International Development Research Centre

MANUSCRIPT REPORTS

LITERACY:
A Summary Review

**Prepared for the Research Review and
Advisory Group**

November 1978

CANADA

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This is one of a projected series of reports that
will present summaries of existing state-of-the-art reviews in
selected topics related to educational research. Summaries of
conference proceedings that address the totality of a subject,
or of assessments of a number of field experiments in a given
area, are also included in each report as appropriate.

The report has been prepared under the sponsorship of
the educational Research Review and Advisory Group, a project of
the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa,
Canada. Further copies of the present report or information about
the project can be obtained by writing IDRC (RRAG), P.O. Box 8500,
Ottawa, Canada, K1G 3H9.

It is intended that the series have a number of uses
particularly to readers who, although familiar with research in
general, nevertheless seek familiarity with a particular subject.
Persons in national or international organisations, funding agencies,
Ministries or Departments whose areas of discretion include the
determination of research priorities, allocation of funds to pursue
these, or advising others in the related tasks, are among the intended
audience. Any information about uses to which the present report has
been put, or comments that would assist in increasing the utility
of the series, will be gratefully received by the project's
co-ordinator at the above address.

CONTENTS

The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education

Content

The core of this volume is the report of a group of specialists who convened at UNESCO in 1951 to report on the use of vernacular languages in education. It was and to a large extent remains a standard point of reference for those concerned with this issue, even though much of its content has been supplanted by more recent research or overtaken by political necessity.

At the time the report was made -- as now -- the medium of instruction was viewed as "a recurrent problem in fundamental education". Within these terms of reference, the report provided the first major international support for the idea that primary education is best begun in a child's, or adult's, mother tongue and maintained in that tongue to as late a stage in education as possible. It is therefore of considerable interest as the starting-point for much of the subsequent three decades' effort in related policy formulation and programme development.

Of interest especially to the contemporary reader are the seven case studies[1] included in the volume to illustrate and expand a number of points agreed upon by the specialists in their main text. There is also an Appendix providing a tentative classification of the world's spoken languages, and a classified bibliography.

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1. The Tarascan Project in Mexico; the Renovation of Arabic; Developing a National Language in Indonesia; the Problem of Pidgin in the Trust Territory of New Zealand; Unification - The Akan Dialects of the Gold Coast; The Iloilo Experiment in Education in the Vernacular; The Finno-Ugrian Experiment.

Sources and Method

Not a state-of-the-art in the generally accepted sense, the report does not explicitly review research but instead applies a cumulation of scholastic expertise to the definition and shading of a complex field.

Assumptions

Three assumptions in particular inform the specialists' deliberations:

First, they "take it as axiomatic that every child of school age should attend school and that every illiterate should be made literate...";

Second, "that the best medium for teaching is the mother tongue of the pupil";

Third, although it is difficult for both these aims to be pursued in a situation where many hundreds of languages lack a written form and/or any literature for the use of pupils, "the problems thus raised, insofar as they are linguistic, can be overcome; insofar as they are social and political, solutions at best may take much longer".

Summary

Given their belief in the "axiomatic" nature of the desirability of instruction in the mother tongue, the specialists took their main task to be providing answers to two questions:

-- under what circumstances is the use of the vernacular possible in education?

-- what measures might be taken to facilitate and encourage its use?

"Vernacular" they define as a "language which is the mother tongue of a group which is socially or politically dominated by another group speaking a different language"; thus it does not include a minority in one country speaking a language that is an official language elsewhere.

The specialists first define and briefly discuss several objections raised (then as now) against the use of the mother tongue, all of which they consider unsound. These include the language has no grammar and no alphabet; the child already knows his mother tongue; later acquisition of a second language is prevented; national unity is impeded. (In the last, they take the view that reactions from linguistically "suppressed" groups can impede unity even more successfully). Practical difficulties, i.e., objections that in fact do limit the extent to which a mother tongue can be used (temporarily or permanently) are then raised and discussed; e.g., inadequacy of vocabulary; shortage of educational materials; multiplicity of languages in a locality or country. The specialists also recommended policies that should be followed with regard to use of the mother tongue in certain specific linguistic situations, e.g., where there is need for reading material, shortage of suitably trained teachers, popular opposition to use of the mother tongue, or existence and a degree of reliance on a <u>lingua franca</u> or Pidgin.

