflect ESOL sessions

Undergoing ESOL Examination (optional)

Participatory Evaluation

Getting started: who, where, how?

Reflect can be used by any group interested in learning English whether they are asylum seekers, refugees, people from settled diaspora communities, women or men. The process can work with mixed language groups or single language groups. It can be used with people with similar levels of English or with mixed ability groups. Reflect, therefore, could be adapted to different ESOL levels (Entry 1,2,3 and Level 1,2). Any ESOL provider could work with Reflect, be they community-based organisations, further education colleges, or local authority centres. The size of a group could range from 10 to 30 members.

Wherever possible participants should be actively involved in deciding the place, time and duration of the process (though in certain contexts there may already be fixed parameters). In all cases though, it should be possible to encourage participants to draw up some core principles, norms and rules that will guide them throughout their learning process. The facilitator will need to be open and transparent about the Reflect ESOL process (and how it differs from more traditional ESOL practice). Many tools are available to help facilitators draw out and build consensus on principles and norms.

The following issues were identified in one ESOL workshop in North London in 2003: immigration; social security; housing; isolation; trauma; schooling; cultural identity; health care; child care; children's schooling; inter-generational relations; employment (recognition of qualifications/re-trainings; employers' prejudice/minimum wage); cultural identity (bilingualism, power dynamics in the family); neighbourhood (prejudice/feelings positive/negative); shopping; transport; gender relations; media – prejudice/access; cross-cultural relations – between settled communities and refugees or among refugees groups; uncertainty about their future – in UK and back home; personal status/ vulnerability; enforced idleness (impact on self-esteem/motivation); communication home – information about family/relatives/politics etc.

Building the Reflect/ESOL syllabus

A range of participatory methodologies will be used to draw out background information about the participants; their existing knowledge and skills; their immediate and long term needs and aspirations; and their language levels. There will also be an initial process of prioritisation of key issues in learners lives (see box). Mapping out their experiences and aspirations, participants will identify their short, medium and long-term goals (for language and beyond). Gradually the learners will structure and frame their own syllabus responding to their own needs and interests.

Developing schemes of work

Initial and ongoing training of facilitators will have focused on this capacity to creatively adapt the Reflect process to respond to whatever issues are prioritised by their group. Facilitators will also have access to extensive resource and reference materials to help them respond appropriately and design individual sessions – which respond to the issues raised by learners and maximise the language learning opportunities. Facilitators will develop detailed schemes of work on a rolling basis, always being ready to respond to changing situations and issues.

However, the core framework they develop will involve the list of issues prioritised by learners, the participatory tools and games that can used to explore and analyse each issue, the supplementary materials that can be accessed in each case, and the ways of building explicit language learning around each issue and tool/game.

In this early stage it is likely that some participants will identify urgent issues that require immediate response (e.g. going to the doctor, meeting the housing authority, talking to NASS, locating post offices and markets, understanding the telephone system, reading bus signs and maps, etc.). Where possible facilitators will be encouraged to do focused work on these to show that the learning process is genuinely responsive.

Core learning sessions

It is likely that in each meeting the participants will spend some time discussing a particular issue usually using a participatory tool such as one of the visualisations. The construction of different maps, matrices, diagrams and timelines each offer different opportunities for language work, with recurring patterns of sentence construction and relevant new vocabulary. The visual representation of issues ensures that learners have constant reference points of core vocabulary on the issues being discussed – helping with language and literacy acquisition.

Following this initial discussion the facilitator will introduce relevant supplementary materials on this issue being discussed – whether in written format (official forms, newspaper articles, organisational plans/budgets); oral format (external speakers, excerpts from radio or TV broadcasts); or visual format (photos, cartoons, etc.). This material will be used to further analysis of the issue with most language learning occurring through practical exposure and use.

Other participatory tools and games might be introduced at any time to maintain the dynamic of the group and create further opportunities for structured use of language. Particularly there are many forms of role play (re-enactments, simulations, rehearsals, projections, etc) which can help learners prepare for real situations in their daily lives.

Any one issue might take between one and ten sessions – with new materials and tools to advance analysis and learning introduced in each session by the facilitator. On many issues, learners will end up identifying actions which they can take outside the classroom, whether as individuals or as a group. Some actions may entails a change in individual behaviour, accessing specific information (e.g. opportunities for IT training), contacting someone responsible for a particular issue (e.g. a housing officer), or a group activity (such as writing an article for a local newspaper about life as a refugee in the UK). Following up, monitoring and reflecting on these actions becomes an integral part of the Reflect ESOL process. They help to sustain learner motivation and ensure that language skills are used in real situations (and not just inside a classroom).

Some examples of tools:

There are countless forms of visual representation (eg rivers, calendars, trees, maps, matrices, timelines, tables, charts) that can help people analyse and explore key issues. In each case these materials are unique – developed based on the knowledge

and experience of the people in the room. They are initially constructed using movable
objects and then translated onto large sheets of paper/card. They help people to
systematise experience, share knowledge and reflect *on issues through new lenses.*
And of course all the tools stimulate structured use of language around key
vocabulary areas for learners.

In a group of mixed nationalities a map could be used to show the areas that different
groups of people live in; to identify secure areas/danger areas of the local community
(and discuss why); to show where there is integration, or isolation; to look at people's
mobility; to explore transport provision; to map out services. In each case, core
language that might be used in different locations can be illustrated and developed.

A matrix could be used to analyse language use. For example, which languages are
spoken in which places/situations? What about different members of the family – age
groups, males, females, etc. – what spaces do they occupy and what languages do
they speak? Where is language used in its oral form and where is written language
needed?

A Venn diagram might be used to look at the different organisations involved in service
provision for refugees – their closeness to different communities/groups and their
relative power. Equally, such a diagram might be used to look at power relations in the
family – how has this changed with arrival to the UK – and why (e.g. changing gender
roles / status of children – who might have become more powerful because of their
attendance at school and stronger English skills).

The causes and effects of refugee status/lack of status, or integration/isolation, etc.
might be illustrated through the image of a tree, whilst a flow diagram could illustrate
the different stages in achieving refugee status – who is involved at what stage, what
does this involvement entail, who is making the decisions – what are the power
relations etc?

Ongoing assessment is a crucial part of the Reflect ESOL process. This not only enables
participants' to recognise what they have gained through their involvement in the process
(thus boosting their confidence) but also enables them to plan for future learning. For
example they might measure their ability to carry out a particular life-related task – such as
using public transport; engaging with the national health service; reading and decoding a
particular sign at a school; or negotiating with an official on an issue etc. They might also
show their learning and confidence by facilitating or co-facilitating a group discussion.

Participatory evaluation and examinations

At the end of the course/process (or at defined moments e.g. at the end of each term or year)
participants should revisit their initial agenda/syllabus, review the different actions they have
taken and reflect on their learning. They will consider the challenges/constraints and
enabling factors they faced on the way to address different issues and identify what they had
learnt, with respect to language, literacy, functioning in society, addressing issues, self-
confidence and ability to speak out and be heard. They will also give suggestions for
improvement of the course/process. This participatory evaluation will play the role of the
summative assessment as conceived in present ESOL policy. This collective evaluation will be

a learning process for the facilitator, who will draw on the experience to improve their skills in adapting participatory tools, in facilitation and in accessing information on key issues.

Building on the periodic reviews of their progress, participants will be supported in determining when they would like to sit for examinations. Key to this process is giving participants control as to when they take their exams, and what sort of exams they will take (it is envisaged that participants will take the accredited ESOL examinations). This gives the participant ultimate control over their learning process. Different learners might (indeed, should) choose to sit exams at different times. It should always be clear that the exams are self-contained language exams and not exams linked to the Reflect ESOL process itself. Facilitators might of course help to prepare learners who wish to enter exams – helping them to become familiar with the format of the exams- but this support should be considered as outside the core Reflect ESOL process.

Next steps

We are looking for ESOL providers/teachers who are interested in being involved in this Reflect ESOL initiative – whether helping with the materials development process, receiving training, experimenting with the approach or joining the network.

If you are interested please contact us:

David Archer: davida@actionaid.org.uk
Kate Newman: knewman@actionaid.org.uk
Tel: 020 7561 7561

For more details on the Reflect approach, see: **www.reflect-action.org**

Reflect in Canada: using participatory methods in the ESOL classroom

Desiree Lopez

The settlement programme for immigrants to Canada is well supported with a national assessment system and a national ESOL program over a decade old. ESOL learners can access 1,000 hours of free ESOL training, access free childcare and attend classes from a basic beginners level to a high intermediate level. Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is the mainstream settlement program aimed at ESOL learners. LINC is a traditional, classroom-based programme conducted by professional educators. LINC classes are funded by the national government (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) and are seen as the first step on the road to employment in Canada. With the growing demand on programmes like LINC, community based settlement agencies often see learners who cannot access or cope within such mainstream programmes. Additionally, cuts in funding often mean catering to the middle learner majority in beginner-intermediate levels, to learners without additional costly needs such as childcare, and in general, to learners who would fly through programmes making room for new learners. In 1999 the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) wanted to develop an ESOL literacy programme that would serve women who faced barriers accessing traditional programmes and services. In addition to women identified by settlement workers across the city, a new ESOL Literacy assessment was identifying a growing number of immigrant and refugee women not accessing ESOL programmes, and facing other challenges with their integration into their new host culture. This group of women could be characterised by having:

- 0–6 years of formal education;
- 4–7 children under the age of 16;
- no paid employment experience;
- domestic/spousal discontent;
- severe isolation;
- coming from a highly rural environment;
- severe poverty;
- critical health issues including terminal cancer, HIV, and permanent physical injuries; and
- little or no ESOL literacy/oral skills.

Of the women identified for a pilot study, 20 per cent had been expelled from a mainstream ESOL programme due to poor attendance, physical violence, or excessive leave due to domestic issues, health issues or pregnancy. 10 per cent were meant to attend mainstream programmes but were unable to secure seats due to high childcare needs, transportation issues, and lack of financial support to attend classes. Additionally, of the 70 per cent remainder, none had accessed any settlement services since their arrival in Canada, despite often having a partner accessing ESOL programmes.

CIWA wanted to develop a programme that would combine ESOL skills development, with life skills, and most importantly, empowerment for women. In 1999, CIWA's Board President came across the Reflect Mother Manual (Archer and Cottingham 1995). Although the participatory methodology did focus on the development of literacy skills, it spoke of challenges in urban settings, and at the time, there was little experience using Reflect in the North. CIWA set out on a 10-month pilot study to see if Reflect could be adapted to work with

learners that could not adapt to a traditional learning environment. Reflect seemed on paper to incorporate the aspects CIWA believed were needed in ESOL literacy programmes. Furthermore, Reflect was a successful tool, being used in countries where 80per cent of ESOL learners were coming to Canada from.

The pilot project aimed to test all aspects of a traditional ESOL classroom against that of a traditional Reflect circle.

Reflect Pilot Variables

Culturally homogenous groups vs. multi-ethnic/lingual groups

One facilitator vs. multiple facilitators

Use of first language as teaching tool vs. restriction of first language use

Classes split up based on level vs. groups formed based on neighbours

Use of ESOL texts vs. participant developed materials

Trained ESOL teachers vs. social workers, community development workers, volunteers and literacy teachers

Canadian born ESOL teachers vs. multicultural staff reflecting diversity of groups (internal facilitators)

Full-time vs. part-time classes

Formal attendance rules vs. personalised attendance programmes

Level based assessment (grade movement stressed) vs. learner directed progress

No limit on attendance or on residency requirements

Teacher providing additional social and emotional support without training vs. facilitators with similar life experience

No interaction with the larger settlement system for learners or teachers

Linguistic and attendance outputs valued in reviews versus learner outcomes in barrier reduction, increased integration and language use

Teachers limited to feeding up information on learner issues vs. facilitators involved in changing systems that were discriminatory towards ESOL literacy learners

In 10 months the results were dramatic. Previously less than 10 per cent of ESOL literacy learners increased in their levels after 1,000 hours of mainstream study. In 10 weeks of the Reflect adaptation, 80 per cent of learners increased in either their reading or writing level. This was also based on no more than eight hours of class time per week. Multi-ethnic groups

with multiple facilitators in community based classes yielded the most productive learning environments as indicated by both learners and pilot teachers. Additionally, part-time classes with childcare activities were high priorities for learners. Facilitators from diverse backgrounds with languages other than English were preferred, but internal facilitators from the group were not supported due to confidentiality issues.

