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# Adult Literacy in the Third World

## A Review of Objectives and Strategies



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ADULT LITERACY IN THE THIRD WORLD -  
A REVIEW OF OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

by

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## PREFACE

This study on objectives and strategies of adult literacy in the Third World was commissioned through the International Institute of Education, Stockholm, by SIDA (Swedish International Development Authority) on behalf of the International Working Group on Education (IWGE), composed of education representatives from western donor agencies (see Terms of Reference, Annex 1).

Drafts of the review have been distributed and commented upon before this final version was edited. Nearly 100 copies of the second draft were sent out, together with a Questionnaire (see Annex 2), composed of two parts: "Comments on draft review" and "International cooperation", to aid agencies (25), specialized Third World institutions i.e. ministries of education (20), experts - both practitioners and researchers (25), and members or representatives of NGOs from both South and North (approx. 25).

The comments we have received on the contents of the draft report have been very useful and above all extremely positive and rewarding. All responses except one (CIDA), have explicitly answered positively to the first question of Part One of the questionnaire: by and large their experiences do support the conclusions of the review. Furthermore our work has kindly been lauded by many of the respondents, with comments such as: "a very balanced state of the art report", "an excellent job", "a valuable compression of much of the current literature on literacy", "a thoughtful and thorough piece of work", "should be widely distributed". Thankyou!

It is of course impossible fully to integrate all the comments received. We have, however, seriously tried to consider them all and done our best to make direct use of them. Certain valuable suggestions, to do them full justice, would unfortunately have required a wider study than the scope of this review allows for.

We are very grateful for the attention and work dedicated to answering the questionnaire and giving comments on the drafts of this paper, by the following institutions and people:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
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| Adult education departments | Ethiopia and Kenya   |
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## 0. SUMMARY

This summary is organized in the form of an abstract of each chapter in the document.

### 1. Purpose, Scope and Limitations

This review on Adult Literacy has been commissioned by SIDA within the framework of the IWGE exchange of experiences on basic education in developing countries. The purpose is to give an account of and analyse existing experiences and research on Adult Literacy and its immediate follow-up, "post-literacy". A selection of sources and experiences is however necessary to make in a study like this. Our purpose has been to deal with the larger issues, such as objectives and strategies, rather than detailed descriptive accounts of many particular cases. Our selection of experiences and sources are determined by our own perceptions and backgrounds and are intended to represent different political and economic settings with divergent objectives, strategies and results in order to generalize them in a more theoretical way. Our limitations in time, location and backgrounds have led to a certain bias towards sources in English and geographically towards Eastern and Southern Africa as compared to for example sources in French on francophone countries.

We consider literacy as a basic human right that has to be struggled for collectively as a contribution to the creation of a more just society, within each nation and globally.

### 2. Literacy Statistics

There are about 900 million illiterate adults in the world. The highest illiteracy rates are found in the Least Developed Countries, mainly in Africa, and 60 per cent of all illiterates are women. In India and China about half of the world's illiterate adult population can be found.

The literacy data gives a general picture of the situation, in spite of several reasons for questioning the reliability of existing statistics, notably the following:

- the notion of literacy varies from country to country;
- the measures of literacy used are often very rough; and
- the coverage of the data is often incomplete.

### 3. Research and Evaluation of Adult Literacy

Adult Literacy is a relatively recent field of research and has been given little support compared to other issues in the social sciences. Attention has been focused on the methodology of teaching, including the choice of language of instruction, and on motivation for literacy at the level of individuals, communities and governments. One of the largest investments made in evaluation work was that linked to the UNDP/UNESCO-promoted Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP). More action-oriented or participatory forms of research on Adult Literacy have emerged since then. Evaluation studies are also provided by the sponsoring bodies or agencies running the literacy activities evaluated. Furthermore, important sources of experience and documentation derive from a number of international gatherings, where literacy work has been reported and discussed. Publications and networks for exchange of literacy experiences are promoted by the ICAE, DSE, UNESCO (including the IIEP and the Institute of Education in Hamburg), UNICEF and others. The role of the International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods in Teheran has, however, unfortunately not been fully taken over by any other institute, since it ceased to function.

### 4. Definitions and Concepts of Literacy

In this chapter we first discuss the variety and vagueness of literacy definitions. It is pointed out that there is a gap between broader concepts of literacy and operational definitions necessary for evaluating literacy progress. UNESCO's recommended definitions of literacy and functional literacy are quoted. The relativity of the concepts of eradication of illiteracy and literacy success are also discussed. Secondly, we try to summarize the development of internationally adopted concepts of literacy. We have identified three main periods, each representing a new trend:

- 1945-1964: "fundamental education", a term adopted to describe a broad field of development activities (eventually merged with the ideology of "community development"), whereof one was non-formal literacy programmes for adults and children. A broad concept of functional literacy (excluding numeracy), stressing the promotion of practical skills, emerged during this period, though the results of actual literacy activities were very poor.

- 1965-1974: "Functional literacy" within the framework of EWLP with strict economic growth aims, launched by UNESCO and adopted internationally at the World Conference in Teheran in 1965. The idea was to experiment the economic returns of literacy, when linked to specific areas or target groups in industry or agriculture undergoing rapid development. The contents would centre around the production process of each project.

- 1975- : "A Turning Point for Literacy" , expressed in the Declaration of Persepolis in 1975, in which literacy is critically reviewed and conceived as a -political, human and cultural process of consciousness-raising and liberation. This turning point was influenced by the critical assessment of the EWLP made by UNPD/UNESCO and by the Freire-inspired radical pedagogical movement of the early seventies. During this most recent period it has been agreed in the international literacy debate that literacy must be functional in a broad sense and that literacy is only one step towards achieving the various objectives set out. The provision of "basic education" for all children and adults has in the 1980's become a major concern in the international community, which has led to the promotion of both mass adult literacy campaigns and of UPE for children in a reformed; more "relevant" and cost-efficient primary school system.

## 5. Why Literacy?

In this chapter we include a historical perspective on literacy in today's industrialized countries. It shows that universal schooling and literacy have been linked to state formation, trade and cultural exchange, urbanization and economic expansion. It also shows that literacy has been a subject of political struggle and conflict. Apart from the gradualist UPE strategy, there are a few historical examples of "accelerated" models that include specific adult literacy programmes. Finally we argue that the conditions of dependency and consequent economic and political constraints in the third world today hardly permit a smooth gradual universalization of literacy.

Furthermore we critically examine the validity of some arguments against considerable efforts to promote adult literacy in developing countries. In doing this, we discuss the relationship between literacy and development, which certainly is dialectical and not a one-way causal link. We conclude that the question "Why Literacy?" can be answered with a wide range of justifications related to either basic values, such as human rights and equity, or assumed effects of literacy in different contexts, and that literacy in itself is only a potential tool that can be used for a variety of economic, social, political and cultural purposes, either through the process itself or through the utilization of acquired literacy skills.

## 6. State Objectives for Launching Literacy Programmes

The role of the state and its multiple, sometimes conflicting, motives for launching literacy programmes, is discussed in this chapter. Although most states declare a mixture of objectives when they formulate national literacy aims, in most cases one can detect what the principal objective is. We have distinguished

This is the most extensive chapter of the document, starting with an analysis of the nature of literacy strategies, i.e. models of planning and implementation of literacy programmes/campaigns,

## 9. Literacy Strategies--Implementation and Results

In this chapter we discuss the rather weak response among adult illiterates to literacy programmes if there are no specific efforts for mobilization towards creating motivation. The problem of large drop-out and low attendance rates after initial mobilization and enrolment is also analyzed. The conditions of poverty in rural areas, lack of self-confidence, disillusion regarding the benefits from literacy learning, discouraging teaching methods, and the lack of easy and useful reading material are factors that explain low attendance and weak "motivation". The participation and motivation of women is finally discussed specifically. In some countries, far more women than men register for literacy classes, but the general oppressed situation of women prevents them from attending classes regularly and lead to high drop-out rates and poor achievement compared to men. Some examples that show the liberating potential of literacy for women are mentioned.

## 8. Individual Motivation for Literacy

In this short chapter we show that national NGOs often play an important role in the organization and teaching of adult literacy, either together with state-promoted literacy work, or independently, in some cases as part of a popular struggle against oppression. We conclude that the community-based nature of the NGO and thus of the activity constitute its strength, but largely define its limits in dealing with the task of literacy as a whole.

## 7. The Role of National NGOs

between three principal state objectives: socio-political objectives (such as national unity, participation in on-going transformations, mobilization in support of a new regime), which are often the driving force behind mass literacy campaigns; economic objectives, promoting a process of gradual improvement of living standards, which can either result in selective work-oriented programmes within specific development projects or in a more general programme as one of several inputs to build economic growth; and general socio-economic objectives, often in a context of relatively low priority to literacy, but where provision is made through state services in response to public and/or international demand. Finally, the role of international agencies in determining the objectives of literacy programmes is briefly discussed.



guided by priority aims. Although there certainly exist mixtures and variations of each strategy (or "approach"), we have distinguished a number of approaches, that have had or still have major influence in the third world:

- The 'Fundamental Education' approach, promoted by UNESCO during the period 1946-1964. Within this framework, attention was focused on finding the most effective methods of teaching reading and writing in the mother tongue. The conclusions from an extensive study thereof showed however that there is no universal applicable method. The contribution of 'Fundamental Education' programmes to literacy was very poor. It seems as if many of the necessary elements of a whole literacy strategy were neglected. Although this approach is not advocated today, several current literacy programmes continue to retain preoccupations similar to 'Fundamental Education'. These general literacy programmes have, however, advanced beyond their original in many aspects.

- The Selective-Intensive Functional approach launched as an experimental programme, within the framework of EWLP, in eleven countries from 1967 to 1972, with the support of UNDP and UNESCO. The main objective was to evaluate the link between literacy and economic development, but it was also hoped that the EWLP would prepare the way for the eradication of mass illiteracy. The main concerns were two: the functional (work-oriented) content and evaluation. UNESCO/UNDP's own critical assessment of the EWLP is summarized in this sub-chapter. The evaluation approach itself was severely criticized. Furthermore, available data on literacy results indicated high drop-out rates and low success rates, except in Tanzania. Some of the general conclusions from the experience were: Literacy activities must not be viewed as an essentially technical exercise - social, cultural and political factors are as important, if not more; literacy must be integrated in a national plan of development where the political will to implement literacy is clearly articulated; and literacy must often be linked to economic and social reforms. "Functional Literacy" or the Economic Literacy approach has continued to be applied in many countries, with some modifications resulting from the EWLP experience. The concept of "Functionality" has in effect been broadened, but the basic ideological underpinning (human capital theory) and the economic objectives remain essentially the same. Problems encountered in programmes applying this approach are linked to the lack of an atmosphere of mobilization and priority, and the tendency to try to achieve too many things at the same time.

- The "Conscientization" approach, of which Paulo Freire is the major spokesman. His literacy theory and practice have inspired many progressive adult educators, especially in Latin America. The main objectives are linked to a liberating process of critical consciousness, where dialogue and participation are key elements of the pedagogy. In this sub-chapter some critical

issues and problems concerning the interpretation and application of "conscientization"-oriented literacy are analysed, such as its political implications. Furthermore, we mention some practical difficulties in implementing the Freirean literacy approach, such as defining programmes on the basis of local participatory investigations, and applying a true reciprocal dialogue, especially in the context of large-scale national programmes. We conclude that Freire provides an important source of critical reflection and inspiration for literacy practitioners, but that the approach does not provide sufficient guidelines for a whole literacy strategy, and contains certain non-applicable elements.

- The Popular Education approach, which is developing mainly in Latin America, is briefly discussed.

- The Mass Campaign approach, implemented particularly in revolutionary societies. This strategy seeks to involve all segments of society in order to make all adult men and women in a nation literate within a particular time-frame and is often part of a policy for overcoming poverty and injustice through mass mobilization. This sub-chapter is introduced by an overview of recent international moves to promote mass campaigns. We have identified two distinct literacy campaign strategies, which are discussed separately:

- "One-off" campaigns to eradicate illiteracy, of which there are only a few examples, (Cuba Nicaragua, Vietnam, Somalia). They have all successfully carried out mass campaigns over a period of one to two years. The factors for their success are analysed, such as the momentum of commitment, resulting from the recent conquest of power by a popular movement; the relatively low rate of illiteracy; the existence of one principal majority language, and the effective mobilization of all human, institutional and material resources needed. The level of literacy attained is necessarily low and the sustaining of literacy becomes a problem.

- Eradication of illiteracy by a series of campaigns, a strategy that has become frequent during the seventies for example in Tanzania, Burma, Ethiopia and Mozambique. This step-wise strategy is determined by a very large number of illiterates and underdevelopment in general, which makes reaching all of them at once very hard. Literacy has not been an absolute priority compared to other urgent needs and the diversity of languages has complicated the implementation. (Tanzania had the advantage of having an African lingua franca, Swahili). In the Tanzanian and Ethiopian cases, the strategy has been successful in keeping up participation, but in other cases it has been more difficult. This strategy is, otherwise, usually similar to the "one-off" strategy in many aspects, such as objectives, organization and content, that stress political mobilization. Tanzania is interesting for having combined a political and directly Functional curriculum.

- General Literacy Programmes with fairly diverse objectives. They are often large-scale, but "politically cool" programmes, that provide access to those who want literacy. Examples can be found in Botswana, Brasil, India, Mexico, among others, where illiteracy is not seen as an immediate major obstacle to the economy. The lack of strong social pressure and mobilization for literacy at all levels of the society, often results in a high initial enrollment, followed by a very large drop-out. NGOs often play an important role. Much effort and resources are put into curriculum design and methodology. It is not unusual that, too many goals are expected to be reached by one literacy course.

- Selective small scale programmes are mainly of two types: state-promoted activities in specific areas, for development or pilot project purposes; and NGO or community-promoted activities. Small scale projects have certain potential advantages, but they do not create significant reduction of national illiteracy rates.

## 10. Post-literacy

In this chapter, we stress the importance of post-literacy as an immediate follow-up programme to literacy, as a motivational factor for literacy, for consolidating literacy and for preventing relapse into illiteracy. Various forms of post-literacy are analysed, the more formal one through entry into higher grades of the school-system, the "structured" one, designed specifically for adult new-literates and the "semi-structured" form of post-literacy, an organized project for putting learning materials into the hands of adults, without a direct teaching component - an indispensable complement to the other forms of post-literacy. The experience of post-literacy in Ethiopia is interesting in that all three forms of post-literacy are being implemented at the same time. Finally, we argue that the introduction of post-literacy opportunities before even starting the literacy project itself, seems to be a good idea.

## 11. Conclusions and Reflections on Existing Experience

This chapter is in itself a synthesis, that needs reading in order to get an idea of the document as whole. It identifies a series of factors for relative success of large-scale literacy activities. The active role of the state and "political will" are pointed out as necessary elements of large-scale programmes. When the objective is to eradicate illiteracy, it is also necessary to combine UPE and adult literacy. We also discuss other key issues, regardless of the scale of a programme, that in the context of a favourable situation of motivation and mobilization, are important for the success of literacy, although we basically contend that adult literacy is rather a political than a technical issue. We take up the questions of choice of language,

mobilization and training of teachers, contents and methods, and costs and resources.

Concerning research needs, we argue that there is need for many different approaches, as long as they are used creatively and adapted in a sensitive way to reality. We contend that literacy data should reflect gender differences, that pilot-projects are useful for research and innovation, that the political nature of literacy and tensions linked to literacy activities need to be taken into account in research. We also find it essential that literacy research is rooted among those concerned in the 3rd World. There is a need for new research "clearing houses" for adult literacy. Furthermore, we have selected some themes, whose research we consider essential, such as: the impact and use of literacy; learning literacy in a second language/transition from mother-tongue to second-language literacy; contents and methods; drop-out; quality versus quantity; sponsorship and organization of literacy.

Finally we point out that the priority and application of research depends on in what context and for what purpose it is done. Research serves best as an integrated component of the planning, implementation and critical evaluation of adult literacy activities. We cannot expect to arrive at a global adult literacy cookbook!

## INTRODUCTION:

### PURPOSE, SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE REVIEW

During its meeting in Paris in October 1984, the International Working Group on Education (IWGE), composed of international aid agencies' education representatives, identified a number of research areas meriting special attention as part of their endeavour to strengthen basic education provision in developing countries. SIDA, with its long history of support to adult education projects, offered to be the executive agency in the review of the field of literacy and post-literacy, and commissioned the authors to write this study through the Institute of International Education, University of Stockholm. (See Terms of Reference, Annex 1).

The preparation of such a review, which is intended to cover an extremely wide field of activities, necessarily involves a great deal of selection and generalization. As the authors of the paper, we wish to state that such a process means that unavoidably our own ideological perceptions, personal experience in the field, and location in Sweden have all had a part to play in what we know about, what we are interested in, what we have selected (or left out), what we have had access to, and how we have chosen to organize, generalize and theorize the review. We do not wish to create any illusions as to the "complete objectivity" of this paper, and we are sure that any other authors, given the same task, would similarly pass the information available through the filters of their own perceptions.

We will thus try here to give an indication of just which "filters" we have used, for readers to be forewarned!

Firstly, we have concentrated on adult literacy and its immediate follow-up, "post-literacy", in so-called "developing countries". Literacy and post-literacy are but one part of adult basic education, and are mostly set in a "non-formal" context. This study makes no attempt to cover the literacy and post-literacy teaching functions of formal primary education for children, although schools are indispensable in providing literacy or "basic education" as a whole. However, we have pointed out where it seemed relevant, the links between formal schooling and literacy, and between literacy and other aspects of adult basic education, such as health education or training in agricultural skills. Without implying that adult literacy activities are isolated from other forms of education or from their social context, we are convinced that adult literacy training represents a specific area of activity which is complicated and difficult enough to merit its own analytical review.

Secondly, it would be both unproductive and impossible to try to cover all existing experiences, reports, research and evaluation work in a study like this. Our purpose has been to try to deal with the larger issues in literacy work, such as objectives and related strategies, rather than particular detailed accounts of various specific literacy experiences. Thus we have selected a number of cases of literacy activities from different political and economic settings which represent

divergent objectives, strategies and results, and used them to generalize in a more theoretical way. In particular, we have given most prominence to literacy activities which have involved, or attempted to involve, a relatively large number of illiterate people.

Some of the factors constraining the selection have been our own previous field experience, and our present location in Sweden. Our field experience has mainly been in Southern Africa, notably Mozambique, and much of our previous reading and study has concentrated on Africa. Works on adult literacy available in Sweden are mostly in English, which means that we have taken few cases from Francophone sources. We have looked at (mostly English, and some Spanish) sources on Latin America and Asia, but, in the former case, there is a vast amount of experience in the field of adult education to which we have not had ready access. We should add that SIDA's own relative concentration of activity on Eastern and Southern Africa, and to a lesser extent, on South Asia, has also contributed to our own access to materials on, and bias towards these areas - where, after all, the highest illiteracy rates and largest numbers of illiterates are to be found. It is also a limitation of this review that a fairly large amount of literacy work takes place as a sub-component of "integrated rural development projects" and is reported on as such, which makes it difficult for the researcher on adult literacy to pick up the references involved.

Thirdly, we should present our ideological filters. We regard adult literacy - and all education - as performing both reproductive and innovative functions in society, with a constant potential for conflict between the two functions. This means that literacy activities have a strong political and ideological character; the aims and objectives, the forms of delivery/acquisition, the methods, the contents, the results, and the links between the activity and the economy and society, all derive from essentially political goals and political struggles and conflicts. We think that the learning of literacy can be important for the fight of the exploited classes against oppression, but are also sure that it can be used as a form of social control to undermine this struggle. We think that literacy is a basic human right and should be treated as such, and that, as a right, it has to be struggled for. Ideally, we would like to see the masses conquer the right to literacy and the skill itself on their own initiative. However, in an unequal world, new skills have in part to be, or will be, provided by others, and we think that this provision is worthy of support unless it is clearly destined to subvert efforts to conquer more social and economic justice.

Nonetheless, we insist that "the illiterate" should not be considered the bearer of a disease, to be treated by a "vaccination campaign". Illiteracy is a symptom, not a cause of underdevelopment, injustice and poverty. Nor should literacy be treated as a "medicine" for the complaints of society; we do not believe that the simple provision of literacy teacher in itself will transform the lives and social and economic relations of the illiterate population. Without literacy being integrated into a general process of social change, or into a

social movement dedicated to creating social change, it is clear that it will have little chance of changing the fundamental parameters of life. For example, mere literacy training in a stagnated rural milieu is hardly meaningful, and it will be treated as such by the community.

From these perceptions, we regard literacy activities as being a collective enterprise which should contribute to creating a more just society. We look rather askance on formulations which site literacy's importance within the bounds of "successful investment in human capital", "contribution to individual productivity and well-being", "essential element in individual modernity" (etc.), even if someone were able to demonstrate all these attributes empirically ... Literacy is a tool with many potential uses, as a hoe may be used to plough, to weed, to reap, or to destroy. We would like to see literacy used for the collective good of all, rather than as a means for the "individual" to scramble to a well-fed sinecure, even though there are economic and status-seeking motives on the part of its individual customers.

We may then be asked - how much of this paper is scientific and how much is just opinions? While most literacy practitioners (and, one hopes, social scientists) will smile at the question, yet it still needs to be answered. We have tried to use concrete cases and documentation as direct evidence for most assertions, and to give references as to where more detail can be found on each case. When it comes to pulling together the strands from many cases and numbers of ideas, theories and attitudes into a theoretical whole, however, one gets even further away from "empirical facts" than is implied in the process of selecting and analysing particular cases. To some, this is "theory" which remains to be proved or disproved; to others, it is ideology/opinion/bias; but at least to some it gives a way of looking at and interpreting a very diffuse reality ("mega-variate", if you like) that may be insightful and useful. We hope we have done a good enough job for the last category to be in the majority!

## 2. LITERACY STATISTICS

### 2.1 The Data

The number of illiterates aged 15 and upwards continues to rise inexorably in absolute terms. According to the latest estimates there were around 760 million in 1970 and around 889 million in 1985, and unless any radical measures are taken, their numbers will have topped the 900 million mark by the end of this century (Unesco 1983, 1985). In percentage terms the situation is progressively improving with the world illiteracy rate falling from some 44% in 1950 to 33% in 1970 and to 28% in 1985, whence, according to the estimates, to 25% in 1990. (Bataille 1976; Unesco 1980, 1985). The increase in absolute numbers is a result of population growth together with the incomplete coverage of primary schooling for school-age children. In 1980, 121 million school-age children (between 6 and 11) did not attend school (Unesco 1983). These children and those who drop out before consolidating literacy skills will at 15 join the illiterate adult population.

Predictably, the illiteracy rates are highest in the least developed countries and among the poorest and most underprivileged people. In 1985, India and China by themselves accounted respectively for about 30% and 26% of all the illiterate people in the world.

In the 25 least developed countries (with a per capita product of less than 100 US dollars per year) the illiteracy rate was more than 80% in 1970 (Bataille 1976) and around 68% in 1985 (Unesco 1985). These countries tend also to have the highest population growth rates. Further, the proportion of women illiterates is steadily growing. In 1980, 58% of illiterates were women; by 1970 this percentage had risen to 60% (Bataille 1976).

The distribution of adult illiteracy in the world is shown in the Table on the next page.

Fisher (1982) attempts to quantify the degree of social, cultural and economic deprivation of countries whose population is highly illiterate (i.e. with an adult illiteracy rate higher than 66%) by comparing them with countries having a largely literate population (i.e. less than 34% illiteracy). He arrived to the conclusion:

"The indicators examined in all point in the same direction: the 'have nots' in terms of literacy are also worse off in terms of life expectancy, infant mortality, educational provision, communications, nutrition, health services, food production and income; their industry is less developed, their agriculture is less productive. But this is only part of the tragic reality, for within these countries with high illiteracy rates ... the illiterate is even worse off than his compatriots." (p. 161).