The specialists also give their attention to "special problems", i.e., "certain technical issues" arising from earlier sections. These include conscious planning of vocabulary, natural vs. planned vocabulary development, and organization of vocabulary development. Choice of a writing system is discussed and agreement reached as to what is preferable at least in situations "where the attitudes of the population towards their orthographic traditions permit a choice in matters orthographic".

Under the heading of "some problems of multilingual areas", including "questions of vocabulary and structure", the specialists are unable to agree. A minority group does not support the majority thesis that vocabulary

is the main item to be treated in undeveloped languages, leaving the structure as it is found. The minority maintains and enters a separate text largely in the relevant areas to the effect that languages "could and must" suffer structural modifications when lacking some categories for new concepts or containing unnecessary features which could make learning of them difficult.

Factors to be taken into consideration in planning a language programme are listed in such a way as to be of help to authorities planning extension of instruction through the mother tongue where many language groups are simultaneously involved and recognizing that numerical considerations are not necessaricy those of most importance.

Assessment

Largely because of the time that has elapsed since the specialists' deliberations, several of their arguments and conclusions are now open to question and reconsideration. In its arguments the report reflects some ideas about the nature of language and language learning that are no longer prevalent (such as those promulgated by Whorf). It omits certain topics that would be dealt with in any similar discussion today, and it of necessity reflects the difficulties as well as advantages that arise from any attempt to reconcile scholarly points of view. Chief among these difficulties is a certain lack of clarity in some important areas.

For a further discussion of these critiques, see "Literacy in the Mother Tongue: A Reappraisal of Research and Practice", by T.P. Gorman, reviewed in this report p.38.

"Cross Disciplinary Perspectives in Bilingual Education:
Linguistics Review Paper"

Author: G. Richard Tucker, Centre for Applied Linguistics, Arlington,

Va. 22209; formerly of McGill University, Montreal, P.Q.

Content

The review examines several research studies "with a view to drawing
inferences about the effects of various approaches to bilingual education on
the native and second language development of participating youngsters".

It thus considers, first, the state of knowledge about native and second
language learning and implications of this knowledge for the recent trend in
North America towards bilingual education. Second, it examines specific approaches
to bilingual education in Canada, the U.S.A., and the Philippines, each approach
having been the object of thorough longitudinal evaluation. Supporting or con-
flicting data from other evaluations are included where possible. The author also
identifies some gaps in research conducted to date and discusses some implications
of the available research.

Sources

The review draws from two groups of sources. The first comprises studies
that in general contribute to the knowledge of how a second language is learned.
Of these, seven studies (all in English and all but one referring to English-
speaking countries) point to shortcomings of the traditional, behaviorist
approaches to the teaching of a second language. A further thirteen studies

(all in English and all referring to English-speaking countries) examine the learning of native and second languages as analogous processes of creative construction.

The second group of sources concentrates on three longitudinal and evaluative studies of innovative approaches to bilingual education. In each, children from kindergarten and grade 1, rather than beginning their education in the mother tongue, were first immersed in second language instruction programmes. The studies were carried out in Canada (the St. Lambert experiment for English-speaking children being taught French -- 1972, 1973, 1974; publication in press); the United States (the Redwood City experiment for Mexican-American children -- 1975, 1976); and the Philippines (the Rizal experiment for Filipino children taught in English with the mother tongue Tagalog as a subject for study -- 1967, 1968).

The author was responsible for the Canadian study described.

Assumptions

The review questions the assumption that the best medium of instruction for a child is his mother tongue, and the further assumption that literacy instruction should be provided first in the mother tongue.

Research Results

A. The Canadian Experience

On listening skills and reading skills, it appears that delaying formal English study until grades 2, 3 or even 4 level (approximately 7 - 9 years of age) does not adversely affect the capacity of English mother tongue pupils to

to master English skills when these are introduced. The native-language composition skills of anglophone pupils participating in French-English bilingual programmes are not adversely affected; the pupils' written performance in their second language, although good, remains distinguishable from that of native speakers, even after as many as eight years of participation in the programme; the evaluation of writing skills is an area which the author feels requires a great deal of additional work. The native-language speaking skills of anglophone pupils participating in French-English bilingual programmes are not adversely affected; the pupils' oral performance in their second language, although good, remains distinguishable from that of native speakers although acceptable to them; and again, the examination of speaking skills remains a relatively unexplored area.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that "an innovative approach to second language teaching in which the target language is used as the sole or major medium of classroom communication facilitates second language acquisition without causing detrimental effects on native language development".