After the pilot period, classes were set up. The adaptation of Reflect was slight at first. Facilitators incorporated learner based materials, based lessons on real issues faced by students, and relied on visual tools to communicate. In essence, facilitators attempted to follow tools outlined in the Reflect manual. Participants identified that their main frustration was that the classes helped them deal with issues in the short term, but never addressed the long-term or systemic issues. For example, when learners had problems accessing the health services, facilitators accompanied learners and often translated. However, learners then became dependent on facilitators, or spouses and children who could translate. Classes began to look at the power dynamics of service providers and learners. Learners suggested ways to tackle their short-term problems in ways that they could also remain empowered. In the health example, this could mean having the health centre translate forms using learner symbols, having doctors participate in classes to get to know participants in a safe environment, or increasing the use of photos and visual tools. The staff from CIWA began to represent the group at roundtables on social welfare, access to the school system, domestic violence and so forth. The adaptation of Reflect was beginning to build a political voice for learners and educators.

Authentic materials, visual tools (drawings) and use of technology (photos and video) expanded the communication between a group of learners that could not often say more than their first name in English. Additionally, with learners playing a role in developing materials, there was intimate disclosure and a need for the topics covered to be relevant to the issues learners were dealing with in their home lives. With the expansion of the facilitation teams to include trained social workers and community development workers, these demands were better handled by staff and learners. Unlike in traditional ESOL programmes that are governed by a curriculum aimed to integrate learners into Canadian society (and its norms and values), facilitators were expected to not drive a value-based group, but instead encourage equal participation and discussion. This also included full disclosure from facilitators. Here the goal was to re-define the Canadian norms to reflect new members of the community and so community leaders and professionals were often invited to learn more about the learners' perspectives.

Learners would choose a topic to explore (for example, health), and build a tool to help increase their language skills within that topic. Groups would tell their stories about dealing with health issues in their home countries and in Canada. These stories would be broken down sentence-by-sentence, right to the phonetic level. If authentic materials (such as an intake form or a prescriptions label) were part of the learners' stories, these too would be used to build up literacy skills. As the group increased their vocabulary in a particular area, additional tools were developed to address issues faced by learners such as using a chapatti diagram (i.e. a Venn Diagram) to map out who helps a woman after she gives birth in her home country versus in Canada. Photos taken by learners were used for this method. This exercise would not only bring in opportunities to identify new support structures for pregnant women, but also identify gaps in the current systems of services, which facilitators would take forth. In addition to class time, facilitators participated in local community councils, working groups and special issues committees to ensure the literacy agenda would be considered in

programme delivery and development. Learners invited members from the health community to come and meet with participants and talk about ways to work together. This exchange was extremely important in an affluent community like Calgary where most professionals are unaware of literacy issues.

In the first year of the programme, tests proved an 80 per cent increase rate for learners. However, with the incorporation of participatory tools, learners where also exploring multiple reasons for attending classes, most of which had little to do with linguistic outcomes. Reflect enabled learners and facilitators to develop outcome-based evaluations that included socio-emotional outcomes such as increased confidence and decreased violence in the home. CIWA aimed to make these outcomes as important to funders as to the learners and included them in reports and public presentations. In years to come, learners maintained the 80 per cent increase in reading and writing skills, and also maintained a 70 per cent increase in access to further education or employment and a 70 per cent increase in socio-emotional outcomes. Learners who went on to further education programmes or employment, only had a 2 per cent dropout rate, mainly due to pregnancy.

Facilitation was also an area of exploration in the use of Reflect. Initially, the programme was heavily teacher focused (and often reverted to this style when there were changes in staff). Despite professional accreditation requirements for ESOL programmes, CIWA aimed to provide facilitators that could best meet the needs of the learners, and learn from the participants as well. Facilitation teams were often a social worker and a community development worker or teacher. Facilitators were hired based on their ability to speak multiple languages (spoken by learners) and having survived some of the barriers facing learners (poverty, illness, domestic violence, literacy difficulties, and so on). Facilitators were judged not only on the linguistic improvements of learners, but their ability to bring in other professionals to meet directly with learners, to build capacity of learners in the community and to increase opportunities for learners to represent themselves in the public arena – in essence their ability to share their power with learners. For example, facilitators were encouraged to work with learners to tackle inequalities in the testing system and developed a yearlong research project to document the skills of literacy learners that were not captured by the current assessment procedures. This research ultimately led to the revision of test materials and procedures. Learners and facilitators were also encouraged to leave the program when they were ready to experience new opportunities. The use of Reflect identified the need to not build an inauthentic world in which learners could remain. Mainstream learning opportunities were seen as critical experiences, as they often represented the power dynamics of a culture or of the workplace, and were seen as positive challenges for ESOL literacy learners.

Facilitators were trained to use Reflect in order to understand how the exchange of information could be achieved through visual tool development. Facilitators conducted peer evaluations and worked to develop a horizontal working environment, based on the frequent review of power dynamics within the team. The lack of set curricula and the demands of the participants made the job of the facilitators very intense. Facilitators were heavily supported by way of training, time and resources. Additionally, the use of Reflect helped to address the power dynamics of the agency and how the needs of the learners were used to forward the agency's agenda. Learners were encouraged to represent themselves at meetings, events and reviews, truly giving them a public voice.

Trying to adapt Reflect was an on-going challenge. In most situations in the North,

participatory approaches are not as valued as an individualistic approach to success. Participatory methodologies can be seen as time intensive, lacking accountability and deficient of effective decision-making. Additionally, the combination of lack of literacy skills, diverse cultural traditions and isolation often meant participants had been labelled as "difficult" by other service providers. Facilitators needed to have ideas on hierarchy and power re-defined which often-resulted in conflict. Working with learners from many different countries in a new country re-defined the aspect of community development and the aspect of community. Funders faced the challenge to be asked to support high student costs for learners who may never become employable. Reflect helped to change our programmatic aims from being funder directed and test output directed, to learner directed. The challenges were slight in comparison to the outcomes demonstrated by learners.

The use of Reflect was not easy, but was extremely successful. It challenged conventional norms around language learning, but was flexible enough, so that it could be adapted to traditional situations. Reflect was also not only about the empowerment of learners, but included the development of power for educators and others in the social service system advocating for disadvantaged learners. Reflect was not seen as a prescriptive methodology but a set of ideas and strategies. This allowed adaptation to be implemented in all areas of work, which constantly fuelled understanding of authentic participation, its value and its disadvantages. Facilitators were encouraged to question the current system and question their roles in the powerlessness of learners. The use of Reflect meant that value was being placed on individuals, on their life experience and not only their test scores. Literacy became one of many bi-products of the adaptation of Reflect. Reflect helped CIWA re-establish empowerment and re-define integration, which included the learners' life experiences, as the main goals of settlement work.

References

Archer, D. and Cottingham, S. (1995). **Reflect Mother Manual**. London: ActionAid.

3.3

Commentary on Reflect in practice

Juliet Millican

James Kanyeskigye[18] and Simon Kisira introduced the symposium participants to some of the lessons learned through the introduction of Reflect programmes in Uganda. They successfully outlined both the history of Reflect (piloted in Uganda in 93–94 and now being used in 23 African countries) and critiqued what they saw as its shortfalls. I would like subsequently to reflect briefly on Reflect, on what it has given us, not only in terms of discrete programmes, but as a set of tools, a structure and an approach which has influenced many other literacy programmes in the ten years since it first appeared.

In the early 1990s, I was involved with a small team of people on a research report for DfID into what was then termed post literacy[19]. What interested me initially when looking at the field was why the dominant, autonomous, primer based model of literacy learning persisted in so many places throughout the world. In so many countries for so many years I have witnessed teachers, standing in half light at blackboards, pointing with rulers at chalk markings countlessly repeating 'ba ba ba, be be be, bo bo bo', to adults who are already orally fluent in their own first language.

We know that this mode of repetition comes in part from the tradition of work songs, in part from rote learning in Koranic schools, and possibly from second language learning. What we need to understand better is why it persists and how to change it.

Even though we know that literacy is no single set of autonomous skills, that dominant primer based models of literacy learning fail large numbers of their participants, the possibilities for viable alternatives are limited. While trainers and programme designers promote creative and flexible approaches to context-based programmes, the pressure these put on facilitators is vast. Literacy facilitators tend to be young high school graduates, who have had around 8–10 years of formal schooling and maybe eight–ten days of training in literacy. Faced with classes of up to 50, in dusty school rooms, with almost no books or materials, many of them resort to the unconscious effects of their primary schooling delivered in a similar environment.

Earlier discussions at this conference touched on the impact that 8–10 years of formal schooling undoubtedly have had on newly trained literacy teachers and their understanding of schooling and power. Schools produce gatekeepers, who after being trained within one educational system cannot help but reproduce it in another. Expecting such a facilitator to be inventive and creative when they are the product of an education system that has not only taught them by rote, but has not prized creativity or encouraged inventiveness, is probably unrealistic. A literacy group that sits repeating sounds may not be learning but at least they are occupied. After years of looking for alternatives to primer based teaching a colleague in South Africa reminded me that 'a good primer may be better than a bad literacy teacher with no primer at all'.

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18. James Kanyeskiye presented the work of Reflect/Uganda at the Development Symposium.
19. The report is published as 'Using literacy: a new approach to written language', DfID Research Report 10, London, 1994.

What has transformed literacy teaching in the UK is the availability of a photocopier in almost every centre. Texts can be brought in by students, enlarged, adapted, blanked out for gap fills, copied, distributed and discussed. Rural African literacy programmes don't have such facilities. Working with one scrappy copy of a government document or a soap packet, in poor light with large groups, just will not work even if it is written in the language of the learners.

I came into literacy work accidentally and with a background in English as a foreign language (EFL). I had been very interested in the work of Caleb Gattengo and an approach to foreign language teaching known as the silent way. The silent way works with cuisenaire rods, the association of colour and sound and the use of representation. A tutor elicits information or ideas from a learning group and captures these ideas with rods. Rods are used to represent words, to draw attention to prefixes and suffixes, to build stories and to convert stories into texts. Once a rod has been named by a group it carries that meaning for the duration of the class. Groups will stare at a series of rods arranged on a table and generate language from them, building words into sentences and sentences into texts.

When I first found myself working on a literacy programme in Senegal with little preparation and no materials I too resorted to my former training and worked almost entirely with cuisenaire rods. They had the ability to elicit and then represent information and ideas, to form a bridge between abstract thoughts and the concrete representation of them, and they provided a hook to literacy. I soon found that stones and sticks and shells worked just as well in capturing thoughts and helping people to record them. Some time afterwards I discovered Reflect.

Reflect provides us with a viable alternative to primer-based literacy learning. It gives a structure and a series of tools that can be used in rural Africa without a massive infrastructure to distribute them. By focusing on local knowledge elicited from participants it avoids the trap that often awaits trainers when an example becomes a model and is being used again and again. Taking a Freirean approach to literacy as a tool for social justice ReflectReflect builds texts by using the knowledge of local people and makes critical reflection possible. Once knowledge has been represented with objects these provide a focus for discussion and enable groups to draw their own conclusions. Reflect provides a package of tools that can be used in a range of places and can help facilitators to build viable classes, once fixed primers are taken away.

So what lessons does Reflect provide for work in the UK?

Colleagues of mine who were involved in literacy work in Britain in the 70s and 80s talk fondly of a time when literacy was a political activity. Nowadays it has become a political tool. In an era of targets and test-passing we are in danger of working with literacy for domestication as tutors focus on teaching to tests. But the Reflect model of challenging texts and tests, of political and societal analysis should be as relevant as ever in Blair's 'listening Britain'. Looking together at who gets what and why should after all fit with the current Labour manifesto on widening access to higher education. The current focus on qualifications may provide people with certificates, but we need to balance access to the trappings of power against access to actual power and a validation of the voices of participants.

James and Simon's Ugandan experiences remind us that literacy is a multi-modal and multi-lingual experience, particularly in the multi-cultural communities in which we now live.

International programmes often use a dual language approach, teaching literacy in the language of use rather than discrete language programmes and multi-cultural Britain may need to look again at the diversity of words that can appear in a single sentence. Similarly the kinds of literacies used in email, text messages, digital display screens and interactive websites are part of present day realities. They too need to be unpacked and explored.

Simon spoke of working in partnership with learners. UK programmes are full of partnerships, but they tend to be partnerships of providers. Programmes linked to targets are inevitably top down and fixed by providers rather than the needs of learners. The Reflect experience is an important reminder of the need for negotiated programmes that include real reflection on people's everyday realities as well as those they aspire to.