Number of illiterates and illiteracy rates in 1985 for the adult population aged 15 and over.

|                           | Absolute number<br>of illiterates<br>15 and over<br>(in millions) | Illiteracy rates<br>(age 15 and over) |      |       |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|------|-------|
|                           |   | Both<br>sexes                         | Men  | Women |
| World total               | 888.7   | 27.7                                  | 20.5 | 34.9  |
| Developing countries      | 868.9   | 38.2                                  | 27.9 | 48.9  |
| Least developed countries | 120.8   | 67.6                                  | 56.9 | 78.4  |
| 'Developed' countries     | 19.8  | 2.1                                   | 1.7  | 2.6   |
| Africa                    | 161.9   | 54.0                                  | 43.3 | 64.5  |
| Latin America             | 43.6  | 17.3                                  | 15.3 | 19.2  |
| Asia                      | 665.7   | 36.3                                  | 25.6 | 47.4  |
| Oceania                   | 1.6   | 8.9                                   | 7.6  | 10.2  |
| Europe (including USSR)   | 13.9  | 2.3                                   | 1.6  | 3.0   |

Source: Unesco Office of Statistics, The Current Literacy Situation in the World (Unesco, July 1985).

In accordance with our basic theory on education and society we do not adhere to the view that these relationships imply that illiteracy is one of the reasons for underdevelopment, as stated by Unesco (1983). Illiteracy should instead be seen as one of many symptoms of underdevelopment and is therefore dependent on the whole socio-economic and political situation. Indeed, all recent literature on literacy seems to agree that illiteracy must not be viewed as a problem in isolation.

## 2.2 Are the Data Reliable?

All literature dealing with literacy statistics points out their limited significance. Although it is important to be aware of existing reasons for the limitations of the data, our general analysis will not alter, whether there be 800 million or 1000 million illiterates.

There are three main reasons to put available statistics in question:

a) The notion of literacy varies from country to country. Whatever definition of literacy for example Unesco decides on, each nation uses its own criteria in practice. Thus the comparability of national literacy statistics suffers from the lack of common minimum standards.

b) The measures of literacy used are often very rough. "Often, literacy statistics are derived from a census on the educational profile of a society. Less frequently, they are

based upon the respondent's self-assessment in response to a question such as 'Are you able to read?'. Far less frequently, they are based upon performance indicators: 'What does this say?'" (Gillette and Ryan, 1983).

Concerning the limitations of estimates and forecasts on literacy rates, Unesco (1980) say they

"are based exclusively on observed trends in regard to school activities. This may give rise to errors in the following two cases: (a) whenever large-scale out-of-school programmes are implemented, (b) whenever plans are made to step up and/or improve formal education, since a large number of children would be affected and/or reach a standard which would enable them to be considered literate" (p. 16).

In spite of these possible errors, other factors connected to the frequent use of formal education data for estimating literacy statistics seem to cause under-estimates rather than over-estimates of the number of illiterates. In the words of Gillette and Ryan (1983):

"Schooling may produce literacy, but experience shows that such attainments are highly perishable if there are no regular opportunities to read and write. Hence, while there may be some who progress from illiteracy to literacy as a result of informal learning ... there are many more who relapse from literacy into illiteracy." (p. 1).

c) The coverage of the data is often incomplete. The data disseminated by the Unesco Office of Statistics do not provide information for example on the breakdown of illiterates by area of residence or by linguistic groups. Data are sometimes only based on average figures for a country as a whole, which conceal "pockets" of illiteracy, resulting from existing disparities within individual countries (Unesco, 1980).

Moreover, statistics may include a certain amount of political consideration in order to show national progress.

In order to get a realistic and more reliable idea of the literacy situation it is necessary to decide what level of literacy we consider to be of interest. In this respect it is significant that the world illiteracy rate given for 1975 was 33% while at the same time it was said that around 65% were not able to use the written word in practice (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979).

### 3. RESEARCH AND EVALUATION OF ADULT LITERACY

Reviews of literacy research point out that Adult Literacy is a relatively recent field of research compared to other areas of education or social science studies. For nearly a century a vast and growing volume of educational research has been concentrated on child development and teaching in schools. "In comparison with other issues in social sciences little support has been given to research on adult literacy" (ICAE, 1979, p.6).

The research on the teaching-learning process of reading is an illustrative example, where the concentration on pre-school and school children is striking. In Gray's extensive study (Gray 1969) only 13 works on adult reading are found, while hundreds of studies on child reading are referred to. This is confirmed in Gorman (1977): "there is little in current research that might be directly applied toward teaching adults to read" (ICAE, 1979, p. 6).

Most research and analyses on adult literacy in the Third World date from the mid-1960s and onwards. Since then many research or evaluation experiences have developed and a corps of literacy specialists, most of them from the third world, has been established. They were themselves involved in literacy work and are not a separate corps of academic analysts.

Prior to this period the most important contributions to existing knowledge and understanding of adult literacy in the Third World were made by Dr Frank C. Laubach and Dr William S. Gray. Dr Laubach, a US missionary, was the first literacy campaign promoter with great international impact. He was devoted to adult literacy work in the 1930s and 1940s in Asia, South America and Africa. Teaching the World to Read - A Handbook for Literacy Campaigns (Laubach, 1947) is a pioneer book in the field. Dr Gray's work on literacy methodology, in The Teaching of Reading and Writing (Gray, 1969), is the most vast and thorough study of its kind.

The methodology of teaching literacy has continued to be a theme given attention by more recent research, including the choice of language of instruction. Motivation for literacy - at the level of individuals, communities and governments - is the theme that accounts for and runs through much of the recent studies on literacy. Some studies have also centred around the problem of retention of literacy. Existing studies and reports are moreover largely concentrated on the countries that have had major campaigns or programmes, such as Vietnam, Cuba, China, Tanzania, Somalia, Brazil, India.

Three main types of research on adult literacy have been conducted:

- 1) Experimental research representing long term investigations designed to test hypotheses. The most notable example of this kind of research was the evaluation work related to Unesco's Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP). Unesco has published a list of 229 documents and reports from the EWLP experiences carried out in eleven countries. Apart from this major piece of research this kind of "experimental" research on adult literacy is rare.

2) Various forms of participatory research. This has been a frequently-used research method from the beginning of the 1970s, with the studies conducted essentially by activists working in the field. The participatory research approach owes much to the ideas of the Brazilian literacy pedagogue Paulo Freire, and have been much developed in Latin America in the context of popular education projects at the community level (see Erasmie and de Vries, 1981). The approach has been used for two distinct purposes in the context of literacy:

- more commonly, for the so-called "community survey", which should antecede a Freirian-type literacy project, and which seeks to identify the most important aspects and contradictions of community life and the level of social awareness, in order to select out the themes and generative words which will constitute the literacy "curriculum";

- less often, where the researcher is a participant (or, ideally, all the participants), and the research activity seeks to assist in laying bare local reality and in maintaining a continuous joint evaluation of the literacy programme and its social insertion; the research is based on the praxis of action-reflection-action, and should immediately assist in changing the process towards the better attainment of its objectives.

3) Various forms of evaluation studies, measuring the achievements of a programme against its objectives. Some of the evaluation studies linked to EWLP belong to this category, as well as reports made by the government bodies or agencies running the literacy activity evaluated.

Important sources of experiences and documentation on adult literacy in the Third World derive from a number of international conferences, workshops and seminars, where literacy work has been reported and discussed. The reports from these meetings express general findings and conclusions on a number of important factors. The international network for exchange of literacy experiences has developed since 1970 through new international, regional and national institutions and organizations. The International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods in Teheran played a very important role through its publications between 1970 and 1980. The International Council of Adult Education (ICAE), coordinating regional and national councils, provides an important network of information and exchange of experiences. The German Foundation for International Development (DSE) has promoted many important seminars and publications on literacy in the Third World. Unesco has extended its role by the recent involvement of the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in adult literacy planning and administration. The Unesco Institute of Education in Hamburg has also undertaken important research and development work in the areas of literacy and post-literacy.

#### 4. DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS OF LITERACY

##### 4.1 The Scope of Definitions

Varying and often vague definitions of literacy abound in literature and in praxis. We do not intend to make a list of available definitions. We will rather try to delineate major trends in the development of the concept.

The concept of literacy in literature is often a mixture of values, objectives, functions, methods, and levels and contents of skills required. It is surprising how seldom the different components necessary for a clear definition are explicitly accounted for when literacy is discussed. Definitions made by Unesco or others in literature seldom correspond to the operational criteria used in practice in different countries or programs.

It is natural that literacy cannot simply be defined in operational terms without connecting it to its purposes or its context. It is also true, however, that criteria used in practice for evaluating literacy are overwhelmingly limited to simple operational or quantitative definitions, without considering the broader objectives and meanings of literacy, simply because it is extremely difficult or impossible to measure the broader impact of literacy isolated from other environmental effects.

Thus it is important to bear this in mind when we present broader concepts of literacy. Generally one could say that there exists a gap between broad definitions elaborating on the role of literacy and operational definitions aiming at measuring certain skills attributed to literacy. This gap certainly exists in practice. The broader definitions might influence the approach (contents, methods, etc.) to deal with illiteracy, but very seldom the criteria for evaluating literacy.

Before presenting an overview of major trends concerning the concept of literacy, we consider it necessary to give a brief idea of what we mean by a literate person. Unesco's latest recommendation (Unesco, 1978) distinguishes between literacy and functional literacy, the first referring to what we would like to call basic literacy. According to Unesco a person is literate "who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his every-day life". We will use the concept of basic literacy as meaning the first step on the way to achieving a more functional or applicable level of skills, including or not basic numeracy. A functionally literate person must be able to "engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development" (Unesco, 1978). In more precise terms 'functional' literacy varies depending on the environment and the context in each given society at a given time. As we shall see further on 'functional literacy' as used here is not equal to Functional Literacy as conceived in the Experimental World Literacy Program - EWLP.

We will also be using two other terms for describing certain stages of the literacy process. A semi-literate person is able to decipher a few simple words and write his/her own name and/or to make simple calculations in written form. In other words a semi-literate person has started but not completed the process of basic literacy. A person who has just achieved basic literacy we will call new-literate (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979).

We should note two other terminological and practical difficulties. The first is the general concept of "eradication of illiteracy". In practice, no country has ever eradicated illiteracy, as there always remains a part of the population which is for one reason or another not reached by literacy - people with learning handicaps, people who come out of years of schooling without ever having become literate, and so on. Thus in practice the term has come to refer to reducing illiteracy to a very low level overall, to about 8% or below. In the Third World, the term comes to be even more loosely applied, as the business of counting and checking is more difficult there and the conditions of life make universal coverage problematic. Most countries seem to be on the way to "eradication" when the level falls below 20%. It should be pointed out that often the counting covers people who had the opportunity to become literate, or who passed some form of literacy test, and does not reflect such problems as "new illiterates" who did not get to school after the adult literacy effort finished, or those who "relapse into illiteracy" after completing a programme successfully.

The second is precisely the problem of what to call a "literacy success". "Success" is a relative word, which could be judged by passing a test, or by degree of retention of the skill, or by degree of use of the skill, or by whether people use the skill in the way intended, or even whether people also make use of other skills/knowledge learnt in the process of literacy. Normally little attempt is made to estimate the level of success on anything other than passing the final test. Even so, in terms of rating a programme successful, it is important to note that most adult literacy programmes have a level of "efficiency" of 30% or even well below that, counting between initial enrollment and those who "pass" the final test. Only the very large single "campaign to eradicate illiteracy" has historically done much better than that. Thus a programme should not be judged "unsuccessful" on the basis of too exigent criteria! Where strides towards eradicating illiteracy have been made, it has usually been by incorporating very large numbers of people in each stage of the total effort and "passing" a low proportion, and not by "passing" a large percentage of a smaller number enrolled.

#### 4.2 Internationally Adopted Concepts of Literacy

Two major assumptions have guided Unesco in its promotion of literacy ever since 1945:

- 1) Illiteracy is a major obstacle to 'development'. Hence, literacy is an instrument for development. This assumption has been constant, but to what degree and how literacy and deve-

lopment relate has been debated and looked upon differently over time. Recent views expressed are as those in, for example Objective: Literacy (1983):

"...the eradication of illiteracy does not banish deprivation over-night. But by eliminating one obstacle to development it will indirectly help to improve living and working conditions." (p. 7).

2) Literacy is a fundamental human right. Illiteracy in the world must therefore be eliminated.

The international literacy trends can be divided into three periods, 1945-1964, 1965-1974 and 1975-.

1945-1964. The traditional concept of literacy, referring simply to reading and writing skills as an end in itself, was abandoned in theory by Unesco shortly after its creation. In 1946 the term fundamental education was adopted to describe a broad field of development activities, whereof one was non-formal literacy programmes for children and adults. Gray (1969) summarizes the very broad concept of 'fundamental education':

"... fundamental education is often the first stage in organized efforts to promote personal development and community progress. From the outset, it stimulates awareness of individual and group possibilities. Such an awakening may occur in a single activity, such as a health demonstration project. In the course of time, however, it spreads to other activities. In so far it includes the knowledge and skills usually acquired in school, fundamental education tries to develop them according to the needs and interests of the people concerned. Thus people are taught to read and write only when they recognize that these skills are necessary to the fuller attainment of their purposes." (p. 17).

Myrdal (1968) points out that "fundamental education" or "social education" became merged with so-called "community development". The ideologists of the community development movement stressed that literacy must be used for something of practical importance in order to produce development. Myrdal (1968) agrees, but adds that this is equally relevant to teaching in the primary schools. Myrdal (1968) concludes:

"The disquieting fact is, however, that comparatively little has been done to reform the schools and make them more responsive to practical needs, while adult education has been either neglected altogether or turned into something so 'practical' that it no longer encompasses any serious attempt to make people literate." (p. 1687).

We will later on discuss the poor results in attaining literacy during this period. We will now go on to see how literacy itself was conceived.

Already during this period the distinction was made between 'minimum standards of literacy' and 'functional literacy' with basically the same meaning as given recently by Unesco (see beginning of this chapter) with the exception of not including numeracy in the definition of 'functional literacy'.

The limitations of providing only minimum standards was very clear: "if training is discontinued ... the trainees ... soon lose whatever ability to read and write they may have acquired" (Gray, 1969, p. 21).

The concept of functional literacy evolved gradually during this period.

The criteria used for measuring 'functional literacy' vary from duration of training, through the specific contents and methods considered necessary, to specific tests evaluating the literacy abilities.

A more common criterion used is, however, the equivalence to a certain number of completed years of schooling. Four years of schooling have often been proposed as a minimum standard for functional literacy. Arguments against this criterion have been presented by many authors, one being the insufficient and uneven quality of primary schooling.

The level of functional literacy required in a society varies and changes, which means that no fixed or general equivalence to formal schooling can be given.

Gray (1969) argues:

"When defining a satisfactory criterion for literacy, it is essential to adopt a relatively high standard, for there is very little printed matter related to adult needs and interests which can be read by anyone who has not acquired the reading ability normally attained by children, who have had four or even five years of schooling. So much time and energy are expended in preparing less difficult material that it cannot be produced in sufficient quantity to supply adult needs." (pp. 26-27).

Gray (1969) discusses advantages and disadvantages of minimum standards and high standards. He concludes finally that literacy programmes should be organized in a series of stages.

In summary, over 1945-1964, Unesco promoted literacy as part of a broader education programme, called 'fundamental education' stressing the promotion of practical skills, for development purposes. Literacy itself was conceived as exclusively reading and writing skills, preferably acquired through learning in the mother tongue. Distinction was already made between basic literacy and 'functional literacy'. The concepts used today were evolved. Numeracy was, however, not yet included in the definitions of 'functional literacy'.



1965-1974. As a consequence of the poor literacy achievements in the past, and on the basis of a series of studies and activities directed by Unesco to the problem of adult literacy programmes, Unesco decided in 1964 to launch an Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) in order to find ways of transforming literacy into an effective instrument for social and economic development. A new "functional literacy approach" was defined.

The World Conference of Ministers of Education on Eradication of Illiteracy, held in Teheran in 1965, gave international expression to this approach. As to the concept and aims of literacy, it stated that Functional literacy should:

"not be confined to the teaching of reading and writing but should include professional and technical knowledge thus promoting a fuller participation by adults in economic and civic life ... be related to the pursuit of economic and social objectives (increase of manpower output, production of food stuffs, industrialization, social and professional mobility, creation of additional manpower, diversification of the economy, etc.)" (Unesco, 1968, p. 48).

"lead not only to elementary general knowledge but to training of work, increased productivity, a greater participation in civic life and a better understanding of the surrounding world, and should ultimately open the way to basic human culture" (Unesco, UNDP, 1976).

Compared to previous declared aims and concepts, Functional literacy now stressed strict economic growth aims such as increased productivity and consequently included vocational subjects in the literacy programmes. The political and cultural aims seem to have been given much less weight.

Each literacy programme would be linked to a specific economic project in industry or agriculture in areas undergoing rapid economic expansion. The contents would centre around the production process linked to each project.

This approach was based on the assumption that the population groups working in fields of economic priority would have the greatest need of becoming literate. The motivation problem would therefore not constitute an obstacle.

1975-. In the light of the critical assessment of the results of EWLP and the very concept of its "functional approach" and in view of other experiences and theories, a review of the literacy concept in all its aspects, has characterized the present period.

The International Symposium for Literacy in Persepolis held in September 1975 on the tenth anniversary of the Teheran Conference, intended to evaluate the results of a decade of international reflection and action on literacy teaching. It adopted the so called Declaration of Persepolis, that presents a whole ideology on literacy including its objectives, requi-

sites, contents, methods and means.

It stresses the political, human and cultural aspects of literacy. It is radically different from the functional EWLP approach, so as to justify the title of the book presenting the proceedings of the symposium: "A Turning Point for Literacy" (Ed: Bataille, 1976).

The Declaration of Persepolis conceives literacy as:

"not just the process of learning skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of man and to his full development. Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man lives and of its aims; it also stimulates initiative and his participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, of transforming it... Literacy... is a fundamental human right.

Literacy work, like education in general, is not the driving force of historical change. It is not the only means of liberation but is an essential instrument for all social change. Literacy is a political act.

Literacy is... inseparable from participation, which is at once its purpose and its condition.

Literacy... would constitute the first stage of basic education... It would permit the development of non-formal education for the benefit of all those who are excluded by the present system... Finally, it will imply a radical reform of the structures of the education system as a whole." (Bataille, 1976, pp. 273-275).

These declarations are very similar to the literacy "conscientization" ideology, expressed in Paulo Freire's publications (Freire, 1972a, 1972b). Freire himself participated in the Persepolis symposium. The influence should probably be seen in relation to the poor quantitative results of EWLP and the broad influence Freire had on adult educators during the decade 1965-1974.

In Unesco's own critical evaluation of EWLP, the narrowly technical/economic aims of the "Functional" projects were reviewed in July 1975, when the Recommendations of the Expert Team on Evaluation of Experimental Literacy Projects declared:

"... the concepts of functionality must be extended to include all its dimensions: political, economic, social and cultural. Just as development is not only economic growth, so literacy... must aim above all to arouse in the individual a critical awareness of social reality, and to enable him or her to understand, master and transform his or her destiny." (Unesco, UNDP, 1976, p. 191).

Ever since these conclusions were drawn, it has been generally agreed in international literacy debate that literacy must be functional in a broad sense and that literacy is only a first step in achieving the objectives set out.

While "new" definitions of literacy have not been forthcoming, more recent debate on adult literacy has in some senses changed approaches to literacy. The real establishment in international consciousness of literacy as a human right has served to promote two distinct tendencies:

a) The popular education movement, which draws on sources like Freire and the Catholic liberation theologians. In this view, education in its broad sense is not a "social service" nor an "investment in human capital", but an act of cultural affirmation and liberation, thus a collective community-based act by the exploited classes and groups of society closely integrated into the organization of resistance and change. Part of this act is for the community to make itself literate in a collective consciousness-raising fashion, with community organization an essential goal.

b) The idea that literacy must be promoted on a mass basis, as an integral part of general political and economic (evolutionary) change. This trend itself is expressed in two slightly different versions:

- the (somewhat idealistic) promotion of mass campaigns as a general recipe for dealing with illiteracy (and injustice), under the slogan of "eradication of world illiteracy by the year 2000". The Udaipur Seminar's Literacy Declaration encapsulates this idea as follows:

"A literacy campaign must be seen as a necessary part of a national strategy for overcoming poverty and injustice." (quoted in Bhola 1983, p. 245)

- the "basic education" approach. This arises from a series of concerns, notably that existing formal primary education is not "relevant" enough, but it has (as its major distinction from "Fundamental Education") an insistence on education provision for everyone:

"Basic education should be provided for all children and adults as soon as the available resources and conditions permit." (World Bank 1980, p. 86)

While one must laud the recognition that universal literacy involves concentration on both child and adult education, and that education is a right of all, at the same time it is to be asked, what is this basic education (for)? The Unesco definition (Unesco 1979, p.118) is:

"teaching whose objective is the acquisition of elementary knowledge and skills (for example, literacy, arithmetic) necessary for living in a society." (own translation from French original).

This definition leaves a good deal of leeway for anyone to decide what basic education is for. In the current 3rd World conjuncture of financial debt, overproduction of higher-level graduates for declining economies, growing popular dissatisfaction, and inability of governments to cover the costs even of universal primary schooling, there has been a return to insistence on cost efficiency, high standards at higher levels, and "Back to Basics", into which set of preoccupations the new priority given to "basic education", especially in the poorest countries, fits rather well. (World Bank 1980, p. 87). We think it important only to ask in this context, whether "basic education" could not become another way of giving rural people an inferior status education designed to make them "prisoners of the soil" and to shore up the status quo?

## 5. WHY LITERACY?

In the previous chapter many arguments for adult literacy have been included in the objectives and concepts presented. They do not, however, present arguments against literacy, nor do they include answers to the question of setting priorities between literacy and other efforts in education or in other development areas. These questions deal with literacy's role in development as a whole and the impact of literacy.

It is impossible to separate these questions from the account of the problems of implementation of literacy. We will therefore return to these questions in forthcoming chapters.

### 5.1 Historical Perspective

Historically, literacy shows itself to be linked to state formation, trade and cultural exchange, urbanization and economic expansion.

During thousands of years the art of reading and writing remained a monopoly preserved for a specialized class of scribes or a small elite. When the industrial revolution started around 1750, almost 5000 years had passed since the art of writing was first initiated. Still 90% of the world's population was deprived of this art.

The invention of printing at the end of the 15th century made it technically possible to spread literacy to larger segments of the population.

The printed word came about in the process of interaction between social and technical change. The Reformation and birth of Capitalism represented social struggles, where the written word was used to intimidate those in power, as well as the other way around.

"The rising bourgeois used the written word to help them effect their revolution and gain power... But once in power the bourgeois changes its attitude to writing - it becomes a method of control rather than rebellion." (M. Hoyles, 1977, pp. 25-26)

There are many historical examples illustrating literacy as a two-edged sword. Cortez destroyed the written treasures of the Aztecs, the Nazis burnt books.

Both economic and ideological-religious factors have influenced the growth and at some times the stagnation of literacy.

In Venice, a high rate of literacy was attained in the 15th and 16th centuries, because it was needed for navigation and soldiers needed to be literate to read gun manuals.

A successful national reading campaign for all was carried out in Sweden under the control of the Protestant Church during the 17th and 18th centuries, in order to root the Catechism deeply in people's moral attitudes and behaviour.

Industrialization/urbanization and widespread literacy are clearly inter-related. It is however not a simple correlation, that industrialization comes first and then the universalization of literacy, or vice versa; examples exist of both.

In the mid 19th century more than 50% of the adult population in most parts of Western Europe was literate. However, the countries showing the highest rates of literacy did not coincide with those most advanced in industrialization at the time. Protestant countries, such as the Scandinavian countries, Scotland, Germany, Holland and Prussia were more advanced in literacy than England and France, although they were less developed. In the rural and Catholic southern parts of Europe, illiteracy was still well above 50%.

The relationship between industrialization and literacy seems to be dialectical, in that industrialization both requires more advanced and more widespread knowledge and skills, while a certain level of education among broader sectors of the population facilitates industrialization, which in its turn creates conditions for and a need for more widespread schooling.

The European experience also shows that conditions for literacy in rural areas vary as well. Cipolla (1979) states:

"In general one can say that where small private plots dominate, the rate of literacy is higher than in areas where the landowners are few and the agricultural workers many."

The industrialized capitalist societies, such as Western Europe and the USA, had become nearly fully literate societies (i.e. over 90% of the adult population with both reading and writing skills) by the beginning of the 20th century through the introduction of universal schooling for children in the mid 19th century. According to tables presented in Cipolla (1970, p. 90, 92), it took England 32 years (1853-1886) and France 28 years (1860-1888) to reduce their illiteracy rates from 30% to 10%; France took 53 years (1835-1888) to reduce its illiteracy rate from 50% to 10%.