B. The U.S. Experience

The general results of the Redwood City experiment with Mexican-American children are consistent with those of the Canadian experience. The bilingual group (where English and Spanish were used interchangeably) surpassed the comparison group (instructed in English) in Spanish reading; the bilingual group surpassed the comparison group in Spanish vocabulary and oral production, although the reverse was true for English vocabulary and oral production; the results for mathematics were mixed; bilingual group members used more Spanish than the comparison group.

A general conclusion from this and other studies is that the available data do not permit the conclusion that children introduced to schooling bilingually or in their first language will develop greater academic, cognitive or linguistic proficiency than those children who are introduced to schooling exclusively in the second language.

C. The Philippines Experience relates to variation in time at which English is introduced as a second language and its effect upon both the learning of that language and performance in Tagalog, the mother tongue. The general conclusion is that "any change in the number of years in which English is used as the medium of instruction will affect the faculty and effectiveness with which the pupils can profit from instruction in English in secondary schools and college"; furthermore, that "the average level of literacy in Tagalog is not closely related to the number of years in which it has been used as a medium of classroom instruction".

D. Common features in these results are twofold. First, achievement in second language proficiency and achievement in content subjects are directly related to the use of the second language as a medium of instruction. Second, children taught as described do develop literacy skills in their mother tongue, although contributing factors may be that parents encourage and support this development and/or teachers' expectations may be very positive concerning their pupils' progress.

Discussion

The results of the three experiments, as well as of other research mentioned, permit the conclusion that some form of bilingual education programme

is desirable in any community where there exists a strong desire or need for a bilingual or multilingual citizenry. A second conclusion is that social rather than pedagogical factors will probably condition the optimal sequencing of languages. Thus, the proposition in favour of beginning instruction in a second language holds true only in settings where the home language is highly valued,where parents actively encourage literacy in the mother tongue, and where it is known that children will remain in school beyond two or three years. When these factors are not present, it may be better to develop a form of bilingual education in which children are first introduced to their mother tongue.

Suggestions for Further Research

The author indicates the following areas as being particularly suscep-tible to further research or treatment.

- Formative evaluation of many existing innovation approaches to bilingual education, including comparison with alternative models.

- Definition (and publicity and local implementation) of appropriate goals for bilingual education programmes, so that these may be properly evaluated.

- Longitudinal "tracer" studies to determine the probability with which, and manner in which, a pupil who follows a particular programme of instruction will actually at some stage in his life function comfortably in the target language.

- Extensive research programmes designed to operationalize and examine the critical attributes of "communicative competence" for each of the four language skills, and to examine reactions of diverse members of society in

various settings to second language learners who possess such competencies, while remaining, nevertheless, distinguished from native speakers.

- Development of locally appropriate and valid testing instruments, for example, techniques to assess such skills as ability to understand a radio broadcast, a teacher's class presentation, or a homework assignment.

- Application and evaluation of recently developed skill assessment such as "techniques of error analysis", to assess the form and content of writing samples. More research also is needed on the assessment of speaking skills.

- Examination of code-shifting within or because of bilingual programmes.

- Examination of whether children's language skills regress over time and, if so, the social, environmental, or pedagogical factors that motivate this apparent failure to progress.

- General research on the effects of factors such as intellectual potential, social status, physical or emotional development, age of entry, presence of native speakers, community stereotypes, teacher characteristics, classroom techniques, sequencing of languages, and social setting on the desirability and efficacy of bilingual education programmes.

"Language Medium in Early School Years for
Minority Language Groups"

Content

Literature dealing with research on bilingual education ("programmes
in which more than one language is used as the medium of instruction") is re-
viewed to provide answers to two questions:

1) Will a child learn to read more rapidly in his second language,

    if he is first taught to read in him primary language?

2) Will the child achieve greater general knowledge of other subject-

    matter areas in his second language, if he is taught these subjects

    first in his native language?