James spoke of the mix of different participants in Reflect groups, of the range of literacy abilities that people brought with them in order to work together. This reminds me of family literacy projects in Education Action Zones. But the tools that Reflect offers – tools that allow people to analyse and question – could be as relevant to a family in north London looking at their options for the future as they are to a villager in Uganda.

Reflect has its critics and Simon and James have both drawn attention to some of its shortcomings. What it gives us is an approach – a set of tools and a structure that challenges the dominant models of top down approaches and autonomous literacy. It reminds us of the importance of critical reflection, ownership of texts, learners' voices, learner writing – education for empowerment.

These are all lessons that in the UK we are in danger of forgetting.

Section 4

Case studies from around the world

4.1

Literacy and Adult Basic Education, (LABE), Uganda

Simon Kisira

Background

At 63 per cent, Uganda's literacy rate is the lowest in East Africa according to recent reports. Huge disparities exist between men (75 per cent) and women (47 per cent) and between regions – Northern Uganda (47 per cent) and central Uganda (77 per cent). The World Bank's report on *Adult Literacy Programs in Uganda* (2001) reveals that both government and NGO efforts currently reach only 4 per cent of the 6.9 million Ugandan adult illiterates.

Although there are numerous initiatives to develop what is called "functional adult literacy", the quality of those programmes that provide instruction in reading and writing is very poor. The teaching methods, forms of assessment and materials used are often inappropriate and no system is in place to moderate the provision.

The government of Uganda has committed itself to reducing the proportion of people living in absolute poverty to 10 per cent of the overall population and those in relative poverty to 30 per cent by 2017. It identified adult literacy as one of the six priority areas of the poverty reduction strategy, locally known as the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). The PEAP adopts a dual approach to address shortfalls in adult literacy shortfalls; it seeks at the same time to improve the government's National Adult Literacy Strategic Investment Plan (NALSIP) and to strengthen civil society's contribution to the delivery of services. Other national level plans, such as the Social Development Investment Plan, identify adult literacy as "a major input and force in community empowerment and capacity building". Despite these pronouncements, the provision of adult literacy by the state is constrained by insufficient financial resources and low institutional capacity of local government institutions to implement adult literacy programmes. There is also insufficient coordination between civil society's literacy providers and the government, the quality of programmes is on average low, and provision is patchy, varying between regions.
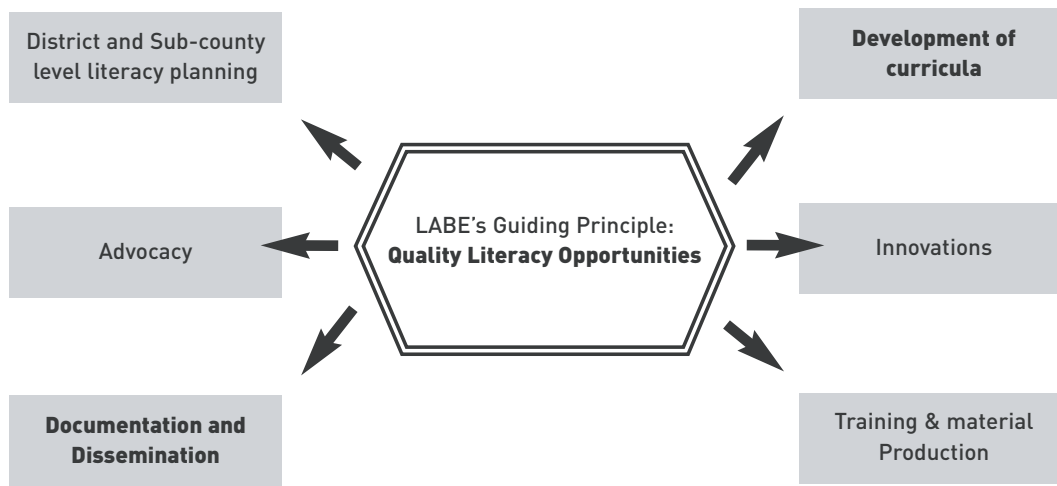
Literacy and adult basic education

Literacy and adult basic education (LABE) is the only national level indigenous literacy organisation whose primary mandate is the provision of literacy and basic education services in Uganda. It started in 1989 as a literacy class in which nine undergraduate students, training to receive professional adult education university qualifications from Makerere University, provided adult literacy lessons to non-literate people in the neighbourhood of the university. It became a conventional "project" between 1993–95 with support from Education Action

International (formerly known as World University Service – UK) and Canada Fund.

LABE is now a registered national level indigenous NGO which promotes literacy and basic education initiatives through multi-level partnerships with civil society organisations, local and central government, the private sector and faith based organisations. In 2004, LABE received support from various donors – including DfID, the European Union and Comic Relief.

LABE's core programmes

LABE's work encompasses six core programmes (see the graphic above), which will now be briefly described .

Advocacy
LABE's advocacy efforts address the government and other agencies aiming to raise commitment to adult literacy. At the local level, we are trying to device strategies that empower literacy learners themselves to demand literacy as a right.

District and sub-county literacy planning
In light of the government's policy of decentralisation, literacy plans are developed at lower government levels, and deliberate efforts are made to lobby for their inclusion into the overall development plans. Since the central government highlights adult literacy as one of its priority areas, we try to influence local governments to also consider adult literacy as a priority area.

Training
LABE works with partners to provide training of trainers in areas such as literacy instruction, curriculum development, material development, literacy planning and advocacy. A multiplier effect is realised because our trainees in turn train other literacy instructors.

Development of curricula
LABE works with other literacy providers at various levels to develop literacy curricula suitable for the type of literacy offered and the target group of their programmes.
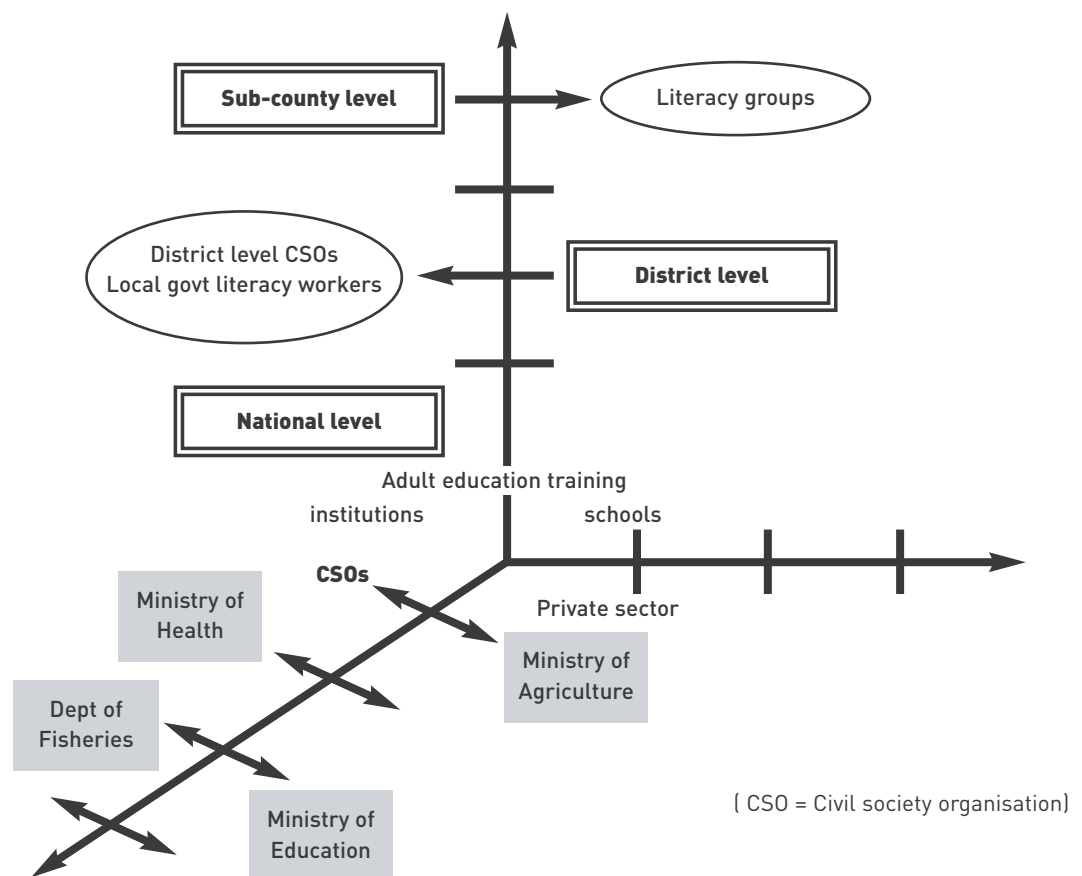
Innovations
LABE has developed innovative programmes such as Family Basic Education – an approach

that explores the link between children's school education and adult literacy, and Fisheries Basic Education – a literacy initiative for the fisher folk. These initiatives have been developed to demonstrate the feasibility of new approaches and methods, with a view to enabling the government and other partners to develop these programmes to a larger scale.

Documentation
LABE attempts to systematically document its different methodologies, approaches, innovations, and processes, both for advocacy and learning purposes.

LABE's multi-level and multi-faceted partnerships

(CSO = Civil society organisation)

LABE's efforts (that were recognised internationally when the organisation won the UNESCO Literacy Prize 2002) rely on multi-level partnerships. The organisation has forged multi-level and multi-faceted working relations with various literacy and non-literacy players. Partnerships have been developed with the private sector, with central and local government structures, cultural institutions, adult educational training institutions, civil society, schools and research institutions on different aspects of adult literacy. Such partnerships include work with:

■ the National Curriculum Development Centre, a government agency under the Ministry of Education, to explore possibilities of developing flexible curricula for different literacy practices;
■ the government Education Standards Agency – ESA, developing an Adult Literacy Assessment Framework;
■ the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) – the lead government ministry for adult literacy – to develop a national management information system for adult
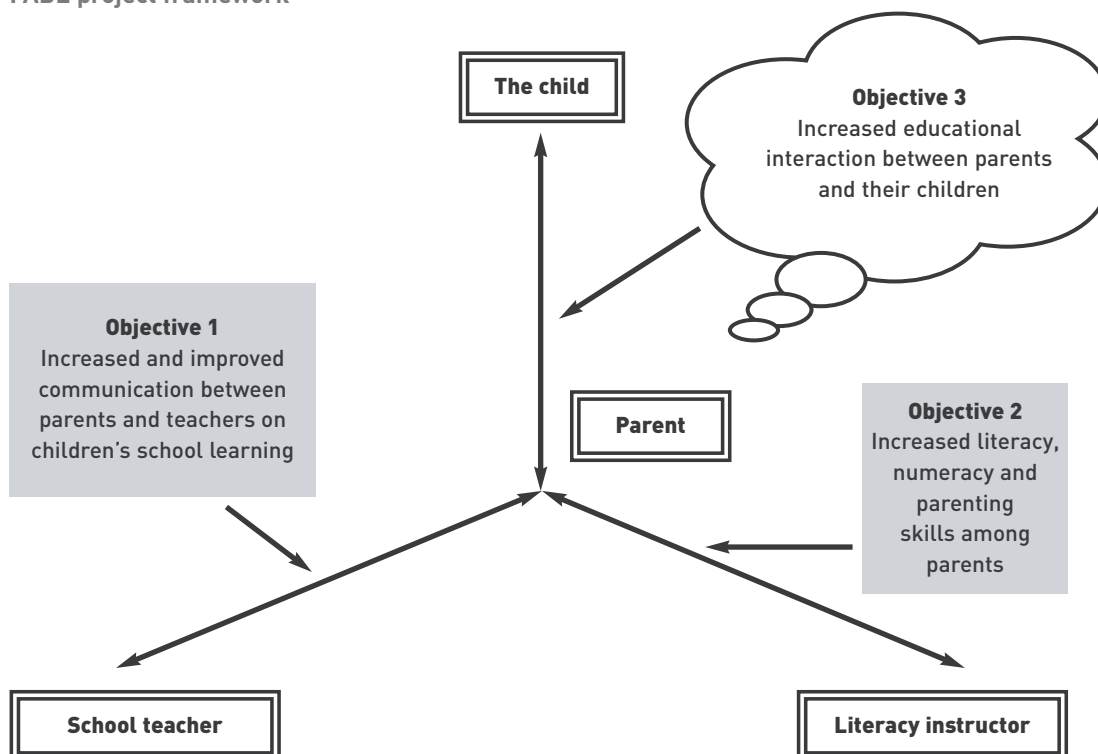
literacy;
- the private sector and other development agencies, we produce/modify/adapt their print materials and hold joint trainings;
- the media to advocate for a higher profile of adult literacy education in Uganda; we try for example to influence the way articles are written on HIV/AIDS, agriculture and hygiene;
- non-literacy, non-state agencies like clans and kingdoms to harness their potential in supporting literacy learning as a social movement;
- Makerere University and with schools on a research project to explore the connections between adult literacy and children's schooling; and
- with Education Action International, we run an exchange visit programme for teachers from Uganda and Britain engaged in family literacy.