In summary, the main factors behind this breakthrough of universal schooling seem to be:

- Changed relations of production, whereby the societal conditions led to increasing requirements for widespread literacy and elementary skills.
- Changed power relations and class contradictions, which led the bourgeoisie in power to demand a more efficient social and ideological control of the masses. (One strong argument used for introducing universal schooling was that it would reduce criminality.)
- Demands for democracy and equal rights, such as to education, by the emerging working class and liberal reformers.
- Economic development, which created the material and structural conditions for the expansion of schooling.

The mass literacy campaign of the USSR between 1919 and 1939, is the first attempt in history by a State to wipe out illiteracy among its adult population within a relatively short period of time. In 20 years illiteracy was reduced from 70% to 13%. Before the Revolution, under the Czarist monarchy, literacy was improving at the snail-pace of a half per cent per year. This would have meant anywhere between 150 to 300 years for illiteracy to be eliminated (Bhola, 1982). The driving force behind the literacy campaign was the Revolution, its ideology and its purpose of changing a traditional socio-economic system into a socialist modern industrial one.

Historically, then, there are two principal "models" for the attainment of universal literacy within a nation. One is the introduction of really universal primary education (UPE), which will gradually eradicate illiteracy in a nation. (It should be noted that "really UPE" implies not only everyone going to school, but everyone becoming literate thereby). In the North, the introduction of UPE had to be fought for, and winning it in real terms involved the state assuming the project as its own and having the power and resources to turn UPE from a right into a legally-enforced duty.

The second is the "accelerated" model, which combines the introduction of UPE with large-scale literacy activities directed at adults - the latter is not generally sufficient to maintain universal literacy in the absence of the former (there exists the partial exception of the Swedish reading campaign in the 17th Century, which involves a discussion beyond the space of this paper!). It is at least arguable, moreover, that the "accelerated" model requires more state power and more economic sacrifices than the "gradualist" UPE strategy.

How do these models apply to the South today? In some cases, such as parts of Latin America and East Asia (e.g. Uruguay, Argentina, South Korea, Taiwan), (nearly) universal literacy has come about "by itself" through the more gradualist UPE model, without mass campaigns and popular armed revolutions (indeed, with some extremely despotic dictatorships along the way). In other cases, the conquest of power by a popular movement has seen the application of the "accelerated" model with some success (Cuba, Vietnam, Tanzania, to name a few), even in the absence of large strides in industrialization and economic development.

In general, however, a brief glance at the statistics in Chapter 2 rapidly shows that universal literacy is not coming about "by itself", and that the struggle is far from being won. One may be complacent about the Newly Industrialized Countries and excited about the revolutionary countries - though really universal literacy is probably a rather tenuous achievement even in these - but between the two lie the countries with the most illiterates. The dependent nature of political and economic (under)development in most of the South has carried in its wake a process of structural marginalization of the peasantry and the unemployed, weak organization and direct suppression of political movements, restricted industrialization (often in capital-intensive forms), and

regimes with a low level of legitimacy and/or power. The state is unable to accomplish the mass mobilization needed for the "accelerated" universal literacy project, and indeed, often would prefer not to face the potential threat posed by mass mobilization. The underdeveloping economies get further and further away from being able to pay for UPE itself, which is crucial to both historical models. The peasantry, finding its exploitation on the increase and its attempts at organization suppressed, turns to well-tested (but uncoordinated) passive resistance, which often includes rejecting the education on offer. It is hard to project the smooth attainment of universal literacy in the Third World under such conditions.

Certainly, states with some legitimacy can, within the limits of their dependency, promote an evolutionary improvement in the living situation of the exploited classes, and also make significant inroads on illiteracy. But overall, we believe that the attainment of global literacy is extremely reliant on popular governments coming to power in the 3rd World, and on thorough restructuring of the existing international situation of political and economic dependency.

## 5.2 Pro and Contra Adult Literacy Efforts

Reviewing the literature, five arguments can be detected against considerable efforts to spread literacy among adults in Third World countries:

1) The introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) will eventually do away with illiteracy such as has been done in most European countries.

2) Television and radio can provide adults with functional education, so as to improve their lives and to promote economic development without literacy. (Verner, 1974).

3) "In time, after more urgent needs have been met, literacy may then itself become a need. Underprivileged adults have a greater need to learn marketable skills than to become literate." (Verner, 1974, p. 310).

Unesco expressed a similar view in 1946:

"... it is more important to teach people better agriculture and village hygiene than to take time teaching them to read. When they are better fed and in better health, then literacy campaigns can be started." (Fundamental Education, 1947, p. 188).

4) Making the underprivileged literate, might create high expectations and demands which would lead to upheaval against the established order. This argument is nowadays seldom declared openly, but it could be a reason for insignificant investments in literacy, as a general "status quo" policy.

5) Literacy often has negative effects:

"Are we fully aware and concerned about the ... often destructive potential of our literacy



endeavours and the indirect, negative influences and repercussions on developmental processes which are apparent in phenomena like rural exodus, negligence of traditional skills and cultural heritages bound to non-written transfer...?" (Hinzen, Horn, Leumer, Nieman, 1983).

Freire (1972) criticizes literacy led by the "oppressive society" as being "dehumanizing", "oppressive" and "domesticating", reinforcing existing injustice and the dominant culture. Unless literacy is organized for liberation and transformation of the oppressive system through a "conscientizing" process, it is not desirable.

The first three of these arguments are interlinked and often used simultaneously. None of them are, however, used today by international agencies like Unesco.

It is strongly advocated by these agencies and other experts that UPE must be introduced in parallel to adult literacy, or else new illiterate generations will continue to grow up. UPE without non-formal literacy programmes would not eradicate illiteracy in any predictable time, considering the present rates of school attendance and the inefficiency of primary schooling, producing high drop-out rates and people relapsing into illiteracy. Primary schooling will not improve its quality, as long as school children live in illiterate environments with illiterate parents. The fact that parents' educational background influences children's school achievement is an important argument for adult literacy, used by many authors. (Myrdal 1968, Rafe-uz-Zaman 1978, Unesco 1980).

The use of radio and television instead of literacy is also widely repudiated today. In many rural areas these media do not exist or do not function properly. In any case, the one-way communication provided by these media - if available - is not enough to teach illiterate adults useful skills. To the extent that non-print media are available to the majority, they can on the other hand supplement the print media in carrying development messages or elements of teaching. In this case they can also play an important role in the process of mobilizing people for literacy. (Myrdal 1968, Rafe-uz-Zaman 1978, Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson 1979, Bhola 1983).

The third argument is perhaps the most complex, because it says YES but NOT NOW, considering that other basic needs seem to be greater and literacy is a marginal need. It is generally shown that motivation for literacy is very low, especially in deprived rural areas. One of the fundamental problems to be considered in planning literacy programmes, is exactly how to create motivation. If the lack of motivation had always been accepted as an argument against launching literacy programmes, then we certainly would have had less progress in literacy today than we have. Myrdal (1968) argues against those who deprecate the importance of literacy:

"... Literacy opens up avenues of communication that otherwise remain closed, it is a prerequisite for acquisition of other skills and the development of more rational attitudes." (p. 1668).

In response to the lack of a felt need of literacy among the masses, Myrdal (1968) advocates that literacy programmes should have the character of a "movement" and a "campaign", in order to create this motivation "by propaganda and by local example". (p. 1662).

Most literacy literature argues similarly in favour of literacy as a priority task, and not as a task that can wait until other signs of development appear. The main argument - apart from social justice and fundamental human rights - is connected to the question of literacy's role in development.

In spite of the efforts made within the EWLP to evaluate the social and economic effects of literacy, the causal link between literacy and development remains ambiguous or unproved. There are, however, numerous examples of coincidence between advances in literacy and advances in economic and social development. World Bank studies purport to show that the highest rates of return are obtained from investment in primary-level education, and that agricultural productivity increases when a farmer has completed four years of schooling. Other studies have clearly shown the positive effect of basic education on health, nutrition, mother-and-child care, and family planning (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985).

In general, we adhere to a dialectical view of the relationship between literacy and socio-economic development, in accordance with, for example, Myrdal (1968):

"... their influence on each other must be mutual and cumulative ..." (p. 1667),

or with the conclusions from the International Seminar on Campaigning for Literacy, in Udaipur, India, January 1982:

"The Udaipur Seminar expressed the view that while the role of literacy in development was indeed significant, there was nothing automatic or deterministic about the literacy and development connection." (Bhola, 1983, p. 204).

"Literacy and the political economy of a society are in a dialectical relationship, each effected by and effecting the other... Literacy work is never too early since it is 'potential added' to individual new literates, to their families and to their communities." (Bhola, 1983, p. 205).

There are certainly examples of industrial and/or economic development preceding mass literacy, such as was the case in many European countries. Even if mass literacy may not always be a necessary condition for economic development, it can facilitate the introduction of innovations of all kinds that are part of the development process. (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979).

It is in this context necessary to stress the importance of adult literacy as compared to children's education, because of the relatively short time it takes to teach adults, and parti-

cularly because of the active role adults already have in society. Tanzania's President Nyerere illustrated this, when in 1964 he said to Parliament:

"First we must educate adults. Our children will not have an impact on our own development for five, ten or even twenty years." (Johnsson, Nyström, Sunden, 1983, p. 4).

Regarding the potential of adult literacy, the education of women is particularly interesting, even apart from the reasons of equality, because of their central role in the production of basic food crops and their key role in transferring habits, skills, attitudes, etc. to the children.

The fourth argument against literacy is a political one. Literacy is, as we shall see later on in more detail, a political issue and a political process. It is important to note that literacy therefore plays different roles, depending on the specific political context as well as on the socio-cultural and economic context of a literacy programme. Literacy has specific ideological aims (sometimes religious), often reflected in the contents of a literacy programme; it requires a certain participation in organizing, mobilizing, teaching, learning and discussing, and finally, it provides a tool for further acquisition of information that might be political. In countries with governments which do not give priority to literacy or other basic needs, adult literacy is organized on a limited scale, mostly by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), religious, humanitarian or political. These governments, especially if they represent a repressive system against those struggling for social justice, are often threatened by literacy activities, not so much because people become literate, but rather by the organized activity that is needed in order to bring about literacy. (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979, p. 63).

The political arguments in favour of mass literacy are mostly used by governments who promote some kind of mass participation or democracy in society or by opposition movements or organizations, such as national liberation movements, who see literacy as a facilitating tool in the struggle to mobilize people for specific political aims and tasks. In any case the possible political importance literacy may have, depends obviously on who organizes it, for what purpose, and in what context. This issue will be discussed in more depth below.

The last argument referred to against literacy, considers its possible negative effects. This argument does not imply that literacy should never be promoted, but rather that it should only take place when certain circumstances (existing or created) permit a positive effect.

Bhola (1982) responds to these arguments by saying:

"Some of the consequences of literacy may be negative and even unavoidable; but when not deliberately abused literacy is positive and potent, literacy can not wait." (p. 27).

We have so far discussed the justifications for literacy in regard to the society at the level of the local community or the nation. The justifications in regard to the individual or family are not all the same. They are closely linked to the problem of motivation for literacy, to which we will return.

One of the most important arguments for literacy is related to basic human rights and is relevant for all these levels (individual, family, community, etc.), as is expressed by Fägerlind and Saha (1983):

"Literacy is also a basic human right which expands personal choice, control over one's environment, and allows for collective action not otherwise possible." (pp. 43-44).

Considering the many disadvantages that illiteracy implies for the individual illiterates, one can use the argument formulated by an International Seminar held in Berlin in 1983:

"If there are close to one billion adult illiterates in the world - as there are - then there are also one billion living reasons for literacy." (Fordham, 1985, p. 23).

### 5.3 The Value of Literacy

In summary, the question "Why Literacy?" can be answered with a wide range of justifications related to either basic values or assumed effects of literacy in different contexts. Literacy in itself, however, is only a potential tool, that may or may not be used for a great variety of purposes of an economic, social, political, and cultural nature. As a capacity it can be dominated to a greater or lesser extent and, without application, it can easily be lost. The capacity can be used by various agents for a large number of ends. Literacy is a flexible tool, and its learning has at least two key moments. One is precisely the period in which it is being learnt, that is, how it is delivered which is of itself so important that it can come to represent the principle means for attaining the objectives contemplated. The other, more obviously, is its later utilization.

As an instrument of communication, it is evident that literacy is not merely an individual capacity, but also an instrument for collective activity. On top of this, literacy being (by design or not) a part of an education system and of a political economy in general, it is clear that its delivery/acquisition (or not) will be influenced by a large number of motivations and aims, which will very often be contradictory, or unite only around a common wish to deliver/acquire.

We will thus also enter into a consideration of two fundamental issues in literacy work: the objectives of the deliverers of literacy, and the motivation and aims of the potential acquirers of the skill.

## 6. STATE OBJECTIVES FOR LAUNCHING LITERACY PROGRAMMES

In general, the State (in the form of the ruling party and/or the government) constitutes the driving force for launching literacy activities. It may wish to respond to demand from the people, or have to yield to pressure from international sources, from the public, or from opposition groups. It may take over the literacy initiative to defuse or neutralise its potential for supporting or legitimising opposition groups. State provision of literacy may, as was historically the case in Europe, represent a strategy for social control, social discipline, and legitimation of inequality (Graff, 1977). Adult literacy is, however, a chancy strategy for social control, and two positions are to be found as a result - to control via literacy, or to control through leaving people illiterate! Nonetheless, one should not underestimate the legitimacy that literacy activities can provide internationally to a government; and the creation of substantial moral pressure to "do something about illiteracy" is an interesting example of the way that multilateral and bilateral aid agencies have influenced governments to undertake activities in which they may not really have very much interest.

When the state actively promotes literacy activities, its motivation is usually based on the expectation that they will serve as an instrument for making other changes in the society, i.e. literacy is conceived within the framework of the state's development strategy. Without doubt, part of the motivation may reside in an egalitarian ideology and a respect for human rights. Nonetheless, even in this case, to run literacy programmes the state always has to devote significant resources to them, which will be limited by the level of economic development and will also automatically represent some other non-realized investment. Thus the state will try to make the most of its investment in terms of overall outcomes, i.e. the transformation of the society or some part of it, politically, socially and/or economically. The state itself is not monolithic, furthermore, so often its literacy programme will in fact include diverse aims responding partially to various different pressures, some seeing the political potential of the programme, others the economic aspects. Thus a statement of national literacy aims is often a mixture of human rights declarations, political objectives, social aspirations, and economic strategy. However, in most cases the principal objective involved is clearly identifiable, and so we will treat the issue by looking at such principle objectives one by one.

### 6.1 Socio-political objectives

First of all, the mere promotion of literacy activities can benefit the state, and give it some legitimacy in the eyes of the people: "the state is doing something for us." The project represents both an immediate consumption good for the underprivileged and an apparent investment in the participants' future, as well as having the advantage of transferring the responsibility for making good use of the opportunity onto the population itself. At the same time, international approval can be acquired, as well as a supply of aid funding. However,

risks are involved - usually the programme needs to be of large enough scale to merit attention, and if it shows no satisfactory results, in the long term the state can be discredited.

As previously noted, the activity can serve the intended objectives both through its process and through its results. Notably, socialist states have explicitly made use of the process to attain political objectives. The content serves to inform the participants about aspects of national policy, while the organizational form, of mass campaigns in a semi-military style, attains various objectives simultaneously. The campaigns mobilize the people on a large scale to participate in an organized collective act of solidarity with the revolution, with important effects not only on the illiterates, but also on the society's "middle classes", who represent a potential obstacle to the socialist project as a whole, but who can fairly easily be mobilized to participate in a "welfare" project like literacy. Then, through their direct contact with the campaign organization and the masses, the "middle-class" teachers themselves receive a political education.

It is evident that such campaigns are difficult to carry through outside a situation where the state represents a promise of large-scale social and economic transformation.

Subordinate to these primary political objectives which are reached principally through mass participation, there exists a series of other objectives. The experience of mobilization can be used for other purposes later on. The collective participation in classes can be used to mobilize the participants for other purposes - construction of social infrastructure, or participation in cooperatives, etc. (Ethiopia provides an interesting experience of this). The question of reinforcing national identity/unity comes up frequently, through the contents, and sometimes through language - either by using literacy to spread a national language (e.g. Mozambique), or by using literacy as an affirmation of giving value to various national languages and promoting "unity in diversity" (e.g. Ethiopia). Occasionally the message of the campaign is reinforced by using conscientization methods adapted from Freire (e.g. Nicaragua), but in general states do not apply this method in "pure" form, due to its political potential for promoting uncoordinated local actions and even criticism of the state itself.

The objectives are profoundly rooted in large-scale participation, and in creation of social mobilization, so little weight is put on the academic quality of results. Often this implies a fairly low level of literacy skills, and numeracy is often omitted. However, there is hardly any sense in promoting literacy campaigns if no-one becomes literate or no-one can use the skills acquired, so an immediate, if less "hot", follow-up becomes necessary.

Even outside the socialist use of literacy campaigns, it is clear (as admirably shown by Freire) that in all cases literacy is a political act, and both overt and covert political messages are to be found in all literacy programmes.

## 6.2 Economic objectives

As argued, political and economic objectives are closely intertwined in the long run, from the state's point of view. Thus it is rare to find a literacy programme which is justified solely from an economic standpoint. However, some kind of economic reasoning lies behind all state literacy projects, and in many, it predominates. This is logical, not only because literacy requires investment, but also because the decision to use literacy as a point of departure is rooted in a vision of society (or part of it) becoming different - "more developed" - where literacy and numeracy play a role in the relations of production.

Giving emphasis to literacy's economic potential can give rise to large-scale programmes or to small highly selective projects, contrary to a situation where primarily political objectives automatically lead the state to large-scale activities. In general, the allocation of predominantly economic functions to literacy represents an evolutionary view of social change - the programme is redolent of expressions such as "self-help", "raising the standard of living", etc., implying a process of gradual improvement, rather than rapid social restructuring.

On the one hand, predominantly economic objectives for literacy can result in a highly work-oriented programme, which tries to build an immediate link between "theoretical" study and productive practice, and which incorporates a large amount of technical information about production. The EWLP (see below) is the most exaggerated example of this approach, then called "Functional literacy" (for convenience, we will refer to this approach as Functional in the future). With the exception of Tanzania, Functional literacy has been confined to fairly small-scale programmes, mostly inclined towards raising the productivity of illiterates within economic projects or "development schemes", in many cases in the form of trying to raise the subsistence level of peasant farmers through providing the bases for greater "self-reliance".

On the other hand, (perhaps largely arising from EWLP lessons), the economic "evolutionary" approach can consider literacy to be one of a large number of inputs to build economic growth, serving as an impulse by, for example, promoting "modern" attitudes in the participants and putting useful instruments in their hands, like some information about production techniques, and some ability to read instructions, calculate with money, work with measurements, write reports, etc. This approach is often built into development projects, the curriculum becomes more general, and the promoters do not expect immediate and direct economic results from it. Often, in fact, this expectation is transferred onto the post-literacy stage, where "learning to read" is supposed to turn into "reading to learn" (to borrow a phrase from Singh, 1976).

### 6.3 General socio-economic objectives

One also finds a number of quite large-scale programmes which are not directly integrated into a development plan and which have at most an "evolutionary" political perspective. These are often to be found in countries where illiteracy is not regarded by the state as a major problem but where the state decides to respond to public (and even international) pressure to "do something about it". Given this decision, literacy is then seen as something which could be a long-term socio-economic investment which gives "hidden reserves of talent" an opportunity to manifest themselves. Use is not made of direct and constant social pressure to impel enrollment - rather, the programme provides access to education for those who want it. In such cases, it may even turn into a long-term indicative plan for the eradication of illiteracy. Apart from low-key mobilizational tactics, such programmes are marked by a general curriculum, by careful attention to the techniques of teaching literacy, and by the creation of a technical infrastructure composed of highly-trained local literacy officers as well as paid teachers (often with quite a high level of schooling). This arises because the main attraction of the programme is its pedagogical quality. The state is usually fairly ambivalent about the programme, and, if it fails to attract much enrollment, is prepared to discontinue it without much remedial effort. In this kind of programme it is also notable that the state is often prepared to give NGOs a fairly large role.

### 6.4 The contribution of international agencies

While the national state appears to play the dominant role in the provision (or not) of literacy to its illiterate citizens, it is possible to find many examples of states involving national NGOs in literacy activities, or of national or local level NGOs taking the initiative in literacy work. Furthermore, it is increasingly becoming the case that states and NGOs turn to extra-national organizations for funding, resources and expertise, which thereby intervene in the provision of literacy to people while not representing their national state. The importance of this influence is easy to derive from our discussions (above and below) of the role of Unesco, not only in promoting literacy and securing its status as a human right, but also in influencing individual countries and programmes as to what kind of literacy should be provided and how it should be delivered. Other UN agencies, such as the UNDP and UNICEF, have also played a role in literacy in a similar way, as have the World Bank and other international aid agencies. There can be little doubt that the participation (or intervention) of these organizations represents a further set of objectives which influence who gets what kind of literacy. These diverse organizations represent a wide spectrum of different national (or even private organizational) interests, and the UN agencies represent an even more complex forum of international agreements, so that "who gets what" also varies widely. On one extreme, some organizations decide what to support on the basis of democratic criteria, and provide aid with few strings attached; on the other, "interventionism" is



much more pronounced. In Arnove (1980), a previous director of a project run by a large foundation is quoted as saying:

".. the government's and the foundations' assistance programmes have been striving to thwart communism, sell America's producers' goods, raise foreign living standards, or all three at once." (p. 215)

In considering what happens in national literacy programmes, the more or less evident international purposes in supporting and even influencing them should not be overlooked. It is certain that some measure of "own interests" will intervene; and in the situation of extremely unequal global distribution of power, capital and resources, the "aid marketplace" cannot but function as yet another site of unequal relations where the "giver" is able to influence the "receiver".

In the next chapter, we will look briefly at another set of interests which may intervene in literacy provision: that of NGOs at the national level.

#### References for this chapter

Background thoughts on the role of the state in literacy are to be found in Freire (1972a), Graff (1977), Wangoola (1983), Kweka (1983), Street (1985), Carron and Bordia (1985), Arnove and Graff (1986). The issue of the role of education in a state and of the state's role in education has recently been gaining prominence: Giroux (1981), Dale et al.(eds), vols. 1 and 2 (1981), Carnoy and Levin (1985) are some examples. Arnove (ed., 1980), represents an interesting look at the objectives of aid-givers in general.

## 7. THE ROLE OF NATIONAL NGOS

In the organization and teaching of adult literacy, NGOs have often had a salient role to play. Where the state actively promotes literacy work, it often can also involve NGOs and mass organizations in the activities. Where it has a more passive stance, it may permit NGOs to take on the task on their initiative, or cede part of the national programme to them; in other cases NGOs, especially community organizations, have managed to carry out activities that the state is against but is not able to stop.

The range of organizations falling under the title "NGO" is so broad and diverse that the term is of little use except for (partially) defining what an organization is not. Initially, in the field of adult education we may discriminate between those of purely national origin and those which are internationally linked or stimulated. In the former category fall everything from community-based organizations and clubs to large independent non-profit-making organizations with national coverage; while in the latter are to be found, for example, organizations of the established religions, or branch organizations of international education associations. Thus the role of NGOs in adult literacy might best be approached from some examples.

In Latin America, there has been a phenomenal spread since the late 1960's of "popular education", which grew up as a popular expression of the need of the exploited classes and groups in society to organize and educate themselves to resist oppression, recover and 're-create their own culture, and work cooperatively for social change. The roots of the movement are probably to be found in a combination of resistance to exploitation, the Paulo Freirian use of literacy learning for liberation, the theories of Antonio Gramsci on the formation and role of intellectuals organic to the working class, the activities of liberation theologians within the Catholic church, and the organizing activities of banned political movements. Starting out on the basis of community organizations which combine organizational with educational work, the trend has been to grow towards the creation of a broad popular front of community-rooted organizations which struggle collectively against the general structures of oppression while maintaining particular community-interest issues high on each organization's agenda. Within "popular education", literacy work may form a part of the activities. In Latin America, partly due to the continental "umbrella" of the Catholic church, which offers wide contacts and some shelter, and partly because one common problem is seen to be US influence in the continent, these organizations have managed to create regional networks and organizations that cover a number of countries. The scope of operation of each organization varies widely, under conditions which vary from revolutionary states through elected governments to dictatorial regimes; but even in the last case, it is clear that the organizations have managed to find the cracks and spaces in the control of the state and move ahead, even under very dangerous circumstances. A very similar movement, with some church support, has been growing steadily in South Africa over the past fifteen years.