Two models of instruction are examined. These are the "native language"

approach, which introduces reading in the mother tongue, and the "direct method",

which begins reading instruction in the second language, after this language

has been introduced orally. Thus the medium of instruction is either the first

or the second language, and each becomes a subject in itself depending on which

approach is used. Material that highlights the contasts between the two models

is presented. Available research is then reviewed to clarify a number of issues

that constitute the main points of disagreement among the advocates of the

methods in question. (See "Discussion", ff.)

Sources

The review includes twenty-five studies relating to countries with linguistic minorities: Canada, Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Spain, Uganda, Union of South Africa, and the United States. Of these studies, only seven are considered strictly experimental, of which only four report results. These last are reviewed in some detail along with a fifth that is of interest because of the methodological difficulties it illustrates. Most of the studies were conducted in the 1960's and 1970's although three date from the 1930's; all but one were written in English. Reference is made to a number of other studies as appropriate.

Assumptions

The review questions the assumption that the "best medium for teaching is the mother tongue of the student", and concludes that the question is still open to debate.

Summary of Findings

It is concluded that the studies reported do not provide the basis for a clear answer to either question, mostly because of methodological problems such as small size of sample or short length of time of the study. Nevertheless, some generalisations can be made:

(1) Teaching second language literacy without oral language training is not likely to succeed. Bilingual programmes in themselves, however, do not seem to harm children or retard their development in their native language;

(2) The effectiveness of the programme may increase with the number of years it is in operation;

(3) The teacher and her or his training apparently has some effect;

(4)   Programme effectiveness may be related to kindergarten experiences, or

      at least to oral language training, but the connections are not clear;

(5)   The success of a bilingual programme is related to a complex web of

      factors that differs in each situation:how much language is used in

      the home, what the relationship is between the languages in the larger

      society, what values are put on each language, etc.;

(6)   The "Hawthorne effect" can alter results radically;

(7)   At times, a form of transfer from one language subject matter or reading

      to another appears, particularly among middle class children.

Discussion

      A number of issues central to both the "native language" and the "direct

method" approaches serve as focal points for the author's discussion of the

results of the research reviewed.

(1)   Transfer of reading skills from one language to another. This is one of

      the least well understood aspects of the debate. The assumption is that

      if there is a time-saving element in one method, then the method is good:

      in other words, results are measured at some arbitrarily defined time,

      without considering that effective learning with greater transfer may

      take more time under one method than under the other. Furthermore, few

      investigations have identified or considered which are the specific

      skills in learning to read which should transfer from one language to

      another.

(2)   Period in child's development appropriate for the introduction of a second

      language and for the introduction of reading. The author cites evidence

      to indicate that a child learns a second language better at different

      periods in his/her development, e.g., he may face more difficulties if he

learns a second language before his native system is developed

(about ten years of age) than if he learns it after. The author does

not cite research on the most appropriate age to introduce reading.

(3) Role of pride in the culture and language. There is evidence to show

that learning a second language depends on the desire to become part

of an ethnolinguistic group; there is, however, no evidence of the

native language approach contention that teaching a child in his own

language will give him a greater sense of respect for himself and his

language, which will in turn improve his learning. The question of

psychological effects produced by instruction in a second language, such

as tension and frustration is debatable. Although there seem to be

short-term negative psychological effects, studies do not show long-term

personality disorientation resulting from a second language.

(4) The rate of learning educationally-related skills in the first and

in the second language. This has been less well studied. On arithmetical

computation and problem-solving, when instruction is bilingual, there are

contradictory findings. Again, it is necessary to consider the time factor,

in that the longer the length of time given to learning in the second

language, the more the performance of bilingual students will be equivalent

to that of monolinguals. Other intervening factors are the effect of the

child's age and facility with second language learning, and his general

experiences of success and failure as he enters school.

(5) Best instructional methods by which a child learns a second language.

There is need for research comparing methods of introducing reading under

the two approaches.

(6) <u>Characteristics of teachers</u>. Studies indicate the importance of the teacher's effectiveness and training, a factor that in practice is often ignored.

(7) <u>Role of learning styles in academic learning</u>. Little work has been done on sociolinguistic styles that are of assistance in classrooms although this has been recognized as crucially important.

(8) <u>Possible effects of negative stereotyping by teachers</u>. There is evidence to support the contention that the teacher's perceptions of the importance of the student's first language affect that student's later learning.