5   LABE's family basic education programme

In LABE, we are eclectic, believing in various methods for different situations – and are in agreement with slogans such as "*No one size fits all*" and "*never trying to fit square pegs into round holes*".

With the advent of universal primary education (UPE) in 1997 by the government of Uganda, tremendous progress was made in increasing access to education for girls and boys. Quality and retention of pupils in schools, however, still remain a concern. We believe there is a role for adult literacy in addressing these concerns, and one of the contributions we can make is to devise new approaches to for example linking children's education with adult learning. The family basic education (FABE) Project is one such initiative that tries to address the challenges of retention in school and quality of children's education. The project aims at improving children's education through increased and improved parental educational support to children's schooling.

FABE project framework

A brief description of the FABE project
The pilot project, set up in collaboration with the government district education office, has been running for two and a half years in 18 primary schools in eastern Uganda. It receives financial support from Comic Relief.

Parents whose children are six and seven years old (Primary Key Stages 1 and 2) are enrolled into the programme with an almost equal number of "fathers" and "mothers". In rural schools, where a large majority of young men and women have migrated to urban areas for employment, coupled with the significant loss of many youthful parents due to the AIDS scourge, there is a large presence of grandparents and other child carers in the FABE classes.

Whereas many parents and child carers in the rural areas have little or no literacy skills, a large majority in peri-urban areas possess basic literacy skills. In rural schools, parent-only sessions, held once a week, focus on the acquisition of reading, writing and numeracy skills, largely based on the primary school curriculum. Parenting skills are also promoted during the literacy and numeracy sessions. In peri-urban locations, however, the project concentrates on equipping parents with the basic skills of teaching and reinforcing their children's reading, writing and numeracy skills, and how they can effectively monitor the school attendance and academic performance of their children.

Once a week, parents and carers have joint learning sessions with their children at school. Teachers suggest exercises based on the primary school curriculum, and "parents" work jointly with their children. These sessions also include singing, playing educative games and developing simple learning materials and games, as a means of creating a relaxed learning environment.

The project also promotes home-to-home learning activities, designed to link families that have evidence of increased educational support to children's schooling, to "weak families". Such activities include sharing testimonies of best practices in parental and family support to children's education, holding reading sessions among the twin homes, and jointly developing learning materials and games used to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills among children and other family members. Some materials, however, such as locally designed calendars, are geared at enabling parents to track their children's school attendance.

The project records adult learners' achievements in reading, writing and numeracy, based on quarterly assessments, and compares these with children's termly exam results in the same subject areas. Trends in children's academic performance and attendance are tracked over a minimum period of a year.

Training of literacy instructors
As part of the FABE activities, we have initiated a programme to twin literacy school teachers with literacy instructors. In Uganda, a large majority of adult literacy instructors have only 6–8 years of formal education. Initial training in adult literacy methods lasts ten days. This is usually followed by a one-day follow-up training per quarter. Technical support to instructors, in terms of supervision, is inadequate. It is therefore of no surprise that the quality of adult literacy provision is generally poor. Schoolteachers, on the other hand, receive two years of training, and are closely supervised and supported during their school teaching.

One way of improving adult literacy instructors' teaching skills is by twining them with trained

primary school teachers of lower classes. In the morning, literacy instructors, acting as teaching assistants, help school teachers to prepare instructional and learning materials, and offer additional support to slow learners, considering the large pupil to teacher ratio. The government ration for lower classes is 1: 110, but in rural areas, the ratio is as big as one teacher to 200 pupils! With the recent government policy of using local languages for instruction in lower classes, literacy instructors, who are mainly people from the local community, help in translating some words and they can provide examples from the local context, which the teacher (who sometimes comes from another part of the country and may not be fluent in the local language) may not be able to explain clearly.

The 'twinned' teachers mentor adult literacy instructors, especially in terms of developing different schemes of work and lesson plans. Instructors prepare activities and lesson plans drawing on the primary school curriculum, but adapt these to make them suitable for adult learning. The skills of producing or adapting instructional and learning materials are also shared between the two cadres. Monthly half-day trainings in teaching methods are held for teachers and instructors to equip them with participatory teaching methods.

Other avenues of training literacy instructors are being explored through twining FABE schoolteachers and literacy instructors with UK schoolteachers engaged in family literacy programmes. This is currently done through correspondence and occasional exchange visits.

Challenges for the programme
Because of the large number of pupils in P1 and P2 classes (six–seven year olds) only a quarter of pupils of each class participating in FABE are directly targeted. Only 30 parents per class can enrol for FABE classes.

An important question is how to continue the programme beyond P1 and P2 classes. It is assumed that parents will have embraced the idea of learning together and monitoring their children's schooling after two years, and hence will be able to sustain these efforts. But the parents who have participated in FABE demand further support. They request that the programme extends to higher classes. Many parents, especially those who at the start of the programme had little or no literacy skills, have only achieved modest literacy, numeracy and parenting skills after the two years.

Another question is whether the participating schools will be able to sustain the FABE activities once the three-year pilot phase has ended. The required resources may not be easily mobilised. Even with decentralisation, school funds are highly conditioned, restricted to particular expenditures. One of the efforts to address this is to lobby local education authorities at sub-county level to include FABE in their budget and to allocate funds in the sub-county three-year rolling education plans.

Although the government at local and central levels has expressed initial interest in taking up FABE as part of the mainstream education provisions, we need to provide evidence of what FABE can achieve. The three-year pilot programme, which included 18 schools in one district, may not be able to produce sufficient evidence. There are 176 schools in this district and a total of 56 districts in Uganda and therefore the pilot covered only a small area. In the short run, current efforts to provide evidence are in terms of furnishing education authorities with results obtained after rigorous monitoring. Case studies, findings of an in-built longitudinal study, trends and comparison of data on performance of target pupils and control groups form part of this.

Our concern is to ensure that an initiative such as FABE is incorporated into state education policies, and is made part of teacher training courses, so that it can become part of teachers' lesson plans. We also advocate for state financial and technical support for such methodologies.

Conclusions – challenges for a small organisation such as LABE

The six core programmes of LABE encompass almost all aspects of adult literacy. It is thus not surprising that LABE's mid-term review (conducted in 2003) found that "the organisation has a weakness of perceiving anything under the sky on literacy as part of its agenda, hence taking on too much". The question the organisation faces is how to balance spread of effort and depth of quality. A decision has to be made on how to focus our efforts – by selecting certain regions or certain aspects of literacy, or by focussing our work on the activities developed with certain partners.

Since the government has now begun to implement its policy of decentralisation, we are also faced with questions of how to translate broad national development policies into concrete plans at lower government levels, with literacy as one of the priority components. The ultimate purpose is to ensure that there is adequate technical, financial and material support for adult literacy classes, and that instructional content, materials and methods are relevant and appropriate. These are some of the issues we are currently grappling with in LABE.

4.2

Gender, education and empowerment: Nirantar, a resource centre for gender and education, New Delhi, India

Malini Ghose

Nearly ten years ago Kavita, a young dalit woman and Shanti, a tribal woman, participated in a literacy programme that Nirantar was involved with. The Chitrakoot district of the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, in which the two women live, is an underdeveloped rural area that scores very badly with regard to most human development indicators. Dalit is the preferred term for many low-caste individuals and groups who reject the pejorative caste titles ascribed to them.

While Kavita and Shanti struggled in the programme to become literate and to critically analyse their life situations as poor, rural, dalit and tribal women, within the home and outside, we (from Nirantar) struggled to explain to them concepts like democracy and the rights they are entitled to as women and Indian citizens. Kavita and Shanti, who represent the situation of a vast number of women living in India, were excluded from participating meaningfully in the project of Indian democracy.

Since being involved in the State run women's empowerment programme we from Nirantar were working with, both women have been engaged in an on-going educational process. Kavita went on to attend school and Shanti worked on reinforcing her literacy skills. Both women got involved in a project of Nirantar to bring out a rural newspaper for which they were trained to become journalists. Today, with Nirantar's support, they along with five other women 'journalists' produce a rural newspaper called *Khabar Lahariya* (literally 'News Waves'). The paper appears fortnightly and consists of eight pages. The circulation is 1300 copies per issue. The women who produce the paper gather news, write, edit, design and illustrate and oversee the printing of the newspaper. They also sell the newspaper to readers across 200 villages. The newspaper contains predominantly local news (though it does have national and international news sections) and information on a range of development issues.

Whenever asked to describe Nirantar's work, images of women like Kavita and Shanti come to mind. Nirantar, a resource centre for gender and education, located in New Delhi (India) was started by a group of five women, to provide women, particularly poor rural women, access to meaningful learning opportunities that would enable them to empower themselves and to transform societal relations that keep them in a position of subordination.

Essential to the process of empowerment is enabling the marginalized (in Nirantar's case the focus is on women) access to information. Information is power. It enables women and other marginalised sections of society to make informed decisions and choices, to participate in political processes, to engage with institutions of civil society, and to influence governance and development. But information for the most part is not available in content areas relevant to women. Nor is it available in an easily accessible form or in the spoken language of people. Also, it is not gender sensitive. Thus, Nirantar believes that there is a need to produce reading and training materials for women and grassroots workers that simplify and demystify information and present it with a gender perspective. We have for example been producing *Pitara*, a bi-monthly news and features magazine in simply written Hindi, which now has an 8000 strong readership – a diverse readership that includes prisoners, school teachers, maids

and grassroots activists in North India. *Pitara*, draws inspiration from our belief that adults with low levels of literacy have the right to read and write not only for information but also for entertainment and to engage with the world beyond their own. Nirantar has also produced a range of booklets and other materials specially for adults with basic literacy skills.

We also believe that the production of information and knowledge should be democratised and decentralised. If people's voices are to be heard, then the skills of producing reading material should be widely disseminated. Conceptualising, implementing and supporting innovative projects like the rural newspaper *Khabar Lahariya* are therefore critical to Nirantar's work as it leads to the empowerment of women and contributes to the process of democratisation in several ways. It fills a huge information void – it reaches areas where no other newspapers reach and is read by people outside the mainstream information loop. However, it is the content and the investigative style of reportage that makes *Khabar Lahariya* popular with its readers and it is this element that has made it important in putting in place a culture of accountability. The newspaper reports on cases of violence against women and atrocities against dalits, exposes corruption within the bureaucracy or misuse of funds by elected representatives of panchayats (local self-governing bodies). These articles have enabled and galvanised people to act. However, being rooted only in the local context is not good enough. In order for the newspaper to survive the women had to move beyond the local. On the other hand, it meant avoiding to push them to enter the political domain. Politics is not a domain that women have access to easily, nor do they necessarily feel encouraged to do so. Entering this world is an educational process, a process that requires women not only know the facts, the history and the politics but more critically to know how to present this information as a subaltern women. This is the journey the *Khabar Lahariya* team has embarked upon.

Khabar Lahariya – A rural newspaper
Women, education and grassroots democracy

... addressing the local

The newspaper printed a story about a local bank manager sexually harassing women employees; ripples were created in the bureaucracy. The man threatened the women reporters and then offered to buy all the copies in circulation to prevent the news from spreading further. The same man it turned out was also not paying widows the pension they were entitled to under a particular government scheme. When information about the widow pension scheme was given in the newspaper, some of these widows were in a position to question him. The two reports together were enough to make the concerned authorities take action against him. Small steps in a remote part of a large country but powerful in the local context.

.... and the global

The newspaper carried a piece on the war in Iraq. The process began locating for the group the scene of action and the actors. Where were Iraq, America and England? Who are Saddam Hussein, George Bush and Tony Blair? But more critically the group needed to figure out their position. What is a dalit woman's take on the Iraq war? Why is the Iraq war important and relevant to people living in a remote rural area in India? The newspaper created a space to make this opinion available in the public domain. And the story was popular. Several letters came in commenting that though they had heard about the war they had not understood it or why it was important. While in the case of the Iraq war the women took a global event and contextualized its relevance locally, equally critical is for them to locate the local in say a national context.