In India and in other parts of South Asia, NGO involvement in non-formal and literacy education for adults and children has burgeoned. On the one hand, community organizations similar to popular education movements have sprung up in response to social repression in the structures of the local society - caste and "feudal" class repression, exploitation of women - but from our reading they seem not to have achieved the same "network" organization across the countries, though they may be closely related to local political parties. On the other hand, there seem to be a very large number of education-oriented NGOs which work closely with the states themselves, meaning a collaborative sharing of tasks between states' (adult) education departments and these NGOs. There thus arises a combination of state and external financing, specialized NGOs to develop curricula and train teachers, and community organizations to mobilize and incorporate the learners. In some instances (as happens also in Latin America), university departments take on the role of providing expertise. An example of this collaborative organization is to be found in the "Bay of Bengal Project" (BOBP), which was initiated among the fisherfolk of five countries bordering the Bay, with the original objective of improving fishing techniques and raising living standards. Financed by SIDA and executed by the FAO, the project has spread to involve several state adult education departments, non-governmental literacy organizations, and local community organizations concerned with women's issues, non-formal basic education for out-of-school youth, etc. (see National Swedish Board of Fisheries, 1984). Some of the Indian NGOs (against the background of India having 30% of all illiterates) involve very large numbers of people in literacy.

In Africa, fewer "constituted" local community organizations seem to operate, although rural communities are tightly organized and interwoven by family and clan ties. In some of the more economically developed nations, trade unions perform a special function in the education of members. Political parties often have a women's organization and a youth organization which have a role to play in literacy work. Sometimes service organizations are found, such as the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe, which provide the technical inputs of programme development and teacher training against payment (see Lind et al, 1986). The independent and the established (i.e. "multinational") churches have thus played a leading non-governmental role in literacy provision. The former have been more dynamic in the past, as they often represented local foci of active or passive resistance to colonialism, whereas the latter either collaborated with the colonial authority or occupied a highly ambivalent position between Europe, the colonial power, the settlers, and the African congregation; however, many of the established churches have become more "indigenous" and have moved away from "domesticating" or religion-oriented literacy into more "conscientization"-oriented work.

The probable explanation for the relative successes of NGOs in literacy/post-literacy and in popular education in general, lies in the rooting of the NGO in some form of cohesive community (members, class, gender, church-goers, etc.), representing an organization to a greater or lesser extent

responsive to the needs, demands and interests of that community, as well as a large degree of non-identification (or even opposition) to the state. In this sense, it is the feeling of a common cause which mobilizes and involves the community in its own project; literacy ceases to be a "service" and becomes an act of solidarity and cultural affirmation, even resistance. The community-based nature of the NGO and thus of the activity constitute its strength, but largely define its limits in terms of actually "getting to grips" with the task of literacy as a whole. It is probably only under conditions of a fairly powerless state, or a popular state, that NGOs can combine their educational efforts into a mass movement against illiteracy in society (though here again, it has been pointed out, the history of the popular movements in Sweden provide at least a partial counter-example). Otherwise, either the repressive forces of the state will intervene, or the educational programme in the long term will become compromised by its relative lack of effect on rigid socio-economic reality and/or by the collaboration of the NGO and the state.

There has been some effort on the part of international organizations to support the literacy efforts of NGOs. This may arise from the fact that the NGO is able or willing to do (better) what the state is not; under some situations, it may represent an attempt to keep an eye on what is being done; in other circumstances, it may even represent a direct "vote of displeasure" against the behaviour of disliked regimes. In many cases, support to NGOs is a laudable effort; however, we see as potentially problematic, the relationship between international aid agencies (with their own procedures and interests), and the fact that the NGO's strength lies in its community roots and its responsiveness to community decision-making.

## 8. INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATION FOR LITERACY

### 8.1 General findings on motivational factors

The key to adult literacy success is still more than in other forms of education, motivation, because of the nature of the living conditions of adult illiterate people. The essence of our study on factors influencing literacy campaign success, is therefore a question of under what circumstances is motivation for literacy strong enough, or can motivation be created and sustained among the masses of illiterates, so that a literacy campaign may reduce illiteracy substantially in a given area. All factors involved - national policy and ideology, infrastructure of literacy services, teachers, curricula, post-literacy, etc. - are geared towards ensuring, reinforcing or maintaining motivation, without which the whole enterprise would collapse. We will here examine the motivational pattern of the learners or potential learners.

The general experience and tendency of motivation for literacy, as manifested by illiterate adults offered literacy, is contradictory, in that without various forms of mobilization - awakening or creating motivation - the response is weak, but once initial mobilization has been carried out in an appropriate way, literacy often attracts a fair number of enrollees. However, in almost all cases the majority of the literacy learners drop out during the course. Among those who do not enrol many might nevertheless have a desire to become literate, while others might never have felt the need or desire to acquire literacy.

"Experience shows that it is more or less futile to try to promote literacy... until keen interest in learning to read and write has been awakened."  
(Gray, 1969, p. 28).

Laubach's experience is that motivation often does exist, although the first response may be negative:

"The first problem we often confront is how to persuade an illiterate to learn. If you ... ask him to study he is likely to say 'no'. Of one thing we may be sure - he does want to read." (Laubach 1947, p.111).

Laubach (1947, pp. 111-113) mentions three reasons for this resistance on the part of illiterates to study:

- 1) suspicion of a patronizing attitude and an ulterior motive on the part of literacy organizers or teachers - "Illiterates have been swindled and exploited and deceived by educated people so constantly that they are afraid of us...";
- 2) doubt of own ability - "the groundless belief that only children can learn and that an adult is too old to learn.";
- 3) fear of a tedious teaching-learning process - "in many countries education and pain have been synonymous - the more pain, the more education."

The first and third reasons above are not declared openly by the potential learners:

"The illiterate usually does give another reason for his resistance, he is too polite to say, "I don't like you" or "I suspect you" so he says instead "I am too busy" or "I am too old to learn" or "I don't need to learn". But all of these are only excuses." (p. 113).

If there is no mobilization for literacy classes or no literacy offered, usually no expressed demand for it is manifested:

"Because of the nature of the clientele the touchstone of most literacy analysis is motivation... The issue is not just the individual motivation, but the motivation of the government or agency concerned. Indeed the two are intimately connected, since it is the apparent lack of individual motivation that impels literacy experts to concentrate on motivation or commitment at the national level. Outside of the context of an ongoing national campaign, it is undeniable that literacy is the one level of education in the Third World where people are not clamouring for greater access or more provision." (King, Ed., 1978, p. ii).

There are many studies and experiences showing that:

"... virtually every literacy project in every country still starts out with overenthusiastic over-subscriptions of enrollment. People would indeed like to be literate. However, the strength of their desire and its ability to carry them through to completion are still the uncertain factors." (Oxenham, 1975, p. 4).

An in-depth study on motivation in Bangladesh concluded:

"... all adult participants as well as teachers, had a positive attitude towards the adult literacy programme, at least in the initial phase. They realize the importance of such programmes, but in spite of this both enrollment and attendance are far from satisfactory. The strongest barrier to motivation is poverty, since the potential learners need to use all their time earning a living, they cannot spare sufficient time to attend school. The programme moreover does not provide any immediate benefit, nor any clear prospect for the future, and this is another major barrier." (Adult Literacy Motivation, 1979, p. 82).

When there is a strongly felt need for literacy, the methods of delivering literacy seem to be of less importance. "Where the motivations are present, even inefficient methodologies may succeed impressively." (Fordham (ed.) 1985, p. 17).

This implies that although the need to explain the relevance of literacy in pre-literacy mobilization campaigns is essential, it is still more important to create a situation where the need for literacy is felt or where the use of literacy becomes evident, or to select areas for literacy where such a situation already exists in order to ensure strong motivation.

The consensus is that to insert literacy into an ongoing development project/programme aiming at solving felt needs, encourages participation and motivation.

The individual motivation that might exist without promises and arguments put forward by campaigners or mobilizers, arises from earlier life experience and perspectives of the future. For example, studies from Pakistan have concluded that:

"learners must have had some exposure to written language, seen the need for reading or heard of other illiterates who have achieved success through literacy before they apply themselves to the lengthy task of becoming literate" (ICAE, 1979, p. 35).

A similar finding is that previous involvement in education - no matter how limited the experience - favours participation in literacy.

The availability of easy and useful reading material, such as posters, newspapers, books, etc. influences motivation for literacy in the same way. The introduction of written material of this kind - often referred to as a post-literate environment - may therefore be made prior to a literacy effort in order to create the need for literacy. Geographical mobility from rural to urban areas also creates literacy needs, i.e. for correspondence. This is one of the most common concrete motives for illiterates wanting to become literate. A common felt need is also to sign their own name, instead of the humiliating fingerprint that illiterates have to give in their various forms of contact with authorities. Other common individual motives that may inspire the need for literacy are to:

- help own children attending school
- get employment or a better job with higher salary and prestige
- gain social prestige
- avoid being cheated by knowing how to check calculations or read contracts
- strengthen self-confidence
- make it possible to get further education

The motives may be more oriented towards social, political and collective aims, mainly in situations of socio-political transformation, such as:

- to acquire more knowledge about social rights and duties
- to be able to participate in and influence social and political life
- to keep accounts and minutes within social or political organizations
- to teach others
- to improve own and others' living conditions

(Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979).

The most common reasons for joining adult literacy programmes found in a survey in Bangladesh were to "learn reading books, letters" and also to "write letters". Among other reasons were "to gain social prestige", "to help teach their own children" (Adult Literacy Motivation, 1979). An evaluation made in Botswana found "general literacy", "community development" and "reading and writing letters" to be the most common expectations from joining the Literacy Programme (Botswana, Ministry of Education, 1984).

We have seen that more or less motivation may exist or may be created to achieve a positive attitude towards a literacy endeavour and a relatively high enrollment in the initial phase. Why then does the attendance rate become so low and drop-out rates so high?

It seems as if the same reasons which kept back those illiterates who did not even enroll also have a strong influence on attendance and drop-out. The conditions of poverty in rural areas imply that work for survival, including the traditional tasks of women, must always be given priority in use of time. Lack of time is the most common reason given for dropout, both in Botswana and Bangladesh, by interviewed drop-outs. This reason seems to reflect the participants' living conditions or the "poverty" barrier to motivation mentioned above. Very few interviewees in the Botswana study stated "no interest" as a reason for not joining or dropping out. Fears and apprehensions such as the quite common belief among adults that they are too old to learn have also been found to hinder both motivation to enroll and to continue (Laubach 1947, ICAE 1979). Such psychological barriers are frequently not given attention in literacy literature.

The high drop-out rate, one may suppose, also reflects some kind of disillusion. "When it becomes clear that no immediate material gains are associated with literacy, the disillusioned participants start to drop out of the programme." (Adult Literacy Motivation, 1979).

As was pointed out by Laubach (referred to above) the reasons given by illiterates for not joining or, we can suspect, for dropping out, may be excuses or there may be reasons not openly declared, such as "discouraging teaching methods". Several reports support this theory in the sense that the teachers' attitudes are held to be essential for participation and for sustaining motivation, although this



observation is not based on interview surveys with adult learners. A superior and patronizing attitude discourages interest, while a democratic, open and involved attitude, treating the learners as equal adults - creating an atmosphere of confidence - is found to have a positive influence on attendance and results. (Laubach 1947, Freire 1972, Sjöström & Sjöström 1982).

In some countries or regions, especially in Africa, the extended family structure has not been severely damaged by the nature of the "development" process, and the family is still the basic social and economic unit rather than the individual. Under these circumstances, we find other forms of constraint operating on enrollment in schools and literacy classes. As a unit, the family may well decide that only one or two of its members need under prevailing circumstances (notably, family production needs) to become literate, or to graduate from high school and become employed, thereby adequately serving the needs for literacy/cash/influence of the whole family. This may also explain why many people enrol in literacy classes or schools for only a short period before dropping out. In that short period, they have attained their own limited goals, such as ability to sign their names, or do simple sums, while more advanced goals will be attained by other family members.

In such "underdeveloped" regions, these situations largely undercut the "developed" western rationale of social analysis and programming on the basis of individual statistical collection. It would be much more indicative to measure access to and attainment of literacy skills and education by family, and in a first phase address the problems of inequalities and hardship at the family level. (For provoking these ideas, we thank Gustaf Callewaert, researching in Guinea-Bissau).

A poem "Why should we become literate?" by the Director of the National Institute of Adult Education in India makes an interpretation of the motivations and disillusion experienced by literacy learners, similar to those mentioned above. Here are some excerpts:

...  
We joined the literacy classes before.  
But after some time, we got wise.  
We felt cheated. So we left the classes.

...  
We agree to join the classes  
if you teach us how not to depend  
on others any more.

We should be able to read simple books,  
keep our own accounts, write letters  
and read and understand newspapers.

One more thing -  
why do our teachers feel so superior?  
They behave as if we were ignorant fools,  
as if we were little children.

...  
Treat us like adults.  
Behave with us as friends.

And yet, something more -  
we don't get a square meal.  
We have few clothes.  
We don't have a proper shelter.  
And, to top it all, floods come and wash away  
everything, then comes a long spell of drought,  
drying up everything.  
Would it help us if we became literate?

Can literacy help us live  
a little better? - starve a little less?

...  
Would we get better seeds, fertilizer and all the water  
we need? Would we get proper wages?

...  
If all this is done, all of us  
will join the literacy classes, it will then be  
learning to live a better life.

...  
But if we find out that we are  
being duped again  
with empty promises,  
we will stay away from you.

(Satyen Moitra in Adult Education and Development, Sept.1982)

The experience behind this poem also illustrates the danger of false promises given in mobilization and propaganda for joining literacy.

As we have shown earlier it is, however, only campaigns that have overcome the problem of massive drop-out (with the exception of certain small-scale projects). Apart from other important factors characteristic of successful campaigns, incentives and social or moral pressure or even sanctions have often been used to urge illiterates to learn. For example, during the literacy campaign in the USSR those who were illiterate and government-employed were confronted with the alternative of learning to read or losing their jobs. A strong pressure on people to learn to read in Sweden during the 17th and 18th centuries' reading campaign was created by not permitting marriage without reading skills (Johansson, 1977).

The two most powerful methods to inspire or even compel literacy motivation, attendance and learning are according to Laubach (1947) "making it easy and making it necessary".

## 8.2 Women's motivation for literacy

Surveys carried out on participation in literacy programmes reveal somewhat contradictory tendencies. In certain countries many more women than men participate (Kenya 78%, Zimbabwe nearly 90%, Zambia 70%). Although it is true that the illiteracy rate is higher among women than men, this does not explain why so many women and so few men participate. On the other hand, most experiences show that the drop-out rate among women is high and their attendance is very irregular. As a consequence of this and of other factors disadvantageous to women, several evaluations of literacy show that it takes

longer for women to become literate, in other words the pass rate is lower for women than for men. This is the case of, for example, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Mozambique (Johnston 1984). In South Asia, however, studies show that women participate less than men in literacy (A. Dighe, in Carron-Bordia 1985).

What then are the motivations of women to explain their relatively high participation in certain African countries? Research undertaken by Jennifer Riria (1983) on rural women and literacy in Kenya and other countries shows that women's motivation for literacy is partly linked to changes in the social role of men and women. Women in many third world countries, especially Africa, are now actively involved in areas that men monopolized before. With the emigration of men to the towns to take up employment, women have been left in charge of agriculture and general home improvement projects. Consequently women in this situation feel the need for literacy because they see it as an instrument to coping in an understanding way with their responsibilities. It also creates a desire among women to be able to read their husband's letters and to write back without help of other people. Other motivations found by Riria and other researchers relate to:

- the desire to help children to study;
- economic advancement and more self-reliance;
- liberation from absolute submission to received authority;
- the wish to be actors in the same way as men in society.

A group of women in Kenya, quoted by Riria (ibid., p.12), expressed their wish to study in the following typical way:

"We do not want to be cheated any more by the clerks who weigh our coffee, milk and other products. We want to help our children study."

In spite of the many reasons for rural women to participate in literacy classes, the multiple traditional and new roles of women prevent them from regular attendance and efficient learning. The lack of time due to being overburdened with domestic tasks, childcare and agriculture, is always a strong obstacle. Lack of self-confidence and relative isolation from more literate environments are additional factors working against full participation in literacy classes. Women are moreover discouraged by the attitudes of men (often including the male teacher) to their capacities in the classroom (Johnston 1984). Husbands and guardians at times even completely forbid "their" women to take part in literacy classes. "Men are afraid that if their women learn more than they themselves did, it may expose their own ignorance" (Riria, ibid.).

Johnston (1984) points out that women's participation in literacy gives rise to new situations conducive to struggles around women's liberation:

- "-the woman integrates into a new reference and support group, itself often supported directly by powerful social forces ...;
- in the literacy class situation, the woman is placed in a situation of (near)equivalence with other members of the local society ...;

-she is in fact not available to perform certain domestic tasks at literacy class time ... which necessarily rebound to the responsibility of other family members, sometimes male;

-she becomes able to manage new skills ... which give her a new (potential) role in the family;

-the mastering of new skills may also give her greater opportunity for paid employment, leading to relative economic liberation. Where the new skills enable her to produce an increased surplus from her agricultural labour, however, this may not lead to any change in her economic status, if her husband controls its use or distribution. This may lead to tensions in the family;

-the acquisition of new skills in a new environment often gives women new confidence, which may manifest itself in new habits of dress, wider and more open social contacts, greater desire and ability to participate in political discussions and programmes, and a general democratization of society may follow." (pp. 9-10)

In South Asia, experiences show that rural women are less motivated for literacy than men, due to the hindrances of poverty, religious and cultural traditions and the social and political milieu, which impose a strict enforcement of the economic and social subjugation of women. Without accompanying social change, literacy does not present a way out of the existing submission of women. As women are certainly aware of this, the common constraints on their participation in literacy - lack of time, overwork, male resistance, etc. - are not easily overcome. Only when literacy is truly linked to making women aware of the causes of their oppressed situation, and at the same time to organizing and training them for successful income-generating activities - not marginal social welfare concerns - does it become an economic need giving rise to strong motivation. The case of the Self-Employed Women's Association in India is a successful example of this (Fordham 1985 and A. Dighe, in Carron-Bordia 1985).

## 9. LITERACY STRATEGIES - IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

### 9.1 The Nature of Literacy Strategies

Literacy strategies (or "approaches") refer to the models of planning and implementation of literacy activities. The strategies adopted arise directly from the objectives of the deliverers of the programme, as regards both choosing literacy as the means of operation and making the contents and methods fit to the overall aims.

Some of the most important questions to be considered for a literacy strategy are: What are the priority aims? Which groups should be included? What is the scale of the programme, in number of participants and period of time? How is motivation to be created or used? What is the framework of organization and supervision to be? What level of literacy is to be reached? What kind of teachers can or should be recruited? What training do they need? What languages, contents and methods should be used in the teaching programme? What kind of evaluation should be used? What follow-up activities or facilities exist or need to be created to attach to the programme?

In recent history, we can distinguish four approaches, that have had or still have a major influence in the Third World: The 'Fundamental Education' approach (in today's terminology, 'Basic education' or 'general literacy'); the 'selective-intensive' Functional approach (launched through the EWLP, and to some extent still practiced as 'Functional Literacy'); the 'Conscientization' approach (inspired by Paulo Freire, and often promoted by NGOs); and the 'Mass Campaign' approach. None of these are complete or exclusive strategies. They focus on different aspects and there certainly exist mixtures and variations of these approaches. All literacy programmes do not necessarily fit into these categories and some can be fitted into one, while they are clearly influenced in certain aspects by others. The growing experience of literacy in the world means that even programmes with rather different aims may borrow successful aspects from each other.

We have already distinguished three main sets of objectives which inspire the launching of literacy programmes, two "positive" or "active" and one more "passive". These are:

- activities principally inspired by a wish to make political changes
- activities principally inspired by a wish to develop production
- activities intended to provide supply to demand, with a more "fundamental education" content.

As has been noted, it is seldom that these objectives are exclusive, and it is frequent that different interest groups push for, or use, a programme for different objectives. There also are a series of definitional problems, for the programme as for the researcher. One is the difference between stated aims and real aims, or between stated aims and the real

resources and efforts put into meeting them. Another is the difference between efforts and results, where for a diversity of reasons internal or external to the programme, the results turn out to be very different to those intended or worked for. A third is change over time, where modifications and changes in the practice of literacy result from or imply changes in the aims themselves. It has been noted, for example, that often the aims and objectives are set unrealistically high (Carron & Bordia, 1985), which can demoralize both deliverers and learners and result in changes to (or even abandonment of) programmes in course. A fourth major problem is simply bad use of terminology: e.g. the word "campaign" is often used to describe a most un-campaign-like activity; the phrase "eradication of illiteracy" expresses a wish to reduce illiteracy to a more prestigious level (about 20%); "literacy success" is used extremely amorphously, perhaps often too strictly. It is notable from the history of adult literacy work that in most cases the "success rate" between initial enrollment and final "pass" figures in any one round of a programme does not surpass 33%.

Bearing these issues in mind, we will examine some of the strategies which have been used, starting from an historical perspective, and then look at the details of those strategies which by and large are those in practice in the present. It should be stressed, however, that these literacy strategies overlap in time and space.

## 9.2 The 'Fundamental Education' Approach

'Fundamental Education' was promoted by Unesco from its creation, as referred to earlier. Literacy was only one of many activities aiming at "community development". Very little preoccupation was put into the questions of planning and organization, target groups or follow-up. Both adults and children were supposed to participate. Unesco stressed the importance of finding out the values and interests of the illiterates in order to adapt the programmes to the local culture and religion. (Regarding the objectives see page 7.)

During the period 1946-1964, when Fundamental Education was used as a concept, much intellectual preoccupation, promoted by Unesco, was firstly put into the question of language of instruction. A group of specialists who convened at Unesco in 1951 wrote a report on the use of vernacular languages in education (Unesco, 1953). Unesco strongly recommended the use of vernacular languages within the framework of 'Fundamental Education' as being the only efficient and correct pedagogical vehicle of teaching. After concluding this, a study of the most effective methods of teaching reading and writing in the mother tongue was promoted by Unesco. The study was carried out from 1952 to the end of 1954. The result is presented in William Gray's extensive survey: The Teaching of Reading and Writing, first published in 1956 by Unesco. It is interesting to note that the purposes of the study imply that it was thought that improved teaching methods would be the solution to the problems of literacy programmes. Originally it was even suggested that the final study report should be prepared in the form of a teacher's manual, to be used throughout the

world (Gray, 1969). Gray himself showed, however, the impossibility of such a result. The final report rather stresses that there is no universal applicable method and justifies the necessity to vary programmes and methods according to particular needs.

There seems to have been no systematic evaluation system connected to the adult literacy activities within 'Fundamental Education' programmes. One can only find very general assessments, all indicating the overall failure of Fundamental Education to make any substantial contribution to eradicating illiteracy. Some of the reasons for this failure are pointed out in Unesco-documents: the target group was unspecified, the programmes were aimed at people without motivation, follow-up of literacy was neglected. (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979).

Nonetheless, many of the current literacy programmes in operation continue to be similar to "Fundamental Education" activities, in one sense retaining the preoccupations with integrating literacy into "community development", providing access to those who demand it, and concentrating most resources and efforts on the production of "good" material and teaching methods. In another sense, however, these general programmes (discussed below in Ch. 9.6) have incorporated other experiences of planning and organization and have thus advanced beyond their original.

### 9.3 The Selective-Intensive Functional Approach

#### 9.3.1 The EWLP Experience

The Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) covered Functional literacy projects, supported by UNDP and Unesco, in eleven countries (Algeria, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Iran, Madagascar, Mali, Sudan, Syria, and Tanzania) from 1967 to 1972.

The main objectives of the experimental programmes were

"to test and demonstrate the economic and social returns of literacy and, more generally, to study the mutual relations and influences which exist or may be established or strengthened between literacy training - particularly among the working population - and development." (UNDP/Unesco, 1976, p. 9).

It was also hoped that the EWLP would make it possible to "prepare the way for an eventual World Campaign for the Eradication of Mass Illiteracy". (UNDP/Unesco, 1976, p. 10).