(9) <u>Eventual political goals of the students</u>. Although it is not frequently discussed, the political desires for the country as adopted by the student have an overriding effect on the kinds of studies attempted and the results noted.

The author also discusses at length some of the methodological shortcomings of the studies reviewed. A related point is the lack of research available comparing the effectiveness of curricula developed in conjunction with a community and curricula imposed from outside.

<u>Suggestions for Research</u>

The author has several suggestions, apart from those implicit in the preceding section. These include:

(1) analyses of cognitive and psycholinguistic processes involved with learning to read a first language;

(2) analyses of those processes in learning to read a first language that, once learned, would not have to be repeated in learning to read in a second language;

(3)   descriptions and analyses of the cultural context of learning in particular communities, and experiments in modelling of the schoolina process after that context;

(4)   descriptions of the functions of the two languages in the broader community, and the possible uses of literacy in both;

(5)   study of second language learning beginning at radically different times in the child's developmental life, either when he is quite young, or as he approaches adolescence (assessment of developmental level could replace the need to determine ages, a difficult process in many Indian communities);

(6)   comparisons of Indian. teachers teaching in Spanish, mestizo teachers teaching in Indian, and both teaching in their native languages;

(7)   isolation of "successful" schools and descriptive analysis of events in the relevant classrooms.

"Retention of Literacy and Basic Skills
A Review of The Literature"

Education Department of The World Bank, June 1977. 17 pp. (mimeo).

Includes six (6) pages of annotated bibliography.

<u>Author</u>:   James R. Sheffield, Teachers College, Columbia University

<u>Content</u>

The 25 studies reviewed (10 dealing with retention among adults, 15 with primary school leavers) were carried out in 16 countries, all but two in Asia, Africa, or Latin America. Nine of the studies were done in India. Publication dates ranged from 1950 to 1976. The attached table presenting a summary of results also indicates for each work reviewed the literacy criterion, how many people were studied, the time lapse since and length of schooling or literacy course, and whether or not background variables were used in the analysis. In general, the studies identified and reviewed were cross-sectional, not longitudinal. Literacy in most cases meant the ability to read and write at a certain level of competence, although numeracy skills were researched in several studies and results reported.

<u>Method</u>

The reviewer does not report on his search procedure.

<u>Assumptions</u>

The "assumption" being tested in the survey is that there exists a basic threshold level beyond which school leavers will retain their basic literacy skills almost unimpaired, and that this threshold is at the completion of the ourth grade of primary education.

Although the task, as stated, suggests that literacy and retention of literacy may be "good" in and of themselves (i.e., the value of becoming literate is not questioned), the reviewer seems chiefly concerned with the functional uses of literacy.

Summary of Main Findings

A. <u>Primary School Retention</u>

    1. No threshold of educational level for permanent literacy was
        discernable.

    2. Retention rates were generally high.

    3. Retention is positively related to the amount of schooling.

    4. Teacher qualification and school size appear not to be affecting
        retention.

    5. Time elapsed since the schooling experience was only slightly
        negatively related to amount of retention in the cross-sectional
        studies.

    6. The influence of other variables such as SES, use, religiosity, and
        mother's influence, varied according to social context.

    7. Numeracy appeared to be retained to a higher degree in three of the
        four studies that compared numeracy and literacy retention.

    8. Writing skills seem to lapse more quickly than reading.

B. <u>Adult Literacy</u>

    1. Adults learn faster than school children, but retain less.

    2. The rather short duration of most literacy courses and the wide
        variations in programs and effects of outside factors make difficult
        conclusions about the effectiveness of variations in the length of
        study.

    3. Previous schooling increases the level of retention following adult
        literacy courses.

    4. Retention is affected by family background, the social mileu and
        personal factors. In the studies reviewed, age, family income,

occupation,were prominent in their influence, as were variations
in the mode of presentation. In general, prior exposure to schooling
(see 4) moderated the effect of these variables.