While the women journalists have been forced to enter the domain of mainstream politics they have simultaneously tried to redefine what constitutes the political. By continuously reporting on cases of violence against women both within the family and outside, the paper has established that this is an issue of public concern. By blurring the public/private dichotomy the newspaper has also built a link with the national women's movement, which is also engaged in similar struggles. This work has challenged and transformed power relationships, especially gender relations both at a societal level and in the individual lives of the women involved. Rural journalists are rarely ever women and certainly never poor, marginalised women with very basic levels of literacy and education. A male domain (predominantly upper-caste) has therefore been broken into.

Besides *Khabar Lahariya*, Nirantar has conducted several training programmes on writing for women with basic literacy skills. Such trainings include orientation on politics, gender, caste and language. Nirantar has worked with several educational and literacy initiatives through direct fieldwork and in a capacity building role by providing training and other human resource inputs to other non-governmental organisations and government programmes. These trainings are around issues like gender orientation, health, violence against women, literacy and numeracy and social science teaching participatory curriculum development. When conducted in collaboration with particular organisations they are designed to keeping the focus on the needs of the participants and the group. Nirantar also conducts regular training programmes to which it invites participants who have made demands for trainings and capacity building inputs.

The members of Nirantar believe that the organisation has a role to play and that it can fill a gap in bringing together literacy, education and women's issues. As women's rights activists they felt that many of the concerns raised by the women's movement found no space in educational work. Nor did the Indian women's movement engage in a substantive manner with the education sector. We try to bring these two worlds together. We continue to believe that concerns central to the women's movement belong centre-stage in any agenda for women's education. This includes issues of identity, sexuality, violence, health, and the right to political representation and livelihood. Structured teaching-learning spaces – both formal and non-formal – are vital arenas through which gender equality can be promoted, through the content and pedagogy – being empowered in the process of learning is as crucial as the outcome of learning.

Examples of our work in this area are: developing a curriculum for a six month residential course where the content areas were identified and structured around the life-worlds of the learners and teachers, around the issues of land, water, forests, health and society (where several women like Shanti and Kavita participated); shorter residential literacy camps (about 10 days) which are designed to make available opportunities for intensive bursts of learning during the agriculturally lean seasons; issue-based literacy camps around issues like law or health, where literacy teaching and learning – the key words through which literacy is introduced and the discussions – are woven around these themes; developing an activity based gender and language teaching curriculum and workbook around the themes of work, identity and violence.

We realise though that creating little islands of creativity or excellence is not enough. In order to bring about changes at the policy level Nirantar tries to link the micro-context of the field with the macro context of policy. We engage with mainstream institutions and programmes through for example training programmes and through research and documentation. Such research projects are used to initiate dialogue, critical reflection and are used to lobby for changes with different stakeholders.

4.3

The National Literacy Programme in Namibia

B.U. Ngatjizeko

Background

The National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN) was officially launched on 5 September, 1992, two years after independence. It came in existence as a result of tireless efforts by Namibians both in exile (under the SWAPO Literacy Campaign, SWC) and inside the country (under the Namibia Literacy Programme, a non-governmental organisation) during the liberation struggle.

During the mid 1980s, SWAPO, the liberation movement, launched a literacy programme in exile (particularly in refugee camps in Angola and Zambia), spearheaded mainly by the SWAPO Women's Council. This programme was funded by the London-based Namibia Refugee Project, a trust created for this purpose. Recruitment and training of trainers was made possible through this funding and a lot of countries rendered their support to the programme, such as Kenya, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, to mention just a few. Literacy materials were developed and produced, followed by recruitment of literacy promoters or teachers, as they are commonly known. Subsequently, about 10,000 Namibians were enrolled, who benefited immensely from the programme. Upon the repatriation of Namibian refugees to Namibia in 1989, this programme was interrupted for a short while, but was later merged with the Namibia Literacy Programme and continued.

On the other hand, the Namibia Literacy Programme (formerly known as the Bureau of Literacy and Literature) and the Council of Churches (CCN) carried the bulk of literacy work inside Namibia during the difficult years of the struggle for independence. NLP concentrated more on mother tongue literacy, while CCN concentrated on the teaching of English language – from basic to advance. This was not an easy task as literacy or education for that matter, was seen as a threat to the South African colonial regime. The CCN was seen to have associated itself with the liberation struggle. Both the NLP and the CCN produced literacy materials and English textbooks and recruited literacy teachers, who set up literacy classes across the country. Thousands of people, including formal teachers, benefited immensely from these two institutions' respective programmes. There were others who contributed to literacy in Namibia, for example the so-called Department of National Education, but its efforts were highly insignificant.

The commendable efforts of the SLC (in exile), the NLP and the CCN formed the backbone of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN), which was set up after independence. The NLPN is run by the government, through the Department of Adult Basic Education (DABE) in the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (MBECS). The NLPN has offers classes in all areas of the country. Regional and district level officers oversee the implementation of the programme in the different regions. Literacy classes are part-time, usually meeting three times a week for two hours. Literacy teachers are also employed on a part-time basis.

The three stages of the NLPN

Namibia is blessed by its diversity of cultures and languages, as about 11 or so different languages are spoken. Most of these languages are written, developed and indeed taught from primary to secondary education. Some are available as a subject up to university level. The NLPN starts with the mother tongue of the participants. One has to add here that within a main language group, for example the Oshiwambo, literacy materials were developed in the two main dialects of that group. The NLPN is structured in three stages, of about one year each.

Stage 1 – Mother tongue (basic)
This is the first stage and, as I indicated already, it is taught in the mother tongue. This could be languages such as Otjiherero, Silozi, Rukwangali, Thimbukushu, Ju /hoansi, Khoekhogowab, etc.

Stage 2 – Mother tongue
In the second year (stage 2) the medium of instruction is still the mother tongue. Over the course of stage 2, learners are expected to consolidate the skills the learners that they acquired in stage 1. In stage 2, learners are introduced to functional literacy issues, such as "How Government works", "Starting a Vegetable Garden", "Issues on HIV/AIDS", etc. It is worth noting that the literacy promoters (the term used by the NLPN for literacy teachers) are urged to introduce some oral English communication at this stage.

Stage 3 – English for communication/communicative English
This stage is for basic and functional English or English for general communication. It is the task of the literacy promoters to create an environment suitable for communication in English communication. Stage 3 is the last stage of the Basic Literacy Programme.

In terms of overall assessment, the completion of stage 3 is equated with Grade 4 of our formal education. Since it was necessary to bridge the gap between this grade and the level required of a secondary education student, a forth stage was introduced. This stage also serves to equip the learners with general knowledge and skills. The forth stage (not necessarily linked to the three years of the basic literacy stage and is open to everyone who appears to be at the right level. It is open to any person who might be a school drop-out, but could be tested and meet the requirement).

Adult Upper Primary Education (AUPE)
This stage was introduced as a follow up to the basic literacy stage. It covers three years (stages 5–7) and serves as a kind of post-literacy/general knowledge programme. AUPE is still in its initial stages. Unlike the basic literacy programme, for which there is a curriculum framework only, AUPE has got its own curriculum. Different syllabi were designed for the different courses that it includes.

Numeracy is part of the curriculum and is covered in all stages. This is important as people in Namibia live in a cash economy and face issues of having to deal with money and with commercial transactions that require them also to understand the 'language' of business.

Issues related to the Symposium themes

In the remainder of this paper, I will address several of the themes that were discussed at the symposium in light of the experiences of the NLPN.

The curriculum: Is it a centralised curriculum?
To a large extent, the curriculum is centralised, in the sense that it was developed by DABE, the central office in Windhoek (the capital) that is responsible for the NLPN. One may therefore say that the NLPN follows a 'one size fits all' approach.

However, it is worth looking at how the programme is being implemented. At the basic literacy stage (years 1–3), the curriculum is really a framework. The syllabus as well as the literacy materials are developed at Head Office, but with the involvement of participants from the respective regions. The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), the MBESC unit responsible for curriculum and material development has to be engaged in the final approval of any curriculum or materials developed.

District Literacy Organisers (DLOs), with the support of the Regional Literacy Officer (RLO), then recruit and train the literacy promoters, through a pre-service course of three weeks. Promoters are further supported (or entitled to) by regular (monthly) in-service courses or refresher courses.

There have been good efforts to decentralise the curriculum and to make it more flexible.

The *first effort* is the improvement in terms of the content of the materials. The emphasis is to strike a balance between national, regional and/or local issues. The formula that is used looks as follows: 60 per cent of the content covers national issues, 20 per cent regional issues and the remaining 20 per cent local issues. Recently produced materials aim to depict local situations and illustrations for example are chosen carefully. However, the situation is very far from being perfect.

I said already the people responsible for materials production are located in Windhoek. However, and this is the *second effort*, whenever materials are being developed, Head Office staff travel to the respective regions and involve the regional staff (whether DLOs, literacy promoters or community members), in that exercise right from the very start. Efforts have thus been made to move towards decentralising all literacy activities, including the curriculum development.

The literacy promoters
One of the biggest worries the NLPN has been facing (and will continue to face for sometime to come) is the quality of its contracted literacy promoters. Some are good, others are not so good. Though they are teaching the different stages according to their qualification and/or experience, one problem is that most, if not all, resort back to the "didactic method" of teaching as they have experienced during their school years. They mostly follow and stick to the book, while advised against that during their training courses. Pre-service and in- service training courses advise them (or ought to emphasise) to be more innovative and creative. This has an impact on how the curriculum is implemented. As a result of promoters often sticking to the book, the curriculum may be interpreted in a narrower way than expected.

The role of gender in the NLPN
Overall, the programme has a very high turnout of women, both as learners and promoters. There is a concern that more men need to be recruited into the programme. Currently, only about 40 per cent or less of those who are considered to be in need, attend, and this is regarded as a major stumbling block. Some of the problems in attracting male learners are related to patterns of the past, i.e. the 'migrant labour system' that continues to exist (in different form than in the apartheid era) in the fishing and mining industry.

Language issues in relation to adult literacy/numeracy
In the NLPN, literacy starts with mother tongue in the first two stages and from stage 3 onwards the medium of instruction is supposed to be English. English is the official language of the country.

However, the NLPN is now adopting what we call a "dual/literacy approach". There is no question whether dual literacy is right or wrong, but the question is how to strike the balance, that is at what stage to introduce English. I have already said earlier that in stage 2, promoters are encouraged to introduce some spoken English. This is the idea behind the dual literacy approach: to introduce English (e.g. oral English – focusing on everyday situations and the vocabulary they require, for example the names of different parts of the body or asking for and understanding directions). For DABE, this was a compromise, as it was the students who demanded the early introduction of English.

Our indigenous languages have status and are they are vital, which explains why the government is keen to promote them. Most of them have a written form and are taught up to secondary and even university level. There is strong desire to keep these languages alive and vibrant. At the same time, Afrikaans (previously the official language) has remained a lingua-franca up until today.

The role of research and evaluation
This is a difficult area for the NLPN, as we don't seem to have enough capacity to carry out research regularly. However, a number of studies have been undertaken since 1990.

The first overall evaluation of NLPN was conducted in 1994/5 by Dr. Agneta Lind. This was instrumental in the revision of the NLPN "Policy Guidelines for the Second Phase", 1996–2000. The main issues reflected in this Evaluation were relevancy, impact, institutional structures and sustainability of the literacy programme.

In 1996, a post-graduate student (M. Tegborg) from the Institute of International Education, Stockholm University (Sweden) conducted a study entitled, "Adult Literacy and Empowerment: A study of a National Literacy programme in the Caprivi Region, Namibia". This study provided additional evidence of the meaning and impact of literacy for the target group in one region.

The second overall evaluation of the NLPN was conducted in 1999. The main focus was again on issues of relevance, impact, institutional structures and sustainability of the literacy programme.

Regular monitoring and evaluation activities are carried out by DABE throughout the year. The External Review and Advisory Mission (ERA) conducted important studies annually from 1996–99. The ERA Mission provided a "backstopping" function to DABE on Royal Netherlands support to the NLPN.

As part of her PhD thesis, Uta Papen did an interesting piece of research in 1999 and 2000. Her research combined an ethnography of literacy practices in and around NLPN with a policy analysis of NLPN. Her study describes the uses and meanings of literacy in different social contexts and institutional settings of NLPN, e.g. in classrooms and in the training sessions for literacy teachers. The research was mostly carried out in Windhoek and in Katutura, the former black township of the city.