The projects were selective in the sense that a specific target group of illiterates working within a specific economic activity in a specific region was selected for the experiment. They were intensive in the sense that they were limited in duration and considerable resources were concentrated on them.

The human capital theory, regarding education as an economic investment, was the ideology behind the design of Func-

tional Literacy within the framework of EWLP. The meaning of functionality was therefore very limited to improved vocational skills or in general to the work-oriented contents of the literacy programmes. Much effort was put into the methodology of adapting the teaching materials to the specific skills needed within the target group of each project. The teaching of the 3 Rs was supposed to be work-oriented and integrated with the teaching of vocational skills. This kind of curricular design intended to ensure practical relevance.

The teaching method focused on "adult-centered" pedagogy. Active participation of the learners involved, both in the pedagogical process and in the form of "self-management", was recommended.

The principle of integration was meant to apply to organization as well as to the preparation and presentation of curricula. Institutional co-ordination between various national bodies and between them and international bodies was meant to be created.

The main concerns were however two: the functional content and evaluation. The high concern for evaluation is reflected in the main objectives and in the actual costs. While about 17 US dollars per person enrolled were spent on the implementation (including preparations), 26 US dollars per enrolled were spent on research (Edström, 1976).

The whole evaluation process is, however, severely questioned in Unesco's critical assessment of the EWLP (Unesco/UNDP, 1976). This critical appraisal of the evaluation process is worth summarizing at some length.

Programme evaluation sought to detect successes of the EWLP in changing the new literates' relationship to their socio-economic milieu, and changing the milieu itself, and judged the influence of functional literacy plausible and favourable in about 42% of the observations. A number of questions arise, however, including those of insertion into what milieu, and on whose terms. The profile of the "successful" graduate is a rather "Westernized" one, and furthermore not a compendium of particularly attractive qualities, even for a Western setting. "Mastery of the milieu" again is seen in fairly narrow and technocratic terms, and "transformation of the milieu" according to fairly narrowly economic and individualistic criteria. Unfortunately, clearly designed programme objectives were never present in the EWLP programmes; there was also genuine and longstanding conflict between "technico-scientific" and "activist-pragmatic" approaches to the programme, and thus between "summative" and "formative" evaluation. The former tended to predominate, meaning that certain very important aspects of the programme were never examined or evaluated at all. Timing was not scheduled realistically. In all, "confusion as to the purpose of evaluation, a narrowly-focused and quantity-oriented evaluation design laden with a not always appropriate set of value structures that tended to side-track rather than expedite evaluation, chronic delays due in part to attempts to evaluate progress toward EWLP's imprecise goals weakened the self-assessment effort" (p. 156). Much of the data provided proved unreliable and/or invalid.



An outstanding illustration of the failure to achieve the objectives of evaluating the EWLP is given in a summary of the project in Algeria:

"The Algerian project was one of the few among the experimental projects that made a serious attempt at evaluation. However, the evaluation studies suffered from a lack of continuity and sophistication and are, at best, inconclusive as to the effects and/or benefits of the project." (Unesco/UNDP 1976, p. 25).

The Unesco/UNDP assessment report (1976) also concludes that the other objective of EWLP ( - "to prepare the way for an eventual World Campaign..." - )

"is certainly no nearer than when the programme began .... Neither literacy or development as a whole can be willed into existence by international agencies ..." (p. 190).

The figures available on learning results are very limited, incomplete and based on doubtful reliability. "Test levels and criteria varied widely from subject to subject, context to context, project to project and within projects." (Unesco/UNDP 1976, p. 174). In some countries the new literates achieved a level corresponding to two years of primary schooling, in others a level corresponding to four years of primary school. It seems, however, very clear from existing data that the drop out rate was in general high, in average about 50%, ranging from 37% in Tanzania to 68% in Sudan (Edström 1976). The overall success percentage among initial enrollees can be calculated at around 12%, on the basis of rounded-up figures given in different places in the Critical Assessment. (Page 11: Over 120 000 were made functionally literate. Page 174: The million-odd illiterates reached by the programme.) The overwhelming majority of those made literate through the EWLP projects come from the Tanzanian project (96 900, p. 174). This fact is surprisingly enough not commented at all in the Critical Assessment. But it is logically consistent with the general conclusions of the assessment, that successful literacy can only be achieved when it is integrated in a national plan of development where the political will to implement literacy is clearly articulated in theory and practice.

The final result of EWLP is said to have led to a series of lessons and recommendations on literacy efforts.

The conclusions stress that "functionality" in EWLP terms was much too technical. Especially in its early stages EWLP tended to accept the idea of the "underdeveloped" person as the impediment to development, which is clearly false on several grounds. Further, the theory of development prominent at the time was one of economic growth, which in turn implied technical know-how as the chief prerequisite to foster it. Consistent with the approach, EWLP tended to view the design and planning of literacy as an essentially technical exercise, whereas in fact the problems are only partly technical. Social, cultural, and political factors are as important, if not more.

Gillette and Ryan (1983) point out that in many EWLP cases, literacy was "functionalized in economic terms (...) resulting in the virtual exclusion of female participation." (p. 15).

The Unesco/UNDP report (1976) makes many critical comments on the role of the experts trying to "market" a "pre-packaged product". A new notion of the expert as an international "animateur" rather than an importer of precise skills and concepts is recommended for the future. It is noted as unfortunate that not more attention was given to the existence of earlier successful mass literacy campaigns, nor the wishes of some member governments to replicate them.

Problems of co-ordination between various institutions both within the nations and between national and international bodies arose repeatedly. "Self-management" by the learners involved failed to materialize in almost all settings.

Many of the pedagogical experiences are also critically analysed. The teachers were mainly recruited among professional teachers, which was felt to be inappropriate. For the most part, integration was not achieved, i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic were not allied with the practical material to be learned. Inadequate provision for follow-up reading materials was a serious problem in many national projects. The number of drop-outs and degree of absenteeism may have reflected material that was not, after all, "relevant" enough and/or an inadequate psychological climate at local level. Concerning methods, the report concludes that it seems advisable to use a variety of methods and techniques. The best mix and balance remains to be found.

On the subject of language of instruction, the EWLP evaluators number among EWLP's successes the giving of a general strong impetus to "rehabilitation" of third-world tongues as a medium of instruction. The multiplicity of languages thus used created, on the other hand, a number of problems, e.g. of transcription, translation, etc. The evaluators conclude that the closer the language used to present the content of the course is to the worker's everyday language, the more effective the literacy programme.

Impacts of EWLP on further educational action are described as "limited, fragmented and incidental".

Finally, we consider one of the evaluator's recommendations worthwhile quoting:

"Literacy policy and planning must seek to integrate national necessities with the needs expressed by different social groups. No literacy process can be effective unless these groups realize that literacy serves their own interest as well as those of the nation.

For this reason, literacy must often be linked to changes in other fields, such as economic and social reforms (it is useless to teach a farmer to increase productivity if the greater part of the fruit of this labour goes to a landlord)" (p. 191).

### 9.3.2 The Economic Literacy Approach Today

Apart from the Tanzanian experience, which blossomed into full-blown campaigns over twelve years, (and will be treated in more detail below), the EWLP experience was unsuccessful, although it taught many lessons. However, it did not result in the burial of "Functional Literacy", which on the contrary has continued to be applied in many countries, notably in Africa and Asia, with some modification resulting from the EWLP experience and from other strategies. The concept of "Functionality" has in effect been broadened to include "awareness training" and a wider range of contents than the directly productive skills training involved in the EWLP. Nonetheless, the basic ideological underpinning (human capital theory) and the objectives (direct impact on raising production) remain essentially the same. Its chosen point of impact is the economic unit or the development programme, and its target population is selected from the producers involved. A deal of the content aims at transmitting better production techniques for the produce of the given area of impact, at least in theoretical form (the practice often being reserved for direction and supervision by other authorities in the "development programme"). As such, the "Functional" programme tends to remain small-scale and highly selective, though occasionally an intention is expressed to gradually widen it to cover a mass audience and proceed in this way to eradicate illiteracy (the only successful case so far being Tanzania). Generally the functional programme has no time limits set in advance, and the integration (in one way or another) of production and literacy often means that the programme of basic literacy covers two years or more (ICAE 1979, p. 46).

Levine (1982) contends that the term "Functional Literacy" is now used to justify everything and anything connected with basic skills education for adults. Further he argues:

"these varying conceptions of functional literacy encourage the idea that relatively low levels of individual achievement (...) will directly result in a set of universally desired outcomes, such as employment, personal and economic growth, job advancement, and social integration ... however ... the attainment of functional literacy rarely produces such outcomes". (p. 250)

Where successes have been registered, it is generally the case that in reality the literacy activity was situated within a powerful mobilization process or a broader process of change whose benefits to the learners were evident. The approach, as a selective small-scale activity, suffers from the problem that it cannot rely for mobilization of participants on a general atmosphere of priority, urgency, progress, change, mass movement. It has to show concretely that it is worthwhile for the participants. A case from Iran is worth citing (Furter, quoted in ICAE 1979), where the potential students demanded to be paid for attending classes, as the programme was an answer to the problems of the organizers and not to those of the learners.

In relation to organization and supervision, there seems to be a vast range of different approaches. An initial variable is the size and selectivity of the programme, and the kind of economic project it is inserted in. Another is the range of intentions for the future, as to degree and form of expansion or transfer. All of these factors influence whether a national coordinating body is mounted or not, who takes organizational responsibility, where materials are prepared, and so on. Usually pedagogical supervision is undertaken by a small team based in the area of the programme. The recent tendency is, however, to mount a specific literacy "bureaucracy" from national level and downwards.

The selection, mobilization, and training of teachers is somewhat more difficult than in more general programmes. In small projects, it is often possible to pay the teachers, but any intention to spread the programme more widely makes this a dangerous tactic - once the right to a salary is established, all teachers will demand it. On the other hand, the long-term nature of the programme and its lack of an atmosphere of priority and urgency make it very difficult to mobilize volunteer teachers. In principle also, given the "functionality" of the programme, one would expect a long training programme (which represents higher investments and makes teacher drop-out costly) in order to transmit both the techniques of production and of literacy teaching. However, it is clear that in general the training courses actually given are short (2-3 weeks) (Carron and Bordia, 1985, p. 31), probably for "cost-benefit" reasons, a factor which must at least undermine the real "functionality" of the teaching. In counterweight, usually the supervisory bodies are expected to carry out continuous in-service training, and the other structures of the project are supposed to do the "real" technical training outside the literacy classes.

The choice of language for the programme has been a serious obstacle. Language is often a complex national political issue, around which the state treads warily. It is also clear that, for the programme to be Functional, it must transmit Functional language skills also. In employment situations, workers may have a variety of mother tongues. Even rurally-based development projects may often cover more than one local language group, as well as personnel speaking other languages, maybe only the official one. A variety of strategies has been used, all of which trip over one of two problems: either the (predominant) local language is used exclusively, which is not very Functional in a national sense, and which may upset the students as being a way of providing an "inferior" education; or somehow (local-official, franca-official, bilingual, or just official), the official language is reached, usually involving considerable lengthening of the literacy programme, which becomes littered with failures and drop-outs along the way. There is no easy solution to the problem, which requires a political approach and a careful consultation with all involved (including the literacy students!). (Carron & Bordia, 1985, p. 23).

The methods used obviously seek to integrate (at least a theoretical) elementary technical training and a few other topics of wider concern into a literacy training. This

requires careful elaboration of material, and, to be Functional, material often has to be developed for each and every project area according to local produce, etc., a costly and time-consuming process. It has been pointed out that common problems with an economic approach to literacy are, to emphasize narrow production techniques at the expense of all else (including the participants' interest), or to err towards either all productive skill training and no literacy, or all literacy and no productive skill training. Behind this problem of how to integrate training of literacy skills with that of other functional skills lies the tendency to "try to achieve too many things at the same time" in one literacy programme (ICAE 1979, Carron and Bordia 1985). This tendency leaves the field open for individual teachers to give priority to the area they feel most familiar with.

The demands of rural production often mean that literacy is done in slack seasons and dropped in peak seasons, which can create long gaps and relapses in the literacy component as well as dissociate the technical theory from the technical practice through a long time lag. For these reasons, there have been some attempts to make literacy a concentrated programme with long hours over a short period. A necessary characteristic of the functional programme is the inclusion of an arithmetic course, which can be a major mobilizing factor.

The level of literacy to be reached has varied in practice from programme to programme. The problems faced here are somewhat similar to those faced by all programmes - a high level requires a long course, a low level is not very useful. Language problems play a hindering role in this situation. Many programmes have tried to face the problem by dividing literacy up into a set of levels with their own certificates and tests, to give the learners a sense of getting somewhere. It seems rare, funnily enough, for the testing procedures to cover whether the technical content has been learned, or to provide any kind of "professional" certificate. In general, we have not been able to find any clear indication as to whether literacy successfully learnt through work-oriented curricula is better learnt or longer retained, or whether the curricula have in fact had a notable impact in the long term on production techniques and productivity.

A post-literacy follow-up to a Functional programme presents a variety of problems. If the programme in fact treated literacy as part of functionality, it would seem important to preserve and extend it. Several experiences show that the mere existence of a follow-up possibility can be a major motivating force for the literacy component itself. However, the "applied" nature of the programme may hinder a direct transition to higher levels of the school system, so a more Functional applied follow-up would appear most logical. This alternative is extremely hard to implement, however, as the technical content needs to be more advanced, and finding teachers to teach it becomes more difficult. Tanzania (see Andersson, Male and Westergren, 1984) is currently facing up to this problem. The country had a large number of different functional literacy programmes (13 in all), so the logical continuation would be an even larger and more complex set of applied post-literacy courses. But just the trouble and expense of

researching, writing, printing and distributing all this material is a major problem, requiring enormous input of human, material and financial resources, before even the teacher training problem is tackled, though one ray of sunshine seems to be that it is easier to mobilize new-literates for post-literacy than illiterates for literacy. However, the experience seems to show that post-literacy follow-up will have to be a diversity of formal and non-formal strategies rather than a direct Functional continuation.

#### 9.4 The "Conscientization" Approach

##### 9.4.1 Paulo Freire's Development of the Approach

The "Conscientization" approach to literacy, of which Paulo Freire is the major spokesman, was primarily formulated in the contexts of Northeastern Brazil in the early sixties and briefly implemented throughout Brazil prior to the military coup in 1964, when Freire was imprisoned for a period. Other experiences led or influenced by Freire himself have taken place in Chile in the late sixties, in Guinea Bissau in the late seventies. During the seventies Freire's educational theory had a wide influence in the whole Western world, particularly among radical educators and progressive religious agencies. His literacy theory and practice are still inspiring many educationists, especially in Latin America, where projects are organized by non-governmental groups or organizations, and have achieved a certain status in Unesco contexts.

Freire's publications (1972a, 1972b, 1976, 1978, 1985) deal extensively with theories on the nature of human beings, the formation of human consciousness, the nature of human oppression and the liberation process in general. His ideology is a mixture of catholicism, marxism, existentialism, and a general humanism. We will not try to summarize Freire's whole ideology here, but rather try to describe his view on the literacy process itself.

Freire's literacy theory and practice aims at making it possible for the oppressed illiterates to become aware that they can change their own situation. The main task of adult education is to bring up a process of critical reflection that leads to action and change. Education is seen as an element in the necessary process of human liberation.

No education is neutral. It is either domesticating or liberating. Domesticating methods and content determine each other reciprocally, just as liberating methods and content do.

Dialogue and participation are key elements of liberating education. The educational programme is determined through a participatory investigation together with the people in the area chosen for literacy, on the culture, the living conditions, kind of existing awareness, existing contradictions, the language and vocabulary used, etc. A series of "codified pictures" would introduce the whole literacy course in order to motivate the participants for literacy. A picture would also introduce each learning unit, which would stimulate discussion and awareness about different key themes linked to

peoples' daily lives. Then the word - characterizing the picture - would be presented, which through its syllables and derived syllable families, should stimulate the learners to create new words or even sentences by recombining syllables. The "generative" words together with the pictures would substitute a ready-made Primer - elaborated from above.

"If learning to read and write is to constitute an act of knowing, the learners must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects. It is not a matter of memorizing and repeating given syllables, words and phrases, but rather of reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing itself, and on the profound significance of language." (Freire, 1972b, p. 29).

It is not sufficient, argues Freire, for illiterates to psychologically and mechanically dominate reading and writing. They must dominate these techniques in terms of consciousness, to understand what is read, what is written and why one writes. This cannot possibly be achieved if the educator, or teacher, remains aloof from his or her pupils and merely donates skills and information as one who knows. The role of the educator is to enter into dialogue with illiterates about concrete situations and offer them the instruments with which they can teach themselves to read and write. Such teaching cannot be imposed from the top, as it were, but can only take place in a shared investigation, in a problem-raising situation between educator and educatee. Thus learning of content and the learning process are inextricably bound together.

Freire does not provide any theories or practical guidance on how to organize a literacy project administratively, nor does he even mention the question of evaluation. The questions of how to recruit and train teachers and still more important how to mobilize or motivate people to enroll is not included in his literacy writings.

"What does a total concrete project look like in terms of the acted-upon strategies of approach, the actual materials constructed, the particular contributions of a given group of illiterates, the acts of refinement of the materials, the outcomes which are attributable to the project and the kinds of internal or external obstacles encountered? In short, where is the evaluative dimension from which literacy workers disposed to the Freire approach can get a sense of the ability of his theoretical-practical assertions to deliver rather than to deceive?... The specifics of past actions in literacy projects are essential to share in detail for in their report is the vital knowledge of tested but unsuccessful hypotheses as well as those which have worked." (Bugbee, 1973, p. 434).

It is difficult to get an overview of Freire-inspired literacy projects to appraise their results. Humbert (1977), which describes several projects, is not very concrete. There are, however, many and varied reactions to Freire's works.

"By far the largest and most enthusiastic are those who write from a religious perspective similar to that of Freire himself. Indeed conscientization has become a commonly employed term in the rhetoric of many church-based agencies." (Mackie, 1980, p.8)

In Latin America, the influence of Freire on literacy is so widespread and the interpretations of the "conscientization" concept so broad and varied, that:

"today there hardly exists any government literacy programme that does not define itself as "conscientizing" (Torres, 1985, p. 118).

Torres contends that Freire himself, through his early works, is responsible for having separated "conscientization" from its political dimension.

"When it is not defined by whom, for what nor how the people should liberate themselves, the "liberation" and "conscientization" concepts have become so vague and imprecise that they can be used for anything by anyone." (ibid.)

An illustration of how Freire's ideas can be misused is the Brazilian government-sponsored literacy "movement", MOBRL, using the form, but contradicting the content and aims of Freire's pedagogy. It has been claimed to be successful by the government and for example by the World Bank (1974), but other reports (Selander, 1977) have shown how the statistics on attendance and success are falsified by the teachers, who get paid according to the number of participants in their classes.

Some of the most important critical remarks on the limitations of Freire's theory have been made by marxists, as, for example, in the following by Selander (1977):

"Just as little as a school system can change the society it is part of, just as little can a literacy movement change a society. A liberating pedagogy... must be linked to a struggle that aims at changing the whole economic and political system. Only a political movement is appropriate for this and only a political movement, that is rooted among workers and peasants, is capable of achieving this."

The question is, what does and what should "liberating" education lead to. According to Freire's original theories the answer to this question must not be predetermined. It is the dialogue and "conscientization" process that determines what actions or what specific ideology it leads to. This is not realistic and therefore idealistic, because, whoever is organizing and/or teaching has some kind of specific political aim or ideology built into his programme. If the educators pretend not to have a specific political/religious aim, then the process easily becomes manipulative.



The above-referred political objections to Freire's pedagogy can be found in RISK (1970), Bugbee (1973), Huet (1973), Selander (1977), Mackie (1980), Torres (1985).

Bugbee (1973) also puts the following question:

"What is the undergirding discipline which guides and activates not only the research team to conduct a preliminary thematic investigation, but also the people who are the project's co-authors and beneficiaries? Is Freire suggesting that this crucial element may stem from beneficent governments, the World Council of Churches, Unesco or elsewhere?" (p. 433).

The political implications of Freire-inspired "conscientizing" literacy activities have also been demonstrated by repressive measures by the ruling power-structures against participants and leaders of such programmes. When this has been directed against spontaneous actions against the exploiters, without there having been any organizational links to social movements or a political strategy, it may well have much more negative than positive consequences for the participants (see for example RISK, 1970).

There are a few examples of Freire-inspired government sponsored programmes which, because of their political implications of action or potential action against the government, led to the suspension of their national directors. This happened in Peru 1974, and in Portugal 1976. (Levin, Lind, Löfstedt, Torbiörnsson, 1979).

The growing experience and reflection on these political issues in relation to popular adult education, including literacy, has led to a more explicitly political theory and practice among adult educators who advocate consciousness-oriented literacy, including Freire himself. In later interviews and publications, he has clearly expressed his views on the political implications of his own pedagogical theories and of education in general, for example:

"Today I would have worked for a stronger political organizing towards political aims and to a greater extent linked the work to the working class, because the ruling class does not commit suicide." (Selander, 1977, p. 13).

"When I began my educational practice as a young man I was not clear about the potential political consequences. I thought very little about the political implications and even less about the political nature of my thinking and practice. Yet, the political nature of these reflections was and is a reality. The political makeup of education is independent of the educator's subjectivity; that is, it is independent if the educator is conscious of this political makeup, which is never neutral. When an educator finally understands this, she or he can never again escape the political ramifications. An educator has to question himself or herself about

options that are inherently political, though often disguised as pedagogical to make them acceptable within the existing structure. Thus, making choices is most important. Educators must ask themselves for whom and on whose behalf they are working. The more conscious and committed they are, the more they understand that their role as educators requires them to take risks, including a willingness to risk their own jobs." (Freire 1985, p. 179-180).

The process of practical implementation of Freire's theory and recommended practice of literacy presents a variety of difficulties depending on many factors apart from the political orientation and purpose, such as the socio-economic context, the human and material resources available, the recruitment and training of teachers, the time-factor, the scale of the programme, etc. The ideal situation of designing a literacy curriculum and teaching material based on local participatory investigations for each target group or local community often requires highly-educated staff in quantity if the programme is to cover large areas or a large number of adults. For a national programme it also implies problems of coordination and control. In practice, Freire has recognized the need for literacy primers for general national use, for example in Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Nicaragua, where he worked as an adviser while the primers were prepared. The literacy programmes in Guinea-Bissau, based initially on a Freirean approach and subsequently on other experimental work, have had very little success due to serious language problems, organizational difficulties, staff shortages in quantity and quality, and lack of political will, mobilization and support. (Harisom 1983; Ballara 1984).

"... the Freirean "strategy" or "method" ... reflected an utopian view of the social realities of Guinea-Bissau, and ... served neither as a means to implementing social change nor for teaching reading and writing." (Harisam 1983, p. 346)

Experiences show moreover that the application of the teaching methods, i.e. the "global" method of reading and writing with an accompanying dialogue, where the teacher's role is to promote the learners' participation and creativity and to learn from the learners, is extremely demanding and difficult to achieve, especially in the context of larger-scale programmes or campaigns, where volunteer teachers with relatively low educational qualifications and short training constitute the teaching staff.

Torres (1985) points out that even when the "conscientization" approach has been inserted into popular education projects with "clear political orientation", it has in practice often been limited to a "dialogue" that in itself turns rather into a kind of oral questionnaire, where the educator asks and the learners answer, than a moment of reciprocal communication. Her analysis of the political mobilization and awareness effects of the literacy campaigns carried out in Cuba and Nicaragua is interesting in this context. It was not so much the contents of the Readers, nor the dialogues, nor the revolutionary slogans that explain the strong political/ideological

impact of these campaigns. "It was first of all the process itself, the very close association between the literacy teachers and the learners" (p.121), and the integration of literacy in the revolutionary process as such.

The difficulties of achieving participation in real social transformation through "conscientization"-oriented adult literacy, and the question of under what circumstances there are "spaces" for such actions, are discussed in the Latin American context in C.A. Torres (1981), and continue to be debated among radical educators there. Further studies and clarification of these issues in the adult literacy context would be worthwhile.