More recently, two studies were commissioned by the Review Team on the Renewal of Adult Learning in Namibia (initiated by the government). The first was a study of providers of adult learning in Namibia. The study, which was finalised in 2003, identified 56 different adult learning providers. The second study, a 'Survey on Perceptions, Delivery Systems and Funding of Adult Learning in Namibia' (2003) was carried out by the University of Namibia's Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education (DANFE). The survey forms part of a wider knowledge base needed by the MBESC to develop new policies on adult learning.

4.4

The High School Equivalency Programme in Jamaica

Elaine Ferguson

Introduction

"Basic" education for the 21st century has been defined as secondary-level. It is estimated that approximately two-thirds of the adult population of Jamaica have not had the benefit of Grade 11 certification. This means that a significant number of Jamaicans are under-educated and cannot take advantages of educational and economic opportunities that may arise. It also places Jamaica at a disadvantage as it seeks to compete with others in a competitive global economy. In a bid to rectify this, programmes are being implemented to improve the educational level of the country's adult population.

One of the major goals of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (MOEY&C) is the achievement of universal secondary education to Grade 11 by 2005. This goal cannot be achieved by conventional means only. Through the use of alternative delivery methods, as proposed in a High School Equivalency Programme (HISEP), educational opportunities at the secondary level and beyond will be provided for persons who were not accommodated by the formal system.

Philosophy of HISEP

Education goes beyond the traditional narrow definition; it speaks to the whole person. It assesses how a person fits into the broader society, and recognises that individuals should be equipped with the skill to access, collect, generate and process data and information. These individuals should also be able to develop the art of critical thinking, the skill of using intellectual initiatives and interventions to solve problems and address situations, as well as to continuously evaluate their own and other people's work.

HISEP will provide additional opportunities for learners with different levels of education and will respond to their specific needs, as individuals will enter the programme at varying degrees of academic ability. Completion of HISEP will enable the adult learners to obtain a high school certificate, which could be the point where they will leave formal education. Or, it could provide the basis for further studies by accessing programmes of tertiary and other study, through available educational and training systems, if so desired by the individual.

The thrust is to promote lifelong learning. This takes learning beyond the formal school environment, at whatever level that terminates, and will encompass not just sporadic opportunities, but a continual process of learning through an individual's active work life and beyond. The HISEP will reflect the principles of adult learning, i.e. it will use participatory methods, will respond to the expectations of the learner and will acknowledge the experiences that each individual brings to the programme.

There are several driving forces that make the provision and utility of lifelong learning an essential characteristic of successful people/nations. Two of these are:

■ The short-shelf life of much existing information; and

■ The exponential rate at which new information develops.

In addition, a Profile of the Ideal Citizen Worker, developed at the 11th Meeting of Heads of State of the Caribbean Community in 1997, lists the following as desirable characteristic and attributes:

■ Capable of seizing the economic opportunities, which the global environment is presenting.

■ Demonstrates multiple literacies, including foreign language skills, independent and critical thinking.

■ Has developed the capacity to create and take advantage of opportunities to control, improve, maintain and promote physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being; and to contribute to the health and welfare of the community and country.

■ Nourishes in him/her and in others the full development of each person's potential without gender stereotyping, and embraces the differences and similarities between females and males as a source of mental strength.

■ Has an informed respect for our cultural heritage and that of others.

These ideas have helped shape the thrust and the direction of movement towards the promotion of life-long learning in Jamaica.

The Development of a High School Equivalency Programme

Over the past two years, the MOEY&C, the Human Employment Resource Training/National Training Agency (HEART/Trust NTA), the National Council on Technical & Vocational Training (NCTVET) and the Jamaica Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL) Foundation have worked collaboratively to develop a HISEP for Jamaica. The developmental process was guided by a steering committee which included representatives from the Caribbean Examinations Council, the University of the West Indies, MOEY&C, HEART Trust/NTA and JAMAL.

The curriculum has been developed by NCTVET, which will also administer the assessment instruments and provide certification, while JAMAL will have responsibility for implementing the programme through its island-wide network of centres, as well as in community-based organisations and workplaces.

Target group

There are three main target groups for HISEP, persons aged 18 and over who:

■ completed primary level education but did not attend secondary school;

■ started but not complete secondary level education; and

■ completed Grade 11 of secondary education but received no certification.

The following data provide an indication of the needs of the three target groups:

■ Enrolment data for 2002/2003 prepared by the Statistical Division of the MOEY&C show that there are approximately 79,000 more students enrolled in Grades 1–6 than are enrolled in

Grades 7–13. (It is not clear what accounts for the lower levels of registration at the higher grade levels).

■ Demographic statistics prepared by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica show that the section of the population which falls within the age group of 12–15 (the average group enrolled in Grades 7–9) is 211,575. The MOEY&C's data put enrolment for Grades 7–9 for 2002/2003 at 148,770. It means, therefore, that 62,805 persons in that age group are unaccounted for. (It is not known at what point in the system these students dropped out; some may, however, be registered in private high schools).

■ Data from the Student Assessment Unit of the MOEY&C show that approximately 17,000 students sat the Jamaica School Certificate (JSC) examination in 2002 and 18,000 candidates applied to sit the exam in 2003. It is being proposed that the JSC be discontinued, but what this data show is that there are many persons seeking to obtain some form of secondary-level qualification.

■ Labour force data point to a high percentage of both employed and unemployed persons who received either no, or varying levels of secondary education, for example, of the 171,800 persons unemployed in October 2002, only 4700 had attained at least five CSEs or their equivalent.

Over the past two years the MOEY&C has been addressing this problem. Many more high school places have been created with the upgrading of several 'secondary' schools to High Schools. In September 2002, approximately 50,000 students entered high school compared to 17,505 in 1998. However if the MOEY&C is to achieve universal secondary education to Grade 11 by 2005 there is a need for HISEP.

The subject areas

The core of the programme will focus on five subject areas that draw their content from traditional areas of study. The core courses are as follows.

Language and communication: using reading, writing and verbal skills to organise and communicate ideas and information in personal and group settings. This will include:

■ using spelling, punctuation, grammar and standard, written English;
■ Using written communication appropriate to the situation to express ideas, needs and concerns, clearly, concisely and accurately;
■ communicating in interpersonal and small groups;
■ communicating in a public setting; and
■ reading critically and analytically.

Mathematics: using numerical and mathematical concepts and logical reasoning to make effective decisions and solve problems. This will include:

■ using effective problem-solving skills;
■ applying techniques of analytical thinking and effective decision-making skills;
■ using numerical and logical reasoning, and applying mathematical concepts in a variety of real life settings; and
■ identifying and fulfilling information needs.

Society and Citizenship: applying social interaction skills to develop positive relationships and

to work with family, community groups and citizens in the society as a whole. This will include:

■ applying effective social interaction skills in order to develop positive relationships with family members, co-workers, friends and other persons in society;
■ working effectively and cooperatively in a group setting;
■ recognising the value of history and culture in building society, and promoting understanding of cooperative work and social environment; and
■ applying a collection of generally accepted ethical standards for "right conduct" in both personal and professional areas.

Science and Technology: understanding the general principles of science and technology and information analysis and their approach to the wider world. This will include:

■ using principles of science and effect on technology and change;
■ identifying and fulfilling information needs; and
■ understanding environmental and health issues, and the effect of human intervention and change.

Literature and the Arts: interpreting and analysing commentaries of passages, and poetry, prose and other cultural forms across time periods. This will include:

■ understanding and interpretation of literary texts and passages; and
■ using non-fiction prose passages, selection of articles, editorials, etc. and various art forms to draw informed conclusions.

HISEP learners will be expected to master the skills, competencies and general knowledge that are acquired in a five-year secondary education programme, utilising their life experiences, and information and resource materials that are available in the media, in libraries, in work-places, in tertiary- and community-based institutions, and other facilities. The course content in these five subject areas is designed to satisfy certification requirements that are equivalent to the Caribbean Examination Council's Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Education (CSEC), the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level (GCE) certificate, and the Secondary Schools Certificate (SSC) [Levels 4 and 5].

In addition to the core courses, the curriculum will foster the integration of the attributes of the lifelong learner, i.e.:

■ love of knowledge;
■ critical thinking;
■ values and ethics;
■ high self-esteem;
■ sense of responsibility;
■ autonomy;
■ empowerment;
■ self-motivation; and
■ strong sense of self.

Modes of delivery

The methodology of teaching and the type of learning activities that are to be used, though universal in scope, will be placed in the context of the Jamaican cultural environment. The proposed methodology, utilising a modular format, is:

- self-directed (independent) learning;
- tutorials/group activity;
- audio cassettes, CD-ROMs; and
- web-based, interactive learning.

Assessment towards certification

- portfolio building;
- validated continuous assessment;
- self/peer assessment;
- written/oral presentations; and
- final assessment.

Certification

The High School Equivalency Diploma will be issued by NCTVET to persons who have attained a passing grade in all five subjects. This will be equivalent to Grade 11 qualifications such as the CCSE/GCE/SSC. This certificate will formally recognise the competencies of candidates who have demonstrated competency levels that meets or surpasses the requirements of CCSE/GCE/SSC in each of the subject areas.

Current status

A 12-month pilot period for the project began in 2003 September at 12 centres (JAMAL adult learning centres, community- and workplace-based enterprises) with a maximum of 25 students each, at locations across the country.

English for Speakers of Caribbean Languages (ESOCL)

Liz Millman

As part of the mostly voluntary, locally supported adult literacy work that was carried out in England in the 1970s and 80s, there existed several initiatives to support the reading and writing of speakers of Caribbean languages. At the time, student writing was an important part of adult literacy work. Students' own writings, some of which was written in non-standard English, served as reading materials for other learners.

The experiences of this early phase are documented in a number of publications, including the book 'Caribbean English and Adult Literacy' produced by Roxy Harris in 1979 and published by the then Adult Literacy Unit (later to become Adult Literacy Basic Skills Unit and today known as the Basic Skills Agency). Another book was 'Language and Power', published by a group of teachers working on the Inner London Education Authority's Afro-Caribbean Language and Literacy Project. The ethos of the activities documented in these and other publications was to provide a space for speakers of Caribbean language to tell their own stories, to use and develop their own language and to learn standard English.

In recent years, the interest in promoting vernacular literacies has almost completely vanished and there is nowadays little state support for such initiatives. The advent of *Skills for Life*, the new government programme to support adult language, literacy and numeracy, has led to the establishment of a completely revised and much more centralised system for adult language, literacy and numeracy where the focus is on acquiring the dominant language. This is exemplified by the new national standards and the new national curricula.

Language support for Caribbean language speakers has not been taken into account by *Skills for Life* so far. It does not deal with the issue of language diversity and students are caught between the literacy curriculum and the ESOL curriculum. The ESOL curriculum is considered to be more appropriate for Caribbean language speakers, but many learners prefer to attend literacy classes, as they want to improve their English. A further issue is that there is little understanding of the Creole languages spoken by those who originate from the Caribbean and how they differ from standard English. Caribbean Creole languages are often regarded as inferior and this has of course affected the speakers of these languages.

Nevertheless, the *Skills for Life* strategy has meant a renewal of the government's commitment for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL and has provided opportunities to revive the debate about the role and status of the Caribbean languages. An important concern is how much teachers know about their students' language(s). Part of the *Skills for Life* strategy has been to improve the quality of teaching of basic skills. New qualifications at NVQ Levels 2, 3 and 4 are coming on stream. Since September 2002 new teachers in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL need a Level 4 qualification as well as an approved initial teacher training certificate. At Level 2, adult literacy teachers have to be aware of 'the social factors influencing language and literacy learning and development' and at Level 4, they have to be aware of 'the factors that influence and shape the use of language and literacy'. Potentially, this provides the grounds for developing an awareness of language diversity among teachers.

All teachers and others who work with Caribbean language speakers need to have an

understanding of these languages, enabling them to see where English-based Caribbean speakers may be on the continuum between their English based Caribbean language and standard English. They also need to address the misunderstandings that still prevail about the use of English vocabulary in many Caribbean languages and the stigma that is often attached to these languages. Language is still power today and as we live in a world where all languages are now quickly developing and changing, it is important to support understanding of the Caribbean languages and to provide opportunities for learners to use and develop their own languages. The development of the new *Skills for Life* teacher training programmes provides opportunities for trainers to teach about Caribbean languages so that they can be valued while at the same time students can be helped to improve their standard English.

In the past few years, City College Birmingham has responded positively to meet the specific adult literacy needs of Jamaican Creole speakers from local communities and students from Jamaica. Local people from the community were given opportunities for training as tutors. Staff from the Jamaican community were recruited to try to develop best ways to support learners. Several of these now hold positions of responsibility in the Foundation Studies team of the college.

The College is developing 'English for Speakers of Caribbean Languages' approaches using the ESOL curriculum, although teachers may also make use of the literacy curriculum. The focus is on producing materials and resources that are relevant to the learners. The teachers at Birmingham College emphasise the need for learners to be bi-lingual. They actively support the development of reading and writing skills in standard English while at the same time working with the students' own languages.

Section 5

Reflections across projects

5.1

Reflections on how to resolve tensions between community development and educational empowerment

Jane Mace

The presentations by Roshan Chitrakar on Nepal and Malini Ghose on India both gave accounts of a central dilemma in adult literacy programme design in any country: how to resolve the tension between community development and educational empowerment. Malini was clear that she saw literacy 'as a means to transform power relations'; Roshan's organisation had been criticised for being too much of a 'social mobilisation project'. This was a theme which linked two experiences of working with very poor people living in rural areas – social realities which, at first sight, might seem very far indeed from those which apply to adult literacy work in Britain. As indeed they are.

Where resonances occurred, they were in the almost casual asides which both speakers let fall. Roshan told us that the Community Literacy Project in Nepal works in 25 districts in the country with people whose main concerns were growing enough food to eat. Literacy had to be seen to be of use for them to have any interest in engaging with it. He said that in the last couple of years they had used the approach of *community scribing* as a means to integrate literacy into existing activities and enable non-literate people to participate in producing wall newspapers. Having played a part in training for this, I felt a glad connection between adult literacy practice in this country and the work he described *(see Mace 2002: xiii and 201)*. Then, in passing, Roshan said that the question CLPN continually faced was: 'How do we measure achievement at community and group level?' For British adult literacy teachers and trainers, this offered a sudden twist to the more usual issue pressing down on us: that of assessing progress by individual learners against the present national targets of achievement. It felt refreshing to hear re-articulated a measurement question which gave the focus back to literacy's role in social and political change.

As for Malini's aside, this had to do with assumptions about participation. Her topic was the literacy work developed over 10 to 12 years in rural areas of Northern India. Teachers and facilitators, she told us, had worked together to develop a primer via a process of coming together in a residential setting. Among the problems they faced was the issue of language choice. Should it be the 'standard' – Hindi – or the local language – Bundeli? Bundeli, it was felt, was more 'nuanced' than Hindi, and in the discussions they had (in that language), there was, as she put it, 'an outbreak of storytelling' around each word they were to use. This picture of teachers, learners and facilitators sharing in curriculum development processes together seemed particularly striking to some of us in a context where a national curriculum has been imposed from 'above'.

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5.2

Reflection on how practitioners from different parts of the world can learn from each other

Phyllis Thompson

By virtue of their life experience, the adult literacy students bring the world into learning and teaching, wherever the setting may be around the globe. Refugee women, for example are able to talk about their trauma in a literacy class, the powerless peasant is able to question the unequal distribution of power in his society, the fashion conscious youth is encouraged to think about the labour behind the labels they flaunt and the housewife contemplates the fairness of the trade that brought the coffee/tea they will drink when they take a break from their class.

In recognising the literacy learners as local and global citizens we cannot lose sight of the socio-emotional dimension of the learning and teaching process and in the essence of the 'place' of experience in literacy. How then do we begin to acknowledge learners' expectations, clarify curriculum expectations and maintain an educational focus? What is it that we do to the students in a literacy class? What are authentic learning outcomes? What are the key literacy skills for a global society? How do we balance content and methodology? How do we assess and award success in adult literacy? What is best practice?

If the above challenges the pedagogy then it must also challenge the expectations we have of the 'literacy teacher'. Learners they most certainly are but by what name? Facilitators? Tutors? Community development workers? Social Workers? Political Activitist? Educators? Paulo Freire and others have helped us understand that we bring our particular worldview and values to the learning process. So what background, training and competencies do we expect of the good/effective literacy 'tutor'?

At the heart of literacy learning and teaching is the intention and the desire to communicate. To this end, literacy is a means to social inclusion – a remedy for social exclusion and it clearly embodies learning as well as a social, political an economic, and an environmental agenda.

If literacy is something to do with communication between different worlds, it is in order to ask how far do the 'professional' in literacy communicate with each other or enable the learners to do so. Literacy practitioners in the North and South testify of the added value gained when funders, partners, facilitators and learners discus and agree a shared set of criteria for assessing the quality of learning outcomes in the provision of adult literacy.

How best can practitioners wherever they are on the learner-teacher continuum in different parts of the world learn from each other and what are some mechanisms for doing this? Reflect which has its genesis in the South is acclaimed by many practitioners in the South as a holistic and powerful approach to teaching literacy. It is designed to connect the local experience of the learner to wider themes and global issues. But at the moment it is no more than an interesting alternative for practitioners here in the UK, which they have so far had few opportunities to learn about it and which has not yet been tested in the UK context. Yet government funds via DfID promote it as an effective method for learning and teaching literacy in the South. Perhaps there is an important role for DfID and the DfES to play in the UK to help establish greater opportunities for links and dialogue between stakeholders in the South and the North in the interest of *Skills for Life* and sustainable development in our global society.

5.3

Can we transfer new ideas and approaches without falling into the trap of the recipe paradigm?

Anna Robinson-Pant

Introduction

As a development worker, I have been concerned with issues of 'transferability' during much of my working life. Whilst based in Nepal with various international NGOs (non-governmental organisations), I was often conscious of introducing (or occasionally imposing) concepts, ideas and practices from the UK or USA. When different belief systems were suddenly put in juxtaposition, the tension was often quite tangible. This might be when traditional birth attendants were 'trained' that it was not acceptable to insist that a woman gave birth in a cow shed (the usual practice, as she was considered unclean) or in an educational context, encouraging adults to participate in a group discussion rather than sitting chanting the alphabet in rows. As a trainer based in Nepal, I was often placed in the situation of receiving and being expected to 'transfer' new ideas or methodologies (usually from short term consultants who flew in from the UK or USA) to local projects. Yet I look back at the most exciting aspect of development work as lying in those moments when the interaction about concepts or ideas from 'outside' gave us the opportunity to re-examine our practice and create a new approach. This was not a one-off transfer of a method or idea, but a two way process of critiquing and transformation by the people involved in implementing a project. Significantly, this happened most when I was a volunteer, working on a more equal level within a team of Nepali teacher trainers. Later on in my career, as I became detached from continuous involvement at community level and regarded as a higher status 'outsider', I found it difficult to facilitate 'transfer' in a creative way. Now that I am working in the UK, I am also aware of translating my experience from Nepal into another context and the need to become more sensitive to how ideas are shared and transformed between different cultures. Here I refer also to different organisational 'cultures' (e.g. school and university, policy-oriented research and academic) .

At the Lancaster symposium, I thought it would be useful to reflect on two situations in which I have been aware of people transferring new ideas – both focusing on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), but in very different contexts. PRA is a methodology used to facilitate discussions with communities about their ideas for development through creating visual representations such as maps, matrices, pictures. Emerging from a "stream of influences" (Chamber 1994), including applied anthropology and participatory action research, PRA is regarded by many as a 'Western' approach, whereas others claim that it has evolved in developing countries[20], is based on oral practices and local materials, and should be considered as more 'indigenous' than surveys and other dominant planning approaches. Already the question arises: who is transferring what and to whom?

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20. As the Lancaster conference used this term, I have chosen to refer to poorer countries of the world as 'developing countries' rather than 'less economically developed countries' (LEDCs). I have also used the terms 'South' ('developing countries') and 'North' ('developed countries') to suggest the polarisation in this write-up.

PRA in Nepal: transferring what?

The first scene I discussed at the symposium was from a PRA gender training programme in the hills of Nepal. A group of women were constructing a PRA matrix, under the guidance of a female facilitator from a Kathmandu NGO, as the basis for discussing gender relations and decision making in their households. The facilitator's aim was to transfer not only a new method of analysing people's situation (the PRA matrix) but new ideas about gender relations and roles. On the matrix, the women listed various assets (land, money, etc.) and then indicated in one column whether men or women had control over the particular resource and in another column, who had access to it. While the women discussed the matrix, a group of men were sitting watching and making comments too. The whole community were actually quite familiar with the practice of PRA (though not this particular tool) as it is a common entry point for organisations planning a development programme in a new area (whether educational, agricultural or health-related). They also recognised the message about equal gender relations that was implied through this activity and associated this with development agencies. They were all aware of participating within a certain discourse through the matrix ranking activity and I sometimes observed people consciously playing to the facilitator's expectations and manipulating their responses (such as men saying they oppressed their wives to appear 'undeveloped').

Seeing the PRA activity from the point of view of a "recipe", the group of women and men knew the ingredients and what roles they should perform, to the extent that the exercise could become mechanistic. From the participants' point of view, the purpose of this activity was to secure certain concrete outcomes: the PRA activity was necessary to develop their relationship with donors who could offer financial assistance to their community. This particular event became even more complicated when the group of villagers discovered that the purpose was for the facilitator to gain practice in PRA as part of the training course – rather than for them to become involved in a development programme. They then demanded payment for participating in the matrix activity.

Looking more widely at the practice of PRA in developing countries, there are instances where the inevitably hierarchical relationships between donor agency and local community have been challenged through using the methodology. Rather than viewing the approach as a tool for becoming involved in development projects, occasionally participants (and many NGO facilitators) have regarded PRA as a potential source of income. In India, some communities have offered their services to train development workers in PRA in situ (from as far afield as the World Bank Washington) on a paid basis. Unlike the Nepal situation that I described above, in this latter case the community and the donors recognised that the 'transfer' of PRA was not just around learning the methods on a technical level and absorbing the message (of equal gender relations being desirable) but could become a two way learning process.

PRA in Norwich: looking at the process of transferral

Turning to my experience of using PRA in Norwich (UK), I discussed the implications of introducing what was regarded as a methodology from the South to teachers in the North. As part of a research project on school councils in primary schools, I worked with a team of teachers and a primary teacher trainer to look at how school council meetings could be made more 'child-friendly'. At present, the school councils are based on an adult model using minutes, agenda and facilitated by a chairperson. We used PRA methods as a starting point

for developing communicative strategies to involve more children in meetings and enable them to have greater control over the agenda. Recognising that primary teachers are all too used to being handed a 'package' of new techniques to implement in their schools, we were concerned to encourage a critical approach to the PRA activities rather than to 'transfer' the technology. Using PRA in workshops as a group, we began by using the matrix activity to discuss our own parameters in decision making (for example, the various agencies to whom teachers felt they were accountable when they were in the classroom). The group of teachers then began to use the PRA tools and other visual approaches in their school council meetings.

Things to consider/ Suggestions	Safety	Durability (lasts)	Sharability	Space	Fun/pleasure
Fenced football area	xxx	xxx	xx	xx	xxx
PE Shed	xxx	xxx	x	xxx	x
Concrete over mud	xx	xxx	xxx	xxx	x
Water fountain	xxx	xxx	xx	xxx	x
Tubs of flowers	xxx	x	x	xxx	X

Copy of a matrix made by primary age children in a Norfolk school to discuss ideas for improving their playground.

The teachers were surprised at how even the youngest children could analyse and decide criteria on the matrix (see above, they decided on 'safety', 'durability' as ways of comparing their ideas). As a result of using the matrix to decide on how to improve the playground, the children decided to request money for a water feature from a local charity. The teachers were however left with a dilemma as they felt they would not look like a "needy school" if they specified that the children wanted something aesthetic, rather than something functional, like a PE shed. The implications of using PRA methodology were that children became more aware of the process of decision making and could begin to challenge teachers' authority when they had a difference of opinion.

As PRA methods were used more widely in class councils, we noted the ways in which different teachers and children chose to transform the approach. Several teachers felt uneasy with the open-ended nature of the activities. They were used to having to state in advance of each lesson their specific learning outcomes (in other areas of the largely objectives-driven primary curriculum) so they adjusted the PRA activities accordingly. For example, rather than asking children to draw anything that concerned them during the school day (to raise at school council), a teacher asked her class to draw one good and one bad thing (under the happy and sad faces format used commonly in primary classrooms). Though PRA is usually conducted on the floor using concrete objects or symbols, teachers chose to draw a matrix on the whiteboard and conduct the exercise as a whole class with pens. Drawing on the success of the matrix activity in the class council, one teacher used the same approach to initiate a discussion on 'making choices' within a PSHE (Personal Social and Health Education) lesson. The children were asked to decide whether they wanted to go on a school trip to the zoo, museum or funfair according to different criteria – the difference with the school council context being that this was completely fictional and they were not to go on a trip at all! The use of PRA in this context raises issues similar to my Nepal PRA example – how far was the matrix activity simply a role play agreed upon by both parties as unrelated to life?