According to many experiences (including our own) and in view of the critical comments mentioned above, Freire's pedagogy has widely contributed to the understanding of the literacy teaching-learning process and has inspired many literacy workers and experts to develop their ideas and methods in certain aspects. In Latin America there is an ever-growing "popular education" movement which is strongly influenced by Freire's theories. Many NGOs all over the world working with basic adult education are likewise applying a critical consciousness approach, where literacy is a component integrated into a movement for social change and the pedagogical principles are learner-centred. Freire provides an important source of critical reflection and inspiration for literacy practitioners, through his criticisms of domesticating and elitist approaches to literacy and his insistence on the alternative role of the educator as someone who shares experiences with the learners, teaching and at the same time learning from them. The Conscientization approach does not, however, provide sufficient guidelines for a whole literacy strategy, and contains non-applicable elements, especially for large-scale government programmes.

#### 9.4.2 Popular Education

As has been noted in Chapter 7, and above, Freire's theories of conscientization form one of the bases for the growing movement of popular education in Latin America and elsewhere. The praxis of popular education has been based on, and has developed, the theory of the relations between class struggle, political strategy, and educational action. Adult literacy as such is only a sub-heading within the dialectic conjunction of political organization and popular initiative underlying the theory and activities of popular education. Learning of literacy is only one possible outcome from popular education activities, and does not occupy the central position it once assumed in Freire's pedagogy. Certainly, a popular education movement may be built around a literacy-learning activity, in the interests of popular mobilization, participation, and organization, and the literacy methods then used would be close to those suggested by Freire.

However, as literacy is only one subordinate outcome of popular education, we have decided not to devote further attention to this whole fascinating development in this paper.

## 9.5 The Mass Campaign Approach

### 9.5.1 International moves to promote mass campaigns

Mass literacy campaigns have always been difficult but, particularly in revolutionary societies, aiming at socialism, they have been successfully implemented. This literacy approach is a mass approach that seeks to involve all segments of society in order to make all adult men and women in a nation literate within a particular time frame. Literacy is seen as a means to a comprehensive set of ends - economic, social-structural, cultural and political.

In the sixties, when Unesco concentrated on the EWLP, the already successful experiences in Vietnam, China and Cuba were not considered by Unesco for formulating general recommendations or even for international discussion. The reason for this was certainly not lack of information. A Unesco Commission presented a report on the Cuban Literacy Campaign in 1965 (Unesco, 1965), analyzing in detail its success. While the Cuban campaign took place in 1961, it was awarded honourable mention by a Unesco Jury in 1967:

"For one of the most remarkable efforts to mobilize public opinion in support of literacy work, as a result of which the country's illiteracy rate fell from 25 per cent to 3,9 per cent." (Unesco, 1968, p. 74).

In the seventies new successful literacy campaigns have been conducted in Tanzania (1971-1983), Southern Vietnam (1975-1978), Somalia (1973-1975), Ethiopia (1979- ), Nicaragua (1979-1980), and in many other countries mass campaigns have been initiated with longer term perspectives.

In the light of these new experiences together with the failures to achieve considerable progress in other literacy attempts, Unesco decided to promote a discussion among member states on the possibilities and promise of the literacy campaign as a strategy for the eradication of illiteracy. The reasons for this are many: successes with campaigns, the growing opinion that literacy is a human right, the feeling that mass literacy will not only promote development but also help redress oppression and injustice (a feeling promoted by Freire's ascendancy to international legitimacy). It is also possible that the near-monopoly of countries professing socialism on campaign successes, and the resulting legitimization of socialism, have made governments and organizations previously impervious to such activities join their support to the use of the strategy, at least verbally. One may also suspect that it is internationally and nationally comfortable to be able to point to attempts at large-scale literacy, as a visible sign of government concern with human rights, poverty and oppression, without fundamentally doing anything else about these issues.

As a basis for this discussion, in October 1979, Unesco through the International Council of Adult Education, commissioned a study that would undertake a critical analysis of

reputedly successful mass literacy campaigns of the 20th century. The study written by Professor H.S. Bhola (1982) analyzed eight campaigns, those of USSR, Vietnam, China, Cuba, Burma, Brazil, Tanzania and Somalia; and in a memorandum addressed to decision-makers summarized and analyzed the lessons of these experiences. The discussion of this study was one of the objectives of the International Seminar on Campaigning for Literacy held in Udaipur 1982 (reported in Bhola 1983). The seminar was organized by ICAE, the German Foundation for International Development (DSE), and Seva Mandir Agency in India, while Unesco was present as participant.

The Udaipur Seminar adopted a Literacy Declaration, calling for massive literacy efforts:

"Only specific campaigns with clearly defined targets can create the sense of urgency, mobilize popular support and marshall all possible resources to sustain mass action, continuity and follow up.

It is not enough merely to teach skills linked to general economic development if the poorer classes remain as exploited and disadvantaged as before. A literacy campaign must be seen as a necessary part of a national strategy for overcoming poverty and injustice." (quoted in Bhola 1983, p. 245).

Bhola points out that:

"Political will is prior, but technology is the great enabler in the planning and implementation of a successful literacy campaign... The basic processes involved are:

- Articulation of the nation's political will
  - Temporary institutionalization of the first policy initiative and later
  - Development of a comprehensive policy-making and legitimizing organ
  - Study and diagnosis of preconditions
  - General mobilization of the public, and
  - Establishment of structures of mass participation
  - Development of inter-ministerial and inter-agency structures
  - Pre-operational preparation
  - Implementation of development and instructional actions
  - Evaluation of context, processes and results, and
  - Design and establishment of post-literacy programmes."
- (Bhola, 1983, p. 222).

We have chosen to quote this whole list in order to show the importance given to political, institutional, organizational and mobilizing aspects, as compared to pedagogical methods or contents for example.

The present tendency in literacy discussions is focused more on organization, administration, planning, monitoring, and evaluation than on methods and contents as earlier. This is reflected by the quite recent involvement of the Internati-

onal Institute of Educational Planning in literacy activities.

Successful literacy campaigns have been conducted in many different ways, using various methods of teaching and evaluation, aiming at different levels of literacy, etc. The major trait which seems to underlie the success of major campaigns is the ideology of the state, which determines that literacy be used as a central strategy for achieving (or starting to achieve) overall ideological goals, notably a restructuring of social classes and their relations to power. A whole component of this restructuring is political, and its form mass mobilization, which explains in part why a literacy campaign with political form and content should be used. It is thus questionable that the mass campaign strategy can simply be transported from one nation and political system to another and yield success everywhere. Even between nations with similar revolutionary socialist ideologies, campaigns have taken a series of forms, according to local perceptions and capacities, and yielded results at varying levels of short-term and long-term success. In countries which profess socialism, but not of a Marxian kind, a similar range of forms and results have been found. In other, non-socialist countries, campaigns have been tried with less success, or activities have been launched under the name of "campaign" but with little other resemblance to one. To clarify, "campaign" is a word from military sources implying large-scale movement, clearly-defined objectives and targets, allocation of priority status and sufficient resources, and a clear time demarcation. It describes actions, not plans and hopes. (Bhola, 1983, p.206).

States achieving success in campaigns have had the political commitment, motivation and power to be able to organize an effective mobilization of all available human, institutional and material resources needed. For this mobilization all available means of propaganda in favour of literacy are used to create motivation among the illiterates and among voluntary literacy workers to use their time for literacy classes in all possible settings. Different ways of rewarding success - mostly symbolical - together with social pressure to attend classes, have maintained mobilization high and prevented high drop-out rates. For quick positive results, literacy has been defined at a low level, but for its retention and use, links were established for continuing education in follow-up programmes, and for active participation in the social, political and economic life of the country.

Centralized policy formulation with decentralized responsibility to local authorities and organizations for implementation and management have characterized successful literacy campaigns.

Within the range of experiences which merit the title "campaign", at least over some important period of their implementation, two major strategies can be identified, which we will discuss separately below: the "one-off" eradication campaign, and the longer-term "eradication by a series of campaigns", which present some rather distinct features and divergent problems.

### 9.5.2 "One-off" mass campaigns to eradicate illiteracy

From the few existing examples: Cuba (1961; illiteracy reduced from 24% to 4%), Nicaragua (1979-80; from 50% to 13%), southern Vietnam (1976-78; from 25% to 14%), and Somalia (1974-75; from 95% to 30%); the principal factor for their organization and success appears to have been the recent conquest of state power by a movement strongly characterized by its popular support and by its intention to revolutionize the social and economic structure of society. Three additional factors appear (from the successes and failures) to have been crucial:

- a) With the possible exception of Somalia, the illiteracy level was around or below 50% on starting the campaign, and the absolute number of illiterates targeted for involvement did not exceed 1,5 million in any of the four cases. This made it possible to cover all the illiterates at one go, in small classes. (In the case of Somalia, which is in many ways the most "marginal" of the four examples, the statistics are confused by the introduction of a new, Roman script for the language, which made almost everyone technically illiterate. This meant that there first had to be a campaign to teach those already literate to read the new script, before tackling the rural areas with their mixture of literates and semi-literates in other scripts, as well as "pure" illiterates).
- b) Three of the states launched their campaigns within two years after the movement acceded to power (and Somalia within five years after), while popular enthusiasm was at its height. The importance of the time factor for the high level of mobilization is documented in the case of Nicaragua's Literacy Crusade, by Miller (1985):

"The fixed date instilled an urgency in people ... without the firm target date, the campaign would probably have had to be postponed to the following year and precious momentum and commitment would have been lost." (p. 217)

- c) All four states have one principal majority language, which facilitated mobilization, writing of materials, teacher training, provision of follow-up, etc.

The objectives for the campaigns were clear: to involve everyone in the eradication of illiteracy, with a view to general politicization and incorporation (immediate and future) of the masses in the socio-economic transformations to be carried out. The illiterates would acquire the information and skills needed to participate in changing society, while the literate population, as teachers, would be (re)educated by their contact with the working masses. The campaigns were executed over a period of one to two years.

Mobilization was effected, as mentioned above, by the use of all available means of public communication, allied both to symbolic and material rewards and to social pressure on the unwilling. A key feature was not to allow the mobilization activities to relax at all during the whole period of the

campaign. The very aim of the campaign, to eradicate illiteracy over a short period, was generally mobilizing as a significant and quickly attainable goal. The military-style organization of "campaigns, brigades, offensives, marches, flags, ..." gave a general impression of purpose and collective engagement. In addition, Arnove and Graff (1986) put weight on the leadership of a charismatic figurehead, though this factor is not so evident in the Nicaraguan case.

The organizational and supervisory structure arose naturally from the aims of the campaign - as it was everybody's campaign, its structures incorporated all organized bodies in the society - ministries, schools, factories, committees, mass organizations, etc. - and involved them in the mobilization of resources, teachers and students. Central and local literacy committees were organized, involving high-ranking officials at the given level of the organizations mentioned, to facilitate rapid decision-making. The classes themselves were generally small, five students or less, making it easy to organize meeting-times. In general, the voluntary teachers lived with families in the community and participated in productive work in the area. School teachers and literacy instructors kept close contact with the classes and gave support to the teachers. Where more than two students were to be in a class, efforts were made to ensure a similar starting level.

Initial teacher training was of necessity short, around five days. The closing of classes in secondary schools to provide literacy teachers also provided rooms for the training. In Cuba and Nicaragua, the teachers also received a detailed teaching manual. In those countries with minority languages (Nicaragua, Vietnam), these groups were mostly left for a later "second round" drive in their own languages.

The curriculum content largely focussed around the new state's historical origins and policies for the future. The methods were rather traditional "tutorial" pedagogy in practice, although Nicaragua, with some previous experience of popular education during the insurrection, inclined the methodology towards conscientization. In Vietnam, "methodological emulation" was launched, the teachers being encouraged to try to build up their own methodology around the literacy material with the most successful being rewarded. The objectives in the four cases were oriented towards rapid literacy teaching, so numeracy was not included in the criteria for literacy (in Vietnam, reading numbers was included), and, where an arithmetic programme was prepared, it was for voluntary application towards the end of the campaign in more advanced and motivated classes. The literacy tests were formulated on criteria set at central level - abilities in reading a text, taking dictation, free writing - and when the teacher reckoned his group had reached that level, the local literacy committee would assist in verification. Pass certificates were handed out in public ceremonies. In Cuba and Nicaragua, the students concluded by writing a letter to the political leader(s) of the country. A survey of examples of these letters reveals a large variation in the literates' writing capacity.

In all four cases, the problem of regression to illiteracy strongly posed itself. In Somalia, important results were



achieved in the "modernizing" and mobilization of the society, but various factors resulted in a weak provision of follow-up and large-scale relapse into illiteracy. In Cuba, all learners were given a follow-up reading book at once, and vast efforts were made to incorporate everyone in more formal follow-up classes, with the result that after twenty years the country could announce that the "Battle for (universal) 6th Grade" had been won. In Vietnam, use was made of the school system and of 3rd Grade curricula upwards to provide "popular complementary education". In Nicaragua, material for adults with the distinct taste of a primary school curriculum was produced to be used in mass follow-up classes, but this option is currently being questioned as too formal and childish, and antagonistic to the principles of "popular education". The last three countries have all worked hard to produce accessible and cheap reading material, in the form of books, newspapers and magazines, Cuba having done most in this regard. At the same time, they have put much effort into attaining universal primary education, which is of course fundamental to preventing the resurgence of illiteracy and must accompany any serious attempt to eradicate it.

#### References for this section

General: Bhola 1982, 1983, (all four countries).

Cuba: Unesco 1965; Levin, Lind, et al. 1979.

Vietnam: Literacy Work 1978-9; Carron and Bordia, 1985.

Nicaragua: Torres 1985; Miller 1985.

### 9.5.3 Eradication of illiteracy by a series of campaigns

The first example of "a campaign" to eradicate illiteracy that took the form of a series of campaigns, is that of the USSR (1919-1939) where illiteracy was reduced from 70% to 13%. This was followed by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945-1958; 7% illiteracy at the end), China (1950-1966, 1976-; 85% to 25% now), and Korea (?). The seventies saw a large rise in the use of a "campaign series" strategy: Tanzania (1971-1983; 67% to 20%), Iraq (1978-1980; 18% to 0 (?)), Burma (1969-1972 and 1976-1981, 1.3 million literates), Ethiopia (1979-; 93% to 42% est. so far), Mozambique (1978-; 95% to 75% so far), Angola (1976-; 85% to 62% est. so far).

The characteristic feature of the campaign series is to run a sequence of campaigns, each with its own enrollment and literacy target, within a more general (5 to 10 year) plan for the eradication of illiteracy. The enrollment target is often further defined in terms of given priorities for the campaign in question - by area (urban/rural, selected districts, etc.), by political or economic priority (cadres, workers, collectivized peasants, etc.), by language (elaboration of programmes in the major language(s) first), by age group (usually the age of 45 is the upper limit to the priority), and so on.

The objectives behind the campaign series strategy are usually similar to the "one-off" strategy: political mobilization and sensibilization. As far as we can assess, the countries which have registered successes in at least some of the campaigns in the series and in making notable inroads into illiteracy all profess a socialist ideology. In Bhola (1983) a

series of other countries are treated as "new campaign countries", but in practice, of these only Botswana and Kenya seem to have enrolled and kept significant numbers in classes, and in the former case the country itself describes its activities as a "programme" with little of the mass mobilization characteristic of a campaign (ibid., p.80-87). Kenyan figures (Dave et al, 1985, p.32) for the period 1979-83, indicate a total enrollment of nearly 1,9 million, but only a 4% success rate.

There seem to be three principal reasons behind choosing a "step-wise" strategy. The first is the very high level of illiteracy and/or the very large absolute number of illiterates, which makes reaching all of them at once very hard, finding adequate numbers of teachers difficult, and providing adequate structured follow-up almost impossible. The second is that the country's situation of underdevelopment is such that it decides that it does not have the infrastructure and it cannot spare all the resources that would be needed for a "one-off" campaign. An additional encumbrance for many of the countries named has been that they have been in a war situation, which further reduces the possibilities of making literacy an absolute priority and of setting aside sufficient resources to combat illiteracy. A third is often the large diversity of languages, which complicates planning and mobilization. In the case of choosing one language for the campaigns, the second-language situation encumbers and prolongs the teaching programme for many classes, while, in the case of choosing several languages, the production and distribution of materials and the training of teachers, as well as planning the follow-up, become a more lengthy and complex process. Tanzania had the advantage of being able to use for literacy an African lingua franca, Swahili, spoken by most Tanzanians. In Ethiopia the multi-lingual problem has been tackled by producing materials in 15 different languages. Mozambique and Angola chose initially on political grounds to teach literacy in the official language, Portuguese - a second language for the illiterate population - as an instrument for promoting national unity. Experience has somewhat revised their assessment, but technical difficulties have prevented them from beginning literacy in various national languages.

In parentheses, it should be noted that Iraq did not really confront the above problem situations; it declared literacy to be compulsory, and ran six short campaigns to eradicate illiteracy in the target groups (set by age) over three years, so in many ways it comes close to a "one-off" strategy.

Using the "campaign series" strategy gives rise to a number of particular problems which do not affect the "one-off" strategy, most of them related the long duration of the series as a whole:

- the eventual target is very distant, so "eradication" as a slogan is not so effective;
- the mass mobilization afforded by the "revolutionary moment" tends to dwindle over time, making specific mobilization activities for literacy even more important;
- the process of keeping mobilization going constantly over

- so long a time is often beyond the state's capacities;
- teachers become harder to mobilize initially and to keep on the job in a voluntary capacity, given the long haul ahead;
- it is very easy for external factors (drought, war, or just other important programmes) to remove literacy's priority in practice along the way;
- classes, which are large, often begin to accumulate a lot of repeaters from previous campaigns;
- it is easy for the literacy activity to become a bureaucratic process, top-heavy and divest of a feeling of priority;
- the two moments, "literacy" and "post-literacy", in spite of the great necessity of running both simultaneously, contradictorily also have negative effects by becoming a mixture of parallel programmes, which complicates organization, support and training, diffuses efforts and reduces focus on the literacy issue itself;
- the creation of a "literate environment" with large supportive concentrations of literate people is much slower and less effective.

The result is that the first two or three campaigns are usually very successful, but then things begin to fall apart. Thereafter, there are "dead periods" and "revivals", when the state again puts special weight on a given phase (e.g. to support a Party Congress or a big political change), or on a given moment (e.g. the period leading up to a national test). To keep things going smoothly, two things seem from experience to have been important - an ability to mark out new priorities for each campaign and concentrate on them, giving a constant feeling of progress and success; and the creation of strong political base structures with the responsibility for keeping up participation and enrollment (in Bhola's words, making the campaign the masses' own (1983 p. 207)). The latter factor is especially noticeable in the Tanzanian and Ethiopian cases.

In many respects, the successful campaigns in a series are close in organization and content to the "one-off" eradication campaign. A focus on political change is to be found in the material; literacy committees incorporating all the sectors in the society are set up; teachers are usually volunteers receiving moral incentives (and maybe a few material ones) who are given a short initial training; testing is usually centrally controlled; and a fairly formal direct follow-up is usually made available. Because of the conditions which led to the choice of a "campaign series" strategy in the first place, classes are usually rather large (15 - 30).

Ethiopia and Tanzania offer some interesting divergent experiences. Ethiopia's campaigns were structured in two short intensive phases each (three hours of classes per day!), one for the entire target group and the next for those who had not passed in the first phase. This made the time-sacrifice expected by the learners shorter in duration and allowed faster learners to graduate quickly, while the slower learners

had a period in a smaller class where they could be given more individual attention. The first intensive phase could then be taught by secondary school students in the long school holiday which implied restructuring the school calendar slightly but avoided shutting down the schools. The second phase prevented the accumulation of repeaters in later campaigns. Tanzania, on the other hand, set up literacy tests after very long periods (after intervals of two or four years) which may have demoralized learners but made it easier to organize follow-up groups. Tanzania is interesting for having used political mobilization with a combined political and directly Functional curriculum. Partly through international support, it was able to pay a small allowance to voluntary teachers; it also used primary school teachers extensively for teaching literacy (with variable success - reports indicate that the former gave more attention to the Functional content and to adult methods than the latter).

From descriptions and own experience, it seems in general that the teaching practice in the literacy class is traditional and directive. The teachers have low educational qualifications, a very short specific training and a much longer previous primary school experience, so they tend to go back to the ways their own teachers taught them (Lind 1981).

Given the variety of organizational strategies, contents, language policies, et al., between the various cases, the level of literacy intended and reached in practice also diverges considerably from one to the other. Generally, the "literacy campaign" is intended to provide an equivalence to about second grade schooling, though Tanzania's "4th Level" was somewhat more advanced (those passing 3rd Level were also considered literate, however). This prescribed level, even if attained, does not guarantee any lengthy retention of skills, which makes the provision of follow-up crucial to the whole effort. The various follow-up possibilities are examined below (Chapter 10). The countries which undertake the "campaign series" strategy often have high illiteracy, deficient school coverage, and problems in printing and distributing written material, which make it difficult to create a literate environment to motivate, support, and justify the efforts expended. Some criticism has been directed at countries undertaking campaigns in this situation (Street 1985). However, Ethiopia offers a good example of providing follow-up coverage in classes (seven million enrolled), and Tanzania of combining with the literacy effort, the near-universalization of primary education in innovative ways, and the provision of accessible-level reading material on a wide scale. Certainly it is not very sensible to run a series of campaigns to eradicate illiteracy if primary schooling does not universalize its coverage and no material is available to read over the same period.

#### References for this section:

General: Bhola 1982, 1983.

Tanzania: Kassam 1978, 1979; Johnsson et al. 1983.

Vietnam: Carron and Bordia 1985; Levin, Lind et al. 1979.

Ethiopia: Carron and Bordia 1985; Gumbel et al. 1983; NLCC of Ethiopia 1984.

Mozambique: Fordham 1985; Lind 1981, 1985a.

Angola: Marshall 1984.

## 9.6 Large-scale General Literacy Programmes

One may look upon the fairly large-scale literacy programmes which take place on the basis of a rather passive state approach to the issue of literacy, as falling between the active use of literacy for political change in campaign series and the active use of literacy for purposes of economic growth/development in selective form. As mentioned in Chapter 5, such programmes tend to apply some of the organizational principles used in campaigns, but are marked more by being a provision of access to those who want it than by a consistent use of mobilization methods. Probably the majority of state literacy programmes today fall under this description. In Bhola's terms (1983, p. 207), such a programme is "politically cool" (even if in some cases it is called a campaign). Examples of such programmes are to be found in Bangladesh, Botswana, Brasil, Cape Verde, India, Kenya, Mexico and Zimbabwe, among others. The objectives put forward by the state for such programmes are fairly diverse, incorporating statements of human rights, political philosophy cultural policy and economic strategy. The literacy access provided is often quite extensive, and one of the aims is usually the eradication of illiteracy.

The states involved fall principally into two groups. In a few cases, the government involved has a tenuous grip upon power and a low capacity to mobilize, but opens up literacy programmes as one way of making its presence felt and of promoting its legitimacy. In the remaining cases, the countries involved fall into the "middle income" category and have a fairly large mining/ industrial sector, or at least an economy where illiteracy is not seen as representing an immediate major obstacle to growth - illiteracy being concentrated among the peasantry and the unemployed. The economy is such that individuals in fairly large numbers have a certain motivation for literacy learning, such as hopes of employment or promotion, or a motivation provided by the general level of literacy in the society. Migration to the cities is usually extensive, and the need to write letters makes itself felt.

In launching such programmes, the government makes public statements of support, and sometimes wide advertising campaigns are launched (e.g. MOBREAL in Brazil), but in reality most responsibility for mobilization rests on the initiative and dedication of local literacy officials and there is little social pressure operating. This often results in a high initial enrollment, followed by a very large drop-out. It has been noticed that where local figures of authority lend their approval and weight, better mobilization and lower drop-out have been achieved (Lind 1985a, T. Coles, comment on draft).

Various levels of organizational structure are created, usually in the form of a department in the Ministry of Education, corresponding provincial departments, and trained and paid officials at local level with organizational and pedagogical functions. In particular sectors where illiteracy is felt to be a special problem (mines, plantations ...), some kind of special "Functional" programme is often set up in parallel with the more general programme, often on the initiative of the sector management. Furthermore, the government

often "cedes" part of the programme to local NGOs, which may come to play a large part overall. In some cases, various ministries and NGOs have been given responsibility for different "bits" of the programme, which seems from experience to be a perilous option, resulting, without good coordination, in conflicting objectives and dispersion of effort and resources. Where one ministry or organ is in charge of coordinating and directing the whole programme, the contribution of NGOs and of other ministries in its execution can allow for good use of all the resources available.

Teacher mobilization takes place in a variety of forms, often relying on NGOs for a part of the teaching corps. Where such programmes continue over a lengthy period, it becomes hard to find volunteers and the state often ends up paying salaries, even if very low ones. However, almost everywhere initial teacher training remains short (1 to 2 weeks), and in-service training provided by local officials remains important.

Such programmes, in a similar way to a "declining" campaign series, often end up with a large bureaucracy, an indetermination of aims, a high financial outlay, and not very satisfactory results. It may be noted that the attempt to reduce costs or increase coverage by putting a large part of the teaching load on primary school teachers, as was once attempted in Kenya and Tanzania, has the disadvantage of launching traditional primary school methods into adult classes and causing further drop-out (Bhola 1983, p. 120). Often NGOs are most successful in finding and training teachers to use dynamic adult-centred methods in literacy. In many societies, a further caveat has surfaced in relation to teachers: if youths are recruited as teachers, adults are put off. This problem can be surpassed under conditions of general mobilization or high motivation, but it assumes importance in the "cooler" programme.

These literacy programmes make use of a general curriculum oriented around subjects of interest to adults which the state feels comfortable with: health care, agriculture, conservation recreation, arithmetic ... (though where NGOs are involved, they may well use the opportunity to put over some of their own interests). Often the mixture of objectives drawn up for the programme, the wish to maximize use of the cost outlays, and the desire to make the curriculum interesting and useful to adults, result in an "over-packing" of contents - too many goals are expected to be reached by one literacy course. This can become especially aggravated where the programme uses the classes as a launching pad for parallel income-generating projects, as is the case in some countries. While in India (see 8.2 above), such a project proved essential to getting women to participate in one case, in others the parallel "practical" project becomes the main activity, and literacy learning suffers accordingly. This is not to underplay the general importance of practical projects with an educational content, but only to question whether literacy training is the best way to set them up. The results of an experimental project carried out in the Andhra Pradesh state of India in 1972 are instructive in this regard. The project, Non-formal Education for Rural Women, contained literacy and mother/ child care instruction. Three principal different designs were tested:

- Group 1: a training programme with emphasis on reading, writing, and arithmetic, with the content derived from child health care issues;
- Group 2: a training programme concentrating on practical demonstrations and information on mother and child health issues;
- Group 3: a combination of literacy classes and mother/child care demonstrations and instruction.

"The results were that Group 2 showed the greatest progress in the acquisition of knowledge and practices regarding mother/child care; Group 1 alone reached a stage of literacy sufficient to maintain the skills, and Group 3 did not gain as much mother/child care as did Group 2 nor as much literacy as did Group 1." (ICAE, 1979, p. 42).

An important aspect of the pedagogy of the programme is that its language, methods and contents are some of the principal means for maintaining student motivation, and hence attendance. Thus often more effort is put into methodology and curriculum design than is the case in campaign situations. A number of complications arise from this, some of them noted above. The quality of teaching becomes an important factor. In multi-lingual situations, where often there is a certain indefiniteness of language policy by the state, technical, political, and motivational factors can conflict in the choice of language. For example, it may seem best for technical and motivational reasons (fast learner progress) to use local languages, while for political and motivational reasons (access to employment, political participation, higher grades of the school system, etc.) it seems best to use the official language or a "lingua franca". In the face of such problems, it would seem to be especially important to plan the whole educational project well in advance, notably as regards what is to happen after literacy, which should aid the definition of what language and contents should be incorporated in both the literacy and post-literacy components, as well as provide potential learners with a perspective on the matter. Among issues to be considered are, how and when to transit from the mother tongue to the official language, whether levels of adult education are to be considered equivalent to the school system's grades (and which), and whether and how testing should be done. In practice, unfortunately, the low priority of literacy and the relatively passive role of the state have resulted in programmes being launched without any prior decision and/or action on what should be done when the literacy students finish the prescribed textbook (Botswana and Zimbabwe provide examples). Surely the lack of such planning acts to reduce individual motivation in a situation where this factor is most crucial.

#### References for this section

The most concentrated sources of information are to be found in Bhola (1983), ICAE (1979), Carron and Bordia (1985). Other sources are Department of Non-formal Education - Botswana (1982), Lind et al. (1986), Fordham (1985), Dave et al. (1985).

## 9.7 Selective Small-scale Programmes

In many instances around the world, literacy activities represent a continuous on-going project on a fairly small scale. These, by the objectives of their promotion or by the nature of their promoters, are selective in one way or another. Although they do not make large-scale inroads against illiteracy, they have many of their own characteristics and can serve particular purposes not readily attainable by larger activities. We have already referred to those undertaken within the EWLP and the conscientization approaches, which were selective by their experimental or community-based character. In general, we may subdivide small-scale programmes into two corresponding main types:

- more or less decentralized state-promoted activities, within particular areas or units selected for "development" or for pilot projects; these may involve or originate from ministries or institutions (private or state-sponsored) other than the Ministry of Education ;
- NGO or community-promoted activities (including cooperatives, trade unions, churches, women's organizations, etc.) This kind of NGO literacy project represents a great diversity of approaches, from traditional church involvement to popular education within liberation movements; but they are all limited in scale and selective according to the target group defined by each organization.

The results of the first type seem to depend on similar factors to the large-scale programme - exercise of mobilizational pressure within a facilitating organizational framework by the authority responsible, within the perspective for the learners that they will benefit from attending the classes. In this context, the provision of a programme organized in steps, which offers some form of organized post-literacy, is probably an important factor. Benefits on offer have often been characterized by their more "material" nature: better family production, higher wages, promotion. However, some literacy activities within development projects have been planned in such a way that they are strongly boosted by the avenues which they open to increased collective self-management and participation in decision-making (Savaria, 1979). One should note that the mere use of administrative pressures and of putative material benefits can easily put off the illiterates, and that real changes and real participation remain important factors.

The NGO/community position in relation to mobilizing and organizing literacy students is rather different. Although projects organized by the church, for example, may well seem to have the moral authority of the church at their back, one must look to other factors than "authority" to explain the successes reached; indeed the presence of authoritarianism may well explain some project failures. It seems that we must look to the factors of "the culture of participation" and often "the culture of resistance" as being most explanatory. Community and other NGOs operate as mediums for collective participation, decision-making, and action. In some cases, group solidarity and effort might arise from common membership in an organization like a church or a club, even though the literacy



per se does not take place against a background of social change or improved material conditions. In other cases, group interest is aroused by the combination of literacy with useful inputs, such as knowledge of health care or participation in income-generating activities (though here, the problem of finding time for learning literacy often raises its head!). In both instances, the promotion and organization of an organized self-directing collectivity plays a strong part.

But in many instances, most important is the collective's engagement in an organized (even covert) resistance to oppression. Most developed in this sense is the whole "popular education" movement, especially in Latin America, but elements are to be found even in more traditional literacy groups, as the mere fact of poor people organizing themselves to learn something that society in a sense withheld from them, is an act of defiance and affirmation. That there is "space" for such "challenges" organized by NGOs is not axiomatic; it depends on the given historical moment in each society.

In general, small-scale or selective literacy programmes and projects have the potential to be intensive, in that existing resources can be more concentrated, at the same time as the project organizers can be close to the project area (in contrast to large-scale activities led by central government agencies). This permits more flexibility, less bureaucracy and more capacity to respond adequately and in time to the problems and needs of the process. Given that such a project is integrated into a context that promotes motivation (organization, social change, mobilization, social mobility etc.) it is then also potentially possible to achieve better quality in the pedagogical process and the organization, and consequently better results. The contents of teaching materials and classes can be more directly linked to local realities and preoccupations.

The teachers can more easily be provided with advice and in-service training, and the learners' needs can more easily be detected and met; they can for example be divided into groups according to their learning progress, the advantage of which has been indicated by many literacy practitioners.

These advantages of small-scale projects are potential and not an automatic consequence of limited scale. The social context and the human and material resources for the project remain determinant.

Small scale programmes, even run over a long time, obviously do not create any significant reduction of national illiteracy rates, except as pilot projects, where the experience is later put to use on a wider plane. Pilot projects are useful to test varieties of strategies (as was for example done in Tanzania) and contents.

## 10. POST-LITERACY

So-called "post-literacy" is a potentially enormous field of activities which could include most of a society's educational resources. In this chapter, we will deal with post-literacy in a slightly more restricted sense, that is, the immediate follow-up to what a state or organization defines as its literacy programme (which may, of course, also cover people who have become literate through other channels, such as a few years of primary schooling).

As we have noted above, some kind of clear future access to a post-literacy follow-up is probably in itself a major motivational factor for bringing illiterate adults into literacy classes. At the same time, follow-up is enormously important for consolidating and extending literacy skills and for preventing relapse into illiteracy. Unfortunately, this latter aspect of the follow-up programme is often neglected: the organizers prepare the follow-up on the assumption that "literate" adults will join, and use it to move directly from "having learnt to read" to "reading to learn". In reality, the adults who enter such programmes are often marginally literate both because the literacy programme did not provide more than the rudiments of literacy in the first place, and because relapse has taken place in the interval between the adult leaving literacy and joining up again in "post-literacy". It can safely be said that the main concern of a "post-literacy" programme should be to be a "better-literacy" programme!

For the purposes of this sketch of post-literacy, we can conveniently divide the kinds of programme available into four: traditionally, the labels have been "formal, nonformal, informal", but it is probably better to subdivide the category "non-formal" into "structured" and "semi-structured" programmes. This is because there also exist, of course, a number of unstructured (informal) resources lying around in many societies which can be of use to the new literates for retaining their skills, but we are interested in different forms of specifically provided resources.

The "formal" post-literacy follow-up is easy to describe - it implies a near-direct entry into higher grades of the school system, through evening classes or through other specially arranged taught classes using (light adaptations of) primary school curricula. Such programmes have the advantages of conferring directly equivalent certificates which give "credentialized" access to labour market opportunities, of the organizers being able to use (slightly adapted) normal teacher training programmes and (briefly retrained) professional teachers, and of requiring little extra effort for text-book preparation and curriculum development. Where it is difficult to organize anything else, this strategy is obviously preferable to no follow-up at all. However, the disadvantages are also apparent: unless such a programme is conducted in an environment of general social pressure for education, adults on becoming bored and humiliated are very likely to drop out. Furthermore, especially if the job-market is tight, potential participants may regard the struggle to get a certificate as valueless and never join at all; most primary school curricula are notorious for not being especially "relevant" to rural/

adult/ most people's needs at all. They are also organized around child psychology, interests, and learning rates (Dumont 1979). A special problem also raises its head in multilingual societies - often the school system bravely strikes out at once in the official language, such as in Ethiopia, and it almost certainly goes over to the official language fairly rapidly; at the same time, literacy was conducted in the learner's mother tongue; so "post-literacy" becomes first an extra literacy component in a second language (the official one) before adults can be brought into the "main-stream" of schooling.

The non-formal "structured" post-literacy alternative covers a much wider range of possible activities: however, its distinguishing feature is that it consists in some kind of actively organized teaching programme specifically for adult new-literates. It is only sensible to suppose that "structured" post-literacy would follow on directly from its forebear, the literacy programme, in aims, methods, approach, and contents.

Where literacy has been used as a force for political change (in some kind of campaign form), various options are open. One often used, of course, is direct entry to the formal (but now "politicized") school system, as in Cuba, Vietnam, etc., where slightly adapted school curricula were used. Another is to continue a general "politicized" education with a curriculum specially structured for adults, as in Nicaragua, Mozambique, etc. A third is to create a more economically or "Functionally" oriented programme, as is being tried in Ethiopia, in effect using initially-learned reading skills to learn about directly-applicable life skills like agricultural techniques, child-care, health, etc. In general, the mobilization applied for literacy is "carried over" to maintain attendance in post-literacy. Some countries have also set up a selective option, i.e. creating special boarding centres for community-selected adults, offering adult post-literacy courses in specific political and/or "Functional" skills and/or in further general education (Ethiopia, Tanzania and Mozambique all offer examples).

In the specific Tanzanian case, where the political campaign style was wedded to a work-oriented literacy content, it was logical to opt for a similar kind of mass "functional post-literacy" follow-up. In general, a work-oriented follow-up is clearly indicated as the major form of follow-up to work-oriented literacy. It should be added, however, that such "Functional" follow-up strategies represent one of the most difficult options. The tasks of researching, writing, printing, distributing, and of finding and training teachers to teach, the vast number of different materials to be "relevant" both to each particular situation and to the literacy-content (and language) taught before, is a daunting and very expensive one. Dumont (1979) notes as just an initial problem to be faced, that a successful transition to a large-scale post-literacy programme should involve tripling national paper consumption within five years. If a more general programme is printed and the teacher is given the task of making the "relevant" application to local realities, this implies in its turn the use of highly qualified and trained teachers.

Both "formal" and "structured non-formal" approaches to providing post-literacy have to take into account also the attraction such programmes have for all the other multiple semi-literates and even thoroughly-literates in the society, who have often been pushed out of the (rather irrelevant) school system along the way and see the new programme as a welcome "second chance" to move ahead again, or to learn more useful skills. Especially the "structured" approach has to take careful note of the problem of equivalences to the formal school system. If the programme, though quite different to the school curriculum, offers an equivalent certificate allowing secondary school access (e.g. to evening classes), wage rises, etc., this may powerfully motivate literates to join - especially youths "pushed out" of school. Then an adult-oriented programme may find itself dealing with a youthful audience impatient for entrance into secondary school and mostly interested in academic credits. On the other hand, lack of equivalence may dissuade some new literates from joining, and anyway it is hardly sensible to leave out the youthful semi-literates of the society! In the case of Tanzania, furthermore, which deliberately created special "adult" Levels for adult education without equivalence to school grades, it has been found that many "adult" places, at least in the residential post-literacy Folk Development Colleges, are still occupied by hopeful youths looking for some way forward to secondary education.

The third form of post-literacy, the "semi-structured non-formal", represents an organized project for putting learning materials into the hands of adults, without a direct teaching component. It is "semi-structured" in that it is still a project requiring research, planning, preparation, distribution, mounting of infrastructures, investment and so on. High on the list are efforts to "create a literate environment" through making available reading/learning material at an accessible level for new literates: news-sheets, photostories, wall newspapers, posters, magazines, newspapers, booklets and books, rural libraries, reading rooms, and so on. Tanzania has a useful experience which has been transferred widely, of organizing voluntary "writers' workshops" to produce such material. Some efforts have also been put into reaching people by correspondence and distance courses, radio and television.

It is fairly clear that this third form of post-literacy is an indispensable complement to either the "formal" or "structured" provision of follow-up. While it seems in general to be easier to mobilize new literates for post-literacy than illiterates for literacy, without constant access to interesting/useful (but ever-present) reading material and writing opportunities, the teaching of post-literacy is doomed to be a rearguard action in a war, a misused resource, and a process reaching people with inadequate support and motivation for attendance from their immediate environment. At the same time, the mere provision of "semi-structured" follow-up is not enough to substitute a teaching programme, nor enough to motivate students fully for one that is provided. For post-literacy to develop the potential provided by literacy in any adequate way, the use of social pressures and mobilization techniques is still very necessary.

Among recent post-literacy experiences, those in Ethiopia are interesting in that all three forms of post-literacy are being implemented at the same time: "formal" (transition from literacy to formal schooling); "structured" (specifically adult post-literacy classes with more than seven million learners enrolled, as well as selective courses in boarding centres); and "semi-structured" (in this case, setting up Reading Rooms with accessible reading material for new literates); this has not meant, however, that there are no problems in creating a literacy sustaining environment in rural areas, and drop-out has been quite common.

Apart from the state's background objectives for setting up post-literacy, which normally represent an extension or logical broadening of the objectives underlying the literacy programme itself, Bordia has identified four programme-internal objectives for post-literacy in general:

"Remediation: ...to remedy the deficiency of primary education and adult literacy programmes.

Continuation: ...retention, reinforcement and stabilization of literacy skills, as well as their upgrading, and improvement of functional skills ... must continue to receive central focus.

Application: ...the application of literacy and functional skills to living and working situation ... (so) people begin to participate in the development process.

Communitization: ...the process of positive socialization and use of communication skills for individual and group assertion ... the means by which an individual acquires a new identity ... (through) group action for the improvement of the environment, vitalization of community forums or popular organizations for securing social justice. " (in Carron & Bordia (1985), p.186)

While bearing in mind these objectives, it is important to note that the last is not likely to be a state objective unless it fits into the state's own goals: "it can never be said often enough that literacy teaching and post-literacy work are pointless unless accompanied by economic and social change" (Dumont 1979, p. 156). One of the most high-lighted post-literacy objectives (Dumont 1979; Clement 1982; Carron & Bordia (1985)), is to make it possible for new literates to participate fully in political, economic, socio-cultural and technical processes, so as to better control and improve their own lives. (This is of course an acceptance that literacy per se does not achieve this ...). Certain successes in this regard have been reported from Unesco-supported Functional projects in Mali, where new-literates have de facto taken over certain new responsibilities, implying greater self-reliance (Clement 1982). Certainly education can serve to help the attainment of such goals, even in the face of state opposition, but it is perhaps still idealistic to imagine that

post-literacy will generally be set up with such objectives, or will necessarily go far towards achieving them, unless they are a part of already occurring social and economic change.

It is also necessary not to regard post-literacy as the "real" chance to teach everything possible. As in a literacy programme, the "over-stacking" of post-literacy curricula is just as liable to produce confusion, a sense of defeat, and an inadequate coverage of everything in them, preventing the reaching of any of the objectives proposed.

In strategic terms, given the importance of post-literacy in mobilizing for literacy and in validating literacy efforts in general, it has been suggested (Laubach 1947, Dumont 1979, Carron-Bordia 1985) that a sensible way of tackling the whole problem of literacy and post-literacy is to introduce both structured and semi-structured post-literacy opportunities before even starting the literacy project itself. While this is not useful in the case where a "one-off" literacy campaign is to be held (though of course preparation must be done before even in this case), in all the other cases it seems a good idea, though no examples spring to mind! Certainly, the operation of the school system in most developing countries has already created a substantial clientele of fairly-literate and semi-literate people to make immediate use of such facilities.

## 11. CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS ON EXISTING EXPERIENCE

### 11.1 Factors in adult literacy success

In this chapter we will try to synthesize the most important factors necessary for achieving positive results in adult literacy programmes. Most of these factors refer to the level of policy and socio-economic conditions, and not specific technical designs of a programme. This arises from a consideration of under what circumstances the poor and underprivileged illiterate population might or might not respond to the pressures for, or feel the need of literacy. If there are no concomitant perspectives of improved political, social or economic conditions for the population, even with literacy skills, why should the illiterates then use their time for literacy classes?

The Declaration of Persepolis stated:

"Successes were achieved when literacy was linked to man's fundamental requirements, ranging from his immediate vital needs to effective participation in social change." (Bataille, 1976, p. 273).

We have argued throughout this paper that this factor underlies success in achieving and retaining literacy, whatever type of programme or activity is involved. However, numerous other factors influence the relative success of a literacy activity, depending on its objectives, scale and form of implementation, and who organizes it. The following table shows one way of classifying the different combinations of activity and the respective actors:

| PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:         | Political | General        | Economic                    |
|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| STRATEGY:                   |           |                |                             |
| Single campaign             | State     | --             | --                          |
| Campaign series             | State     | --             | (State)*                    |
| Large programme             | --        | State<br>+ NGO | State                       |
| Small programme/<br>project | NGO       | NGO /<br>State | State /<br>Economic<br>unit |

\* Only the (partial) example of Tanzania.

As summarized in the above diagram, there have essentially been three "accelerated" strategies which have moved towards the eventual eradication, or significant reduction, of illiteracy at the national level: the single campaign, of short duration; the rather longer campaign series; and the large-scale programme, of fairly undefined (but longer) duration. From the specific point of view of large-scale literacy results, the following factors have been identified for relative success:

- a) Today, it is virtually axiomatic that the state has to be the prime mover in promoting and organizing such literacy activities. In the past, when the church constituted a strong moral and temporal "para-statal" authority, it was able to mobilize similar results. In some countries, it is now probable that Islam would be able to dynamize adult literacy on the same terms, as it has to a considerable degree done in Koranic schools for children.
- b) On the basis of this "axiom" numerous writers have recently put the emphasis on "National commitment" or "political will" (Bataille 1976; ICAE 1979; Noor 1982; Bhola 1982, 1983; Fordham 1985; Carron and Bordia 1985; Torres 1985). This factor does not refer to mere policy declarations on combatting illiteracy, but mainly to the integration of literacy activities into active socio-economic change (as part of a general programme for political change, or of the national development plan), and obviously also to the allocation of sufficient energy and human and financial resources to the literacy endeavour.

"The success or the failure of a literacy activity does not ultimately derive from economic or technical issues, but rather from the existence or not of a firm political will with capacity to organize and mobilize the people around a literacy project."  
(Torres 1985, p. 90)

"It is necessary that the various actors within a society come together to develop a national consensus for the eradication of literacy and that they forge this... into the nation's political will."  
(Bhola, 1982, p. 240).

"Group pressure reinforced by community encouragement induces learners to succeed."  
(Noor, 1982, p. 180).

It derives from this that the state itself must both thoroughly assume the project and have the power and legitimacy to mobilize and maintain the illiterates' involvement in it. This is not to say that NGOs and mass organizations do not have a very significant potential role to play; but in the absence of supportive state engagement, their role will be severely limited.

- c) As part of the above "national commitment", many writers have set aside the following factors:
- Popular mobilization and participation, social equality and equal rights (Bataille 1976; ICAE 1979; Bhola 1982; Torres 1985). This factor refers to the general policy of a government and to the specific literacy policy adopted. Strong initial individual motivation for literacy is not enough to maintain regular attendance and achievement. Continuous activities aiming at mobilization of the participants are required. The most essential is to create an atmosphere of literacy being a true priority.



"If literacy programmes are imposed on people and are not related to total development and/or local conditions, they have little chance of improving people's lives; they should encourage the skills of participation and self-management ..." (ICAE, 1979, p. 12).

"Popular literacy must not be seen as a welfare service or as a concession. It must instead be viewed as a people's right and consequently as an obligation by the progressive sectors and the revolutionary movement." (Torres 1985, p. 100)

- A broad conception of literacy - including its economic, social, political and cultural dimensions. (Bataille 1976; Unesco 1980; Noor 1982; Bhola 1982). Experiences show that it is difficult to achieve economic objectives directly through literacy activities; the link exists, but without other economic and political changes literacy does not in itself create development, nor does it mobilize adults for literacy.

"... the content of learning materials should be culturally oriented and... relevant to adult perceptions... topics designed to be too specific to functional work needs may alienate..." (Noor, 1982, p. 179).

d) Other more organizational and structural factors, that determine the managerial implementation of the policy-oriented factors, have been found to be crucial for the success or failure of large-scale literacy activities, such as:

- Mobilization of available resources of the state, socio-political organizations and the people. (ICAE 1979; Saraf 1980; Unesco 1980; Bhola 1982). This implies the involvement not only of educational services for literacy but also of a broad range of support from other sectors of the society, including volunteers, mass media, health and agriculture services, etc.
- Central coordination of various ministries, institutions, trade unions, organizations, etc. (ICAE 1979; Bhola 1983). This coordination is needed in order to ensure a multisectoral involvement and joint actions in favour of literacy and post-literacy. A single central coordinating body is needed but local responsibility and flexibility must also be ensured. The organization must correspond to the literacy objectives and have the capacity to sustain a high level of mobilization.
- Post-literacy and other follow-up opportunities. (Laubach 1947; Bataille 1976; ICAE 1979; Unesco 1980; Bhola 1982; Fordham 1985; Carron and Bordia 1985; Ryan 1985). Without follow-up, either through continuing non-formal education or through links to formal education, retention of literacy is not possible. Other opportunities for applying recently acquired literacy skills must also be created in order to avoid relapse into illiteracy. As

Fordham (ed., 1985) concludes:

"literacy must be integrated with vocational training and/or general education and/or political action and/or productive self-reliance work projects" (p. 23)

Ryan (1985) comments:

"The solution to the problem of post-literacy is the development of a literate and literacy-sustaining society. This is not a narrow technical task; it involves a profound cultural change in the information needs people have and the manner in which they seek to satisfy them." (p. 3108).

An important finding is that it is essential to plan and introduce organized post-literacy before or at least at the same time as the actual literacy activities. This then becomes a strong motivational and mobilizing factor for literacy as well as a literacy-sustaining factor.