Our experiences in school showed us that children too were keen to transform the methods. They disliked sitting on the floor to do PRA and told us firmly that "we do sitting at tables" in school council, preferring the adult status of their conventional meetings. Some children saw the mapping activities as "art attack", an opportunity to create a good finished product rather than to express their ideas through a quick drawing or diagram. This was partly because they were used to visuals being put on display in the school as "good work" and were wary of PRA diagrams which seemed rough and ready.

Through the differing contexts in which we worked with PRA methods, it became clear that various factors such as personality (of teachers and children), school culture and the dominant practices would determine who took what from the new approach. One teacher was more interested in the participatory ideology behind PRA than the methods and used it to reflect on his practice. Another teacher was experimenting with different approaches to group work so she used PRA to look at group dynamics. What was apparent in all the schools was that the teachers themselves were used to a "top down" paradigm where they felt they had little say in what they taught, so had to adjust the PRA activities to fit within the constraints of the national curriculum.

How do you move away from a recipe paradigm?
I introduced these two accounts of using PRA in contrasting contexts to begin to reflect on what makes 'transfer' a creative process rather than an imposition. Comparing the Nepal and UK situation, the following points begin to emerge:

- The need to understand and agree on what is being transferred is often overlooked. In the Nepal example, the facilitator tended to assume PRA was a tool rather than an ideology so that 'training' is seen at the level of learning techniques. In the context of 'gender training', this means that ideological differences can be treated as simply not having enough knowledge (on the part of local communities) rather than critically discussing differing views. In the Norwich case, we realised increasingly the importance of discussing our views of 'children's participation' and what we meant by this in the context of hierarchical school structures – rather than assuming that we shared the same aims and perspectives.

- It is important to encourage critical reflection on both contexts between which an approach is being shared. This is not just about understanding cultural differences and belief/value systems, but about exploring differing power relations. For example, in the UK project, PRA activities were shaped by our understanding of how teachers work in relation to top-down structures. In Nepal, it was around dominant relationships and communication between donors and participants, which often prevented interaction about the new approaches. In both cases, the wider power relationships (North-South (developed/ developing country) and school-university) also affected how both sides attempted to transform or implement the new approach. Related to this is the question of ownership and labelling (which arose in discussion of Reflect in this seminar) – why does it matter whether PRA is seen as a 'Northern' or 'Southern' methodology? The heated debate about the 'packaging' and publication of PRA/Reflect experiences at our seminar did suggest that the role of North/South power relationships in influencing who is entitled to disseminate and create knowledge is sometimes overlooked.

Relating my PRA example to the conference theme of learning from developing countries' experience in adult literacy, I think there is a danger that we can mechanistically extract literacy teaching and planning approaches from their original contexts and assume that they can be inserted into a new one. As I have suggested above, we need first to consider why and

how these approaches were successful in their original context. We can then begin to understand what we are transferring (simply methods or an ideology?) and to explore the conditions under which people will feel they can experiment and transform those approaches. This will require time and, above all, a recognition of the hierarchical context in which people work (whether in the UK or developing countries). Above all, this may raise questions about how far people should be encouraged to adapt not just the methods and technology, but the original purpose? As I illustrated above, PRA can be used to control rather than to empower children, and so-called 'Freirean' literacy approaches have in many areas of the world been used by governments as an efficient way of propagating 'domesticating' messages to their adult population.

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5.4

Connecting work from literacy programmes in developing and developed worlds: World Education's experience

Cristine Smith

Introduction

World Education is a private, non-profit organisation, based in Boston, Massachusetts, dedicated to improving the lives of the poor through economic and social development programs. We provide training and technical assistance in nonformal education for adults and children, with special emphasis on income generation, small enterprise development, literacy, education for the workplace, environmental education, reproductive health, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS education, and refugee training. Our projects are designed to contribute to individual growth, as well as to community and national development.

In any literacy program, all three components should be high-quality, but usually one or another of these components (usually either materials or teacher training and methods) is given more emphasis. It is hard to imagine why a program would emphasise monitoring over materials or methods, but it now appears that the adult literacy funders in the US may be trying to do exactly that. In World Education's programs, the emphasis has been primarily on materials. Historically, this was based both on philosophy but also on the need to reach large numbers of beginning-level adult learners with an educational approach that is successful for the majority of learners when used by teachers without much educational training themselves (example, the Nepal National Literacy Program).

However, as we have moved into more specialised literacy programs that integrate specific content with basic skills (i.e. integrated literacy and health programs in Nepal and Mali, integrated literacy and livelihoods programs in Nepal and India), we have emphasised teacher training and methods in post-literacy phases where learners need to figure out how to apply their literacy skills to the health and livelihood needs they face in their daily lives (i.e., women's groups analyse and map the market for particular livelihoods in their areas).

The WEEL Program in Nepal

An example of World Education's approach to literacy education is the Women's Economic Empowerment and Literacy (WEEL) program in Nepal. The goal of this education program is to help women become literate, form an independent savings and credit group, access credit through the group fund, and learn about how to improve their livelihoods. The WEEL program lasts 21 months and has three phases.

- Basic literacy: WEEL uses the national six-month basic literacy (*Naya Goreto*) course in addition to ten new supplementary lessons. The supplementary lessons focus on women's status and productive roles, women's empowerment, and the benefits of forming groups.
- Post-literacy: The three-month post literacy course, entitled *Thalani*, focuses solely on concepts and logistics of savings, including the purposes of savings groups, how to save money within the group, how to keep household accounts and budgets, how to deposit money in the bank.

- Continuing education: There are 12 once-a-month continuing education booklets, used for self-study; women read them as individuals or they can read and talk about them in their group, the meetings of which they organise themselves. The first five booklets deal with the mechanics of revolving group credit. The last seven booklets focus on how to improve livelihoods. In addition to self-study, each group participates together in seven full-day, once-a-month workshops on livelihood issues during the last seven months of the program. The group leaders and the NGO representative co-facilitate each workshop, which includes a workbook for each participant.

  Since 1994, over 10,000 women have participated in the WEEL program, resulting in the development of over 350 women's savings and credit groups. The women in these groups keep all of their own accounts and manage the group fund, which ranges from about 4,000 rupees ($50) in the smallest and poorest groups up to 200,000 rupees ($2500) for the largest and richest groups, which is roughly 25 times the Nepal per capita income; after three years, the average group has a group fund (savings and interest) of about 20,000 rupees ($250). Some women who have successfully been part of a WEEL group are now gaining confidence to join other community groups. One woman was elected to the school board and now feels the need to learn English. There are multiple examples of WEEL women joining local user groups (forestry user groups, water user groups), and there are several instances where WEEL women are standing for local elections. In the past two years, the WEEL staff has begun to see the first loans for women buying land (about 15,000 rupees) and loans for house construction, using money from the group funds.

Lessons learned from World Education Programs in Asia and Africa

While we haven't done as much work as we would like in translating lessons learned from literacy programs in Asia and Africa to the US context, the following lessons emerge as food for thought:

- Materials and methods have to be based on what we believe about how people learn to read. While there are different philosophies about that, at least the rationale should be clear within the philosophy adopted, so that teachers know why given materials and methods are being employed. The populations of learners that we serve in Nepal and Mali, for example, are different from the populations of learners within the US, where there are a larger proportion of adult learners with learning disabilities, and this may also dictate different methods or materials. However, many teachers in the US do not receive an orientation to why they are using the materials given to them, let alone training in how to develop materials and curriculum when none are required.

- Integrating specific content with instruction in basic reading, writing and math skills (what we call "integrated literacy" in Asia and Africa and what in the US is called "content-based instruction") seems to work better than a generic "functional" literacy approach that covers a wide range of topics. We feel this is so because the content is more closely aligned with learners' real needs. This is an area of great controversy in the US, where the discussion of "basic skills" versus "learner-centered instruction" continues.

- Community buy-in and support for the literacy program and literacy classes is critical. This means not only working with the community to set up the program but also means that the classes run better when the teacher is local and is accountable to the students and the community. We don't do enough of this in the US, and several states now have initiatives to bring

the various community development agencies, including the literacy program, together more and to have closer ties with the community. Finding and encouraging teachers from among the learner population is also an area of great concern for more and more programs in the US, where the majority of teachers do not share the same race, educational background, community, language, and class as the learners they teach.

■   We have found in Asia that literacy programs are more successful when they are designed and funded to engage learners over a longer period of time. In some cases, this means resources enough so that learners receive almost two years of instruction (up to 500 hours of instruction). It takes this long to help learners really solidify basic literacy skills within their lives and to integrate new literacy practices into their lives (improved health care, increases in income) so that other outcomes are achieved. In the US, where the average number of contact hours for an adult learner is far less than 100 hours per year, the discussion is just beginning of whether to fund programs to serve as many learners as possible or to improve quality and services so that students can attend for longer and receive more intensive instruction.

■   Regardless of whether materials or methods lead the instructional approach, literacy classes for adults are better when they don't employ the methods used in bad schooling. We have found in Nepal and Mali that beginning teachers in particular do well with a given set of materials and methods, as they simultaneously acquire the skills to run the classes, work with individual learners, etc. The materials are not only geared to help class participants learn, but they also serve as a useful guide for new facilitators. When teachers become more experienced, then it is easier to move them to the next level of teaching techniques, where they can create their own materials. However, all teachers need training and support so that they are steered away from teaching as they were taught in school. In the US, where most teachers taught in the K–12 system, few teachers are required or supported to receive initial or on-going training in how to teach adults in ways that really engage them, and few receive observation or feedback on their teaching.

■   Local organisations need a good deal of support to initiate and develop the program. This requires on-going education in all three components of the literacy program (materials, training and methods, monitoring) so that the local organisation eventually becomes autonomous not only at running the program but in improving and extending it. In the US, required policies about funding and structuring literacy programs, rather than support and education for the local programs, are the primary drivers of program improvement, and this needs attention.

Glossary

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CLPN	Community Literacy Project Nepal
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (UK Government)
DfID	Department for International Development (UK Government)
EFA	Education For All
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESOCL	English for Speakers of Caribbean Languages
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
GALAE	General Authority on Literacy and Adult Education
LAMP	Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (UNESCO)
LGM	Learner-generated materials
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
LOCAL	Learner Oriented Community Adult Literacy
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NLPN	National Literacy Project in Namibia
NRDC	National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy
ODA	Overseas Development Agency (UK Government)
OPL	Older People's Literacy Programme
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan
RaPal	Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (British)
RiPal	Research in Practice in Adult Literacy (Canadian)
Reflect	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (ActionAid)
SANLI	The South Africa National Literacy Initiative
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
TMM	Tailor-made materials
TOT	Training of Teachers
UNISA	University of South Africa

List of participants

Name	Organisation
Alan Rogers	Uppingham Seminars
Anna Robinson-Pant	University of East Anglia
Beans Ngatjizeko	University of Namibia
Brian Street	Kings College, London University
Cathy Kell	University of Auckland
Cristine Smith	World Education; National Centre for the Study of Learning and Literacy
David Archer	Action Aid, London
David Barton	Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University and NRDC
Desiree Lopez	NRDC, Institute of Education, University of London
Elaine Ferguson	JAMAL – Jamaica Adult Literacy
Ismail Baguma	NRDC – Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University
James Kanyesigye	Action Aid, Uganda
Jane Mace	International Consultant
Juliet McCaffery	BALID – British Association for Literacy in Development
Juliet Millican	Education for Development
Lascelles Lewis	JAMAL – Jamaica Adult Literacy
Lindsey Howard	DfID – Department for International Development
Liz Millman	City College, Birmingham
Mary Hamilton	Department of Educational Research, Lancaster University and NRDC
Malini Ghosh	Nirantar, Delhi, India
Olivia Sagan	NRDC, Institute of Education, University of London
Phoebe Emond	City of Bristol College
Phyllis Thompson	Development Education Association, London
Rachel Hodge	Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University and NRDC
Roshan Chitrakar	CLPN – Community Literacies Project Nepal
Simon Kisira	LABE – Literacy and Adult Basic Education, Uganda
Susan Dray	Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University
Uta Papen	Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University
Ursula Howard	NRDC, Institute of Education, University of London

www.nrdc.org.uk