Access to formal education for literacy and post-literacy graduates is important as one of many ways of providing follow-up. However, this has implications for the choice of the language of instruction in literacy and post-literacy. Transfer from a local to the official language is often required in multilingual countries.

e) In alliance with these factors, an evident parallel step needs to be taken on state initiative:

- A dual strategy, combining the universalization of primary education (UPE) and adult literacy outside of school. (ICAE 1979; Fordham 1985; Carron and Bordia 1985; Ryan 1985). This strategy has been fully adopted by Unesco in its current Medium-Term Plan 1984-1989, which stresses that both the extension and renovation of primary education and renewed efforts for out-of-school literacy work have to be ardently pursued if illiteracy in developing societies is to be eradicated.

We have noted that both the "campaign series" and the "large-scale programme" approaches have some difficulties in living up to these factors, the latter rather more than the former. The programme in itself is usually structured within an evolutionary perspective of social change and thus it is hard to mobilize for it and even harder to maintain the necessary motivation and mobilization over a long time. This represents the danger of large-scale investment with little return. The campaign series usually takes place in a situation where the pace of social change is in itself mobilizing, but again, over time both state and individual interest and motivation can drop off. This strategy requires well-trained full-time staff at the base and much dedication, due to the long duration that the consecutive stages imply. This also means that the volunteer teachers need permanent support and moral and material

incentivation. Most important of all is the creation of responsible local organs with political authority to keep things under way; the careful selection of targets and success in reaching them also help to keep up an awareness of progress and achievement.

Since the possibilities for implementing "one-off" campaigns for the eradication of illiteracy are limited to very special conditions (see 9.5.2) that very seldom exist, the series approach presents an alternative campaign strategy in a situation of scarce resources, notably of qualified people.

In the many cases where the overall conditions of a country or a region are not conducive to the launching of campaigns, it is hardly recommendable or sensible simply to lay down all activity and give up. Amongst all the findings discussed above, examples are shown of reasonably successful "cooler" programmes, and many of the prescriptions for successful work are equally applicable to such programmes. As Bhola (International Review of Education, 1984) demands:

"If ... politics do not permit a mass-scale national literacy campaign or programme, what should the policy-makers do? They should do the second-best possible ... " (p. 261)

From our perspective, we see it as being important in almost all cases, and especially "second-best" ones, that the activities prepared be preceded by small pilot projects which do some kind of organizational and pedagogical feasibility testing. As T. Coles succinctly put it in his comments on the draft of this paper:

"... the approach has to be tailored to the particular political, social and cultural conditions prevailing in each country. It will only work where this is done."

#### f) Other key issues

Our conclusions above focus mainly on non-technical factors because of our conviction that adult literacy is rather a political than a technical issue. Nevertheless, technical "inputs" such as methodology, content, material, or financing are not negligible factors for the success of literacy efforts. Our own experience in the field has pointed up the shortcomings caused by deficiencies in these aspects. We know that it is crucial that there are enough primers and manuals and that they are distributed to the right place in time; that the methods of teacher training have to be adequate; that the financing of teacher training, teaching material, transport and so on, must be enough to cover the needs; that funds can be raised by local efforts but that usually this is not sufficient. However, it is not the superabundance of such resources and the perfect elaboration of methods and primers that by themselves determine good results in quality or in quantity.

However, in the context of a favourable situation of high motivation and good mobilization, there are still a number of important issues to be taken carefully into consideration for

the success of the literacy endeavour, among them:

### Choice of language

It is obvious that the existence of a widely shared language has been a favourable factor in most countries that have carried out successful literacy campaigns/programmes, but it is not a sufficient condition, nor is its absence fatal. Ethiopia has shown that mass literacy is possible in many languages in a highly multilingual country.

The choice of language for literacy teaching derives partly from national language policy and from the objectives of the process. Nonetheless, literacy conducted in a second language is difficult and time consuming, and can lead to demobilization if there is no strong motivation among the participants to learn this language. It is obvious that the more distant this language is from the mother tongue and the less spread it is, the more difficult it will be to teach and learn in it. The conclusions of a study made in Ethiopia before the revolution are also interesting in this respect:

"Test results indicate that learning to read in a foreign language is not the decisive handicap which might have been expected." (Sjöström & Sjöström 1982, p. 153).

However, whatever language is chosen, and considering that the mother tongue is best a priori for learning, it is hardly functional to teach literacy in this language if there is no written material in it or if there is no organized programme for teaching the transition from the mother tongue to another language widely used for reading and writing.

### Mobilization and support at local level

A favourable attitude and active support on the part of local figures of authority, such as district administrators, chiefs, literacy or education officers, have been shown to exercise a powerful mobilizing influence, to the extent that their absence can harm even a high-intensity campaign accompanied by general mobilization, while their presence can compensate for the rather "cool" atmosphere surrounding a low-priority programme.

"In Botswana it was noticeable that where a District NFE officer was truly committed to the programme, classes were well attended and there was sustained enthusiasm. Where the dedication was lacking, the programme suffered. (T. Coles, comments on draft).

### Mobilizing and training of teachers

Without an atmosphere of priority or a campaign, it is difficult to maintain the mobilization of non-paid voluntary literacy teachers. Not even the paying of an allowance guarantees constant participation, unless it is an "acceptably" high amount. Once allowances have been paid, it is extremely difficult to return to a non-paid volunteer scheme.

If it is decided to pay the literacy teachers effectively, then it is worthwhile investing in the costs of a longer and more solid initial training. Otherwise it is better to choose a short and mobilizing training. In both cases, but especially the latter, it is necessary to mount a network of pedagogical and organizational support services and in-service training.

In order to sustain such a network and make it worth the financing, it has been found to be crucial to provide professional training in adult education and literacy for the key personnel, such as teacher trainers and field organizers. This need makes itself felt especially in the context of large-scale activities which will continue over a fairly long time. The Adult Education Institute in Tanzania, which played a very important role at all levels of that country's campaigns, gives a good example of how such training can be provided.

### Contents and methods of literacy training

Several studies show that "the need felt by a learner for literacy is more important than the curriculum's content" (Noor 1982, p. 179). As long as the content is not infantile or unlinked to known reality, it seems that the focus of the theme(s) does not determine the results. Contents that concentrate on teaching literacy but which cover multiple aspects of interest for the adult learners are preferable to contents on solely production techniques or solely political-ideological questions. A problem common to many literacy programmes is a too heavy curriculum, both as regards its wide range of topics and themes and as regards its technical complexity - often far beyond what it is possible to achieve in one literacy course for beginners.

The planned teaching method may vary considerably, it seems, as long as the adult learners are treated with respect and patience, without an infantile and patronizing approach. It seems important that the method be within the reach of the teachers, otherwise they will relapse even more easily into the methods they remember from their own primary school experience. Several studies have concluded that the teachers' attitudes to their work, and their rapport with their community, are more important than their formal qualifications or pedagogical training (Unesco/UNDP 1979; Sjöström & Sjöström 1982).

### Costs and resources

Literacy activities require allocation of sufficient resources whose amount must be calculated not only on the basis of the literacy programme as such, but also in terms of providing follow-up and accessible reading material for new literates in sufficient quantity. It is therefore important not to consider adult literacy as a cheap and easy road to development.

On the above grounds, it is easy to see that the reduction of the "inefficiency" of the activities needs careful attention, especially as regards:

- teacher drop-out
- poor attendance and high drop-out among the learners
- the setting of too high expectations in the literacy objectives, resulting in high failure rates and subsequent demobilization
- large-scale relapse into illiteracy and the non-use of learning in practice.

All this is possible to avoid to a certain extent in a situation of general mobilization of the society for literacy, or at least of concentrated mobilization of teachers and learners involved (although almost all longer-term literacy activities suffer these problems to some degree); also important is a careful (even pessimistic) elaboration of the curriculum adapted to a realistic learning pace.

Literacy must be simple, rewarding, and necessary.

### The role of national NGOs

The strength of NGOs is their community identification and base. In the case of the existence of government programmes, NGOs can perform a useful supplementary and complementary function, by mobilizing their own constituency to participate as teachers and learners, by reaching more marginal groups, and by performing a refining role in suiting the overall programme to the local conditions and needs. In all cases where collaboration is intended, it is important to define the precise areas and levels of responsibility, to avoid waste, duplication of efforts and resources, and unnecessary bureaucratic conflict. Ideal collaboration would make full use of the respective strengths and capacities of all parts.

The NGO obviously assumes a completely different role where no state programme exists, or where the NGO launches literacy activities which are deliberately alternative or opposed to the state and/or its educational programmes. In such cases, the level of success depends on the NGO's real rooting in its community and its ability to avoid repression, while it will have to undertake itself all the various stages of organization, mobilization, development of curricula and materials (where used), training and teaching. Obviously, in almost all such cases, the NGO impact will be numerically limited.

While the NGO will certainly need funds to carry out its activities, its strength is its responsiveness and flexibility within local conditions, which may ill accord with the demands and rules of the donors.

## 11.2 Research needs

As mentioned in Chapter 3, research into adult literacy is recent, not very frequent, and often not very coordinated. Research needs are therefore to be found in most areas, often requiring a multi-disciplinary approach. In terms of research methods or approaches, Bernard (1984) points out:

"There is need for research to be used more creatively, more often, and with more precise focus. Research activities can cover all aspects of the literacy problem, but none will work effectively if used for too diffuse a purpose or if the data produced are inappropriate for answering the question asked."(p.10)

Different research approaches each have specific potentials that are needed for different purposes. Surveys, tracer studies, implementation analysis, and qualitative as well as quantitative evaluation studies are all relevant if the framework and design are adapted in a sensitive way to reality. Participatory and action-oriented research seem to be particularly suitable for studying adult literacy, given the role of organization and mobilization in success. It is essential that future literacy research consider the need for data to be disaggregated to reflect gender differences, as problems and solutions are not the same for men and women in literacy. Up to now, with the exception of projects focussed on women, there has been a tendency to ignore the difference.

Pilot projects carefully followed all through offer important possibilities to combine research with adaptation and innovation.

We also consider it most important to focus on tensions and contradictions that arise in relation to literacy activities, in the form of conflicting aims, objectives and motives, between the promoters, financiers, policy-makers, teachers and participants. The political nature of literacy needs to be taken into account in research, and the struggles around the process must be considered in order to provide a proper understanding of the problems and successes and their implications.

Finally, it is essential that research on literacy originate and be rooted among those directly concerned in the countries of the Third World. On the one hand, this means that it is important to strengthen research capacities in the developing countries themselves, and on the other, that it is important to facilitate the compilation and dissemination of existing - mostly unpublished - studies that have been done by third world researchers. Since the International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods in Iran ceased to function, and as Unesco's resources are in the process of being undermined, the need for new research "clearing houses" for adult literacy has become urgent.

An extensive inventory of research needs is covered in ICAE (1979, pp 115-118), so here we will limit ourselves to what we consider to be a few crucial areas whose research is essential to improving literacy work in the Third World:

## The impact and use of literacy

How do new literates - women and men - use their newly-acquired skills in rural areas?

- a) if reading and writing material is made available;
- b) if it is not specifically made available?

What changes or actions promote a higher retention and use of literacy? (Such as the introduction of basic services, rural libraries, cooperatives ...).

What is the impact of literacy, beyond the simple acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills, on the learners (women and men), their families and their community?

What factors determine retention and use of literacy? What is the difference between those who relapse into illiteracy and those who sustain it, in similar settings?

## Language

Does high student motivation for learning literacy in a second (official) language justify teaching directly in this language rather than starting in the mother tongue and transiting later?

When is it best to start the transition from mother-tongue to second-language literacy? How long does it take to complete the transition sufficiently? What facilitating factors can be provided in the environment? What methods are best?

What is the situation of retention of literacy in a second language?

## Mobilizing and training of voluntary teachers

What kind of low-cost or non-material incentives are most effective in maintaining motivation among volunteer teachers?

What forms and contents of in-service training are most needed and most effective?

What factors could incentivate more women to volunteer as teachers? Women instructors/separate training classes/pre-school or child-care services at training courses/other?

The methodology of training volunteer literacy teachers in short courses supplemented by in-service training also needs to be developed through practice and research.

## Curricula, contents, methods

What are the different necessary stages of literacy, their distribution in time and content (reading/writing exercise level, combination of literacy/numeracy, introduction of other practical/Functional/ideological themes)? This question



relates to the fundamental research issue of how adults learn to read and write, which needs more attention!

What positive links can be made to traditional culture and religion in the contents to motivate learners and root learning in familiar themes?

Although the methodology of literacy teaching has been researched to some extent, it still needs more attention, especially as regards the conditions of heterogenous classes.

### Drop-out

What experiences do the illiterates and new literates have of literacy classes? To what extent do the teaching methods and contents encourage or discourage learners from continuing the classes?

"Lack of time" is a common reason given for irregular attendance, drop-out, or failure to enroll. What good organizational strategies have surpassed the real lack of time? Are there deeper reasons for drop-out, such as psychological barriers among rural men or women?

### Quality versus quantity

Is there really a tension between quality and quantity in literacy work? Do smaller-scale projects actually manage to concentrate resources and mobilize participants in such a way that they achieve qualitatively much better results than mass campaigns or large programmes?

### Post-literacy

Research in the form of pilot projects on whether the prior introduction of access to post-literacy classes and to other post-literacy resources actually serves to mobilize illiterates for a forthcoming literacy programme, would be extremely interesting for future literacy strategies.

Similar pilot experiences could test which kind of follow-up (in a situation of choice) new-literates and primary school drop-outs in fact prefer, which produces greater retention of literacy skills, and which serves best the various "macro-objectives" which are/have been proposed for post-literacy.

### Sponsorship and organization of literacy

What is a suitable combination of centralized and decentralized policy-making, organization and control? What is the role of the central government in relation to NGO activities in different contexts? What dangers and benefits are represented by external aid to a literacy project, in terms of motivation, dependency, sustainability or integration with other policies or programmes? Should literacy programmes be separate, or integrated as a process component of content-based programmes?

Obviously, the priority of research topics depends on in what context and for what purpose the research is done. The complexity of the field and of each context implies that generalizations are not always possible or desirable. The practical implications of research may also vary for the same reasons. We cannot expect to arrive at a global adult literacy cookbook! Research serves best as an integrated component of the planning, implementation, and critical evaluation of adult literacy activities. Nevertheless, it is extremely important to create conditions for the exchange of experiences and research results among literacy practitioners and researchers at inter-regional and international level, especially on the basis of South-South contacts and networks, in order to share learning and improve the practice of literacy. As someone once said to us during a literacy course:

"We all know that we learn from our mistakes, but is it really necessary for us to create mistakes in order to learn from them?"

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STUDY ON ADULT LITERACY

## 1. BACKGROUND

During its meeting in Paris in October 1984 the International Working Group on Education (IWGE), as part of its endeavour to strengthen basic education in developing countries, identified a number of research areas that would merit special attention.

SIDA has offered to be the Leading Agency in the area of Adult Literacy. In this capacity, SIDA will take the responsibility for compiling information on literacy programmes and act as a clearing house regarding activities undertaken and experiences gained by other agencies.

As part of the commitment, SIDA has decided to commission a review of existing experiences and research on literacy programmes taking into account an inventory of the experiences and involvement of IWGE-agencies in this field.

This review will give information on possible existing gaps in knowledge which will make it possible to identify areas for further research and possible joint initiatives.

Two research consultants, Agneta Lind and Anton Johnston have been assigned by SIDA to carry out this task.

## 2. PLAN OF ACTION

2.1 Preparation of a research review

A review of research and evaluations done on literacy programmes will be prepared. It should include selected campaigns and programmes carried out in different political settings and representing varying objectives and results. Large issues related to the objectives, strategies and methods should be dealt with, rather than detailed descriptive accounts of results of the various programmes.

Emphasis should be laid on an analysis of the implications of the various conditions and objectives for the strategy, organization, teaching methods, teaching materials, and recruitment, training and remuneration of teachers. Some consideration will be made of the role of post-literacy in relation to literacy programmes.

An attempt should be made to identify some of the determinants for successful literacy programmes in relation to the underlying motives for their launching, the various objectives and approaches chosen, and their impact.

## 2.2 Contact with Agencies, Research Institutes and some developing countries

The draft review will be forwarded for comments to donor agencies, research institutes and to concerned authorities in selected countries undertaking literacy programmes for their viewpoints, comments and suggestions.

Moreover, the donor agencies will be asked to complete a questionnaire on their policies and strategies for support to literacy programmes, the type and scope of their involvement, their input of resources, the forms of cooperation as well as the methods used to assess the various programmes they support.

## 2.3 Travel

In order to supplement the comments and information received, short visits to specialized organizations/agencies, like the ICAE and DSE could be undertaken. It might be worthwhile to fund visits to researchers and/or concerned parties for discussions on the draft report and comments received.

## 2.4 Analysis of the material

A final report will be prepared covering the following issues:

- a descriptive analysis of the commitments of donor agencies as regards literacy programmes, based on a compilation of the completed questionnaires (see 2.2 above)
- an analytical research review, including an attempt at identification of the determinants leading to successful programmes
- a list of gaps in knowledge
- a proposal for possible further research.

## 3 TIMING

The study will be carried out during 12 weeks and should be completed before the end of 1986.

## 4 COSTS

The costs for the study will be borne by SIDA.





4. Which divisions or sections of your organization deal with Adult Literacy and Post-literacy?
5. Does your organization employ any officials with specific responsibility for the coordination and development of Adult Literacy and Post-literacy programmes? Please specify.

ACTUAL SUPPORT

6. What are the proportions of support to different levels and forms of education provided by your organization?

|   | Actual 1980-85 % | Projected 1986-90 % |
|---|------------------|---------------------|
| Tertiary  | _____            | _____               |
| Secondary   | _____            | _____               |
| Primary   | _____            | _____               |
| Adult Literacy and<br>Post-literacy<br>(or Adult Basic Education) | _____            | _____               |

7. a) What has the approximate percentage of your total development assistance budget used for Adult Basic Education been during the last five years?
- b) What is the percentage projected for the next five years?
8. What support does your organization give to specific Adult Literacy and/or Post-literacy projects/programmes? (Please distinguish between different channels of support, such as bi-lateral, multi-lateral, NGOs, if applicable.)

Please list in table-form as outlined on next page for each form of support, if possible.

| Country | Agency/NGO<br>(if not bi-lateral) | Project title | Years covered<br>(fr 1980) | Amount<br>(state currency) | Main contents<br>(expertise, material etc) |
|---------|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--|
|         |                                   |               |                            |                            |  |

9. What were the main reasons or criteria for selecting the projects listed above for support by your organization?
10. What is the approximate percentage of your total support to Adult Literacy and Post-literacy which goes to
- a) NGO programmes?
  - b) government programmes?
11. Among the Adult Literacy and Post-literacy programmes supported by your organization are there any with specific focus on women? Please specify.
12. Do other projects supported by your organization contain Adult Literacy and/or Post-literacy as an integrated or supplementary component? If so, which ones? If possible, please list as above (page 4).





### ANNEX 3

#### Responses to Questionnaire Part II: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Among the respondents to the questionnaire, only five represented multilateral or bilateral aid agencies. Four of these (CIDA, ODA, SIDA and the World Bank) have answered Part II of the questionnaire on their own policy and actual support to Adult Literacy and Post-literacy programmes. In addition to these responses, DSE (Bonn) and the Unesco Institute of Education (Hamburg) presented their activities in support of such programmes in developing countries (seminars, training, documentation etc).

In view of this limited response rate from aid agencies on support to Adult Basic Education, we do not have sufficient information for providing anything near an overview of international cooperation in the field of Adult Literacy and Post-Literacy. Furthermore, our few respondents themselves point out that they do not have an overview of the support they are providing for this kind of educational programmes. Difficulties behind the lack of accurate in-house information in this field seems to be related to the fact that Adult Literacy or Adult Basic Education programmes seldom exist in their own right. They are frequently either integrated with other development projects, administered by sectors other than education or not distinguished from other non-formal or basic education programmes. Another difficulty is that there seem to be many channels for supporting adult literacy projects, especially via NGOs in the North.

It is interesting to note that both the World Bank and the ODA are presently undertaking internal studies on what and how much support is given to Non-Formal education and Adult Basic education. CIDA has recently undertaken an extensive study on its own policy and support to literacy and basic education for women.

Another tendency in common seems to be that adult literacy is given priority neither by the donor agencies nor by the recipient governments. In CIDA's words "literacy still remains the poor cousin of the education system".

Even if we only have responses from four aid agencies, we think it is worthwhile to present a summary of each of their answers separately:

CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency)

Policy: Literacy is not a priority. "Nevertheless, CIDA is increasingly taking into consideration that primary education is probably the best investment a developing country can make. ... Furthermore, CIDA is specifically in the process of implementing a plan of action on literacy and basic education for women."

Actual Support: "CIDA's data-gathering methods do not allow for precise identification of literacy and basic education projects.

.. Moreover, as CIDA's planning is not done by sectors but rather by delivery channels and by countries, there are no projected budgets for Adult Basic Education . . . ."

In 1982 it was estimated that 17.4% of aid to education was allocated for basic education. "A 1985 study on literacy and basic education for women put forward an estimate of about 1.3% (18.3 million \$ CAN) of the total Canadian ODA budget, for literacy and Basic Education for women."

Most of CIDA's support to Adult Literacy and Post-Literacy programmes is channeled through NGOs. Furthermore, CIDA provides support to seven bilateral projects containing literacy, with specific focus on women, and eleven such projects at the NGO level.

Several other projects supported by CIDA, i.e. Integrated Rural Development projects also include Adult Literacy and/or Post-Literacy components.

The contents of the Canadian support provided to specific Adult Literacy/Post-literacy programmes are of two types: 1) funding of activities, equipment and services; 2) technical support, with the presence of Canadian cooperants, through training of educators and program and textbook development a.o.

#### ODA (Overseas Development Administration)

Policy: ODA's support to education gives priority to higher levels of education. The support provided to adult basic education gives emphasis "to training trainers of trainers in British institutions and to a number of small selective adult literacy and post-literacy projects through joint funding with British voluntary agencies."

Actual Support: Due to shortcomings in the internal data-collection system, the ODA has "recently commissioned a study specifically to establish how much we spend on adult education and to evaluate the effectiveness of that expenditure." This implies that the details of the questions related to this subtitle of the questionnaire are not yet available.

#### SIDA (Swedish International Development Authority)

Policy: Education is one of the main areas of Swedish development assistance. Within the overall support to education projects, highest priority has been given to Basic Education (Primary education and Non-formal education) and Vocational training.

"The thrust on Basic education is closely related to the objectives for Swedish development cooperation: economic growth, equality, independence and democracy - no nation can hope to get nearer these objectives without providing Basic education to its citizens."

Actual Support: Adult education has received an average of 10% of the total bilateral education assistance (approx. 25 Million SEK per year) during the last five years. In addition to this form of support that is channeled through the ministries of education of SIDA's programme countries, SIDA channels support to Adult literacy/post-literacy through NGOs (approx. 43 Million SEK in 1984/85) and finally also through other development projects, especially Integrated Rural Development projects. "In rough terms 30 Million SEK were spent on Adult education activities within other development projects." (in 1984/85)

"In very rough figures 110 Million SEK or almost three percent of the bilateral Swedish assistance was appropriated for the various kinds of Non-formal Adult education in 1984/85."

Swedish aid to Adult Education has mainly been used for the following components: paper and printing equipment; means of transport; equipment for training centres; local financing of literacy activities, including honoraria to instructors; and to a limited degree personnel.

#### World Bank

Policy: "The World Bank assists adult literacy or adult basic education programs as part of its effort to reduce poverty and as part of its concern for expanding educational opportunity."

"... in the competition for scarce resources ... adult literacy and post-literacy programs are often not accorded the highest priority."

Actual Support: The World Bank is soon expecting to publish a discussion paper on Bank experience in non-formal education. "However, no separation of literacy programs from other non-formal programs is available and the channels of support are not identified. It is usually a loan or credit to the Government." Data on details of actual support are thus not yet available. Some rural development projects do include Adult literacy/post-literacy components. However, "a list of such projects is not readily available."

The Education Division at SIDA initiates and implements a large number of studies regarding education and training, especially in SIDA's programme countries.

A selection of these studies is published in the series "Education Division Documents". Copies can be ordered from the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, P O Box 1703, S-751 47 Uppsala, Sweden

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