Interpretation

The reviewer suggests that "the notion of a 'threshold' may be
relatively unimportant if not meaningless" since few individuals or societies
are likely to settle for the minimum level of basic skills even if this threshold
could be identified. He says we already know that the threshold is only 2 or 3
years under favourable conditions (i.e., middle class primary schooling) and that
even 8 years of primary schooling does not guarantee literacy under adverse
conditions. Also, "With regard to adults, we know that basic literacy skills can
be taught in 2 or 3 months, under favorable conditions, but if the skills are
not 'functional' and if adults lack the opportunity (or materials) to use
these skills, retention is really not a problem".

Suggestions for Further Research

Suggestions are not included as part of the review.

Comment

The review properly stresses the difficulty of comparing results from
the various retention studies. No attempt is made to interpret differina results
in terms of the different populations served, the social conditions, etc. or to
present hypotheses which might explain apparently conflicting results.

Retention of literacy acquired in a mother tonque language was not compared
with that in a second language (usually the dominant and imposed national languaqe).

No attention was given to the effect of retention of startinq primary
school at a later age.

Other outcomes from the literacy process are not examined for their persistence. What, for instance, is the influence over time of acquiring various forms of literacy on the styles of thinking? Are attitudes influenced toward self and society - on a continuing basis? What is the effect of literacy programs on community mobilization and participation and is the effect lasting?

The reviewer does not comment, except in a very general way, on the methods used in the research reviewed. Nor is any attempt made to distinguish among the studies with respect to quality or sophistication.

TABULATION OF STUDY RESULTS: ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS & RETENTION

STUDY	NO. OF CASES	% RETENTION LITERACY	NUMERACY	LENGTH OF COURSE	CORRELATION W/RETENTION	TIME SINCE COURSE	CORRELATION W/RETENTION	BACK-GROUND VARIABLES?	"THRES-HOLD" NOTED	LITERACY CRITERION
Balpuri (1958) India	1214	59.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carpenter (1951) Nigeria	77	75[1]	-	60 hr. (1 yr.)	-	2 yr.	-	-	-	(b)
Chickerman (1964/5) ?	30	30-75	-	-	-	2 mo.	-	-	-	(b)
Landy-Tolwinska (1970) Poland	567	40[2]	-	5 months	-	18 yr.	-	-	-	-
NCERT (1962) India	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	(b)
PEO (1964) India	-	44	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(b)
Roy & Kapoor (1975) India	270	54.6		1-3 yr.	(+)	0-8 yr.	-.50*	✓	3 years	(a)(b)
Simmons & Allman (1971) Tunisia	225	50	25	3 yr.	nil	3 yr.	(-)	✓	none	(b)(c)
Singh (1970) India	43	35	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	(b)
Smith (1970) Rhodesia	13	high	low	5 wk.	-	8 mo.	-	-	-	(b)

* p = 0.05

[1] Reading Literacy retention; writing retention - 10%

[2] Reading literacy retention; writing retention - 20%

[3] Reading literacy retention; writing retention - 25%

Literacy Criterion:

(a) Median Split

(b) Criterion Referenced

(c) Baseline comparison

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The Experimental World Literacy Programme: A Critical Assessment

UNESCO/UNDP. Paris, The Unesco Press/UNDP, 1976. 195 pp.

Available in English (ISBN92-3-101314-9), French

(ISBN 92-3-201314-2), Spanish (ISBN 92-3-301314-6) from

Unesco Press, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

The authors are a joint drafting committee of the two Secretariats

involved. The work was guided and endorsed by a five member

international expert group under the chairmanship of James Robbins

Kidd (Canada).

Content

The Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) was the single large

global attempt to make thousands of the world's population literate. It

developed a unique approach to the subject and generated eleven national pro-

jects more or less consistent with this approach, all implemented between 1966

and 1971. The present volume critically evaluates the experience gained.

EWLP's main objectives, as enunciated by the responsible UN bodies,

were "to test and demonstrate the economic and social returns of literacy and

to study the mutual relations and influences between literacy training and

(national) development", and "to pave the way for the eventual execution of a

world campaign....".

The core of the present volume is the evaluation report, which analyses

the project experience and assesses both successes and shortcomings, largely

but not exclusively in the context of the first of these stated objectives. The

volume also contains "country profiles", i.e. descriptions of the various national

projects. It concludes with some recommendations applicable to future literacy

action, offered by the guiding expert team on the basis of the report's two main sections.

Sources

Data were drawn from national and international sources, including UNDP and Unesco Project Files. Preliminary drafts of technical reports prepared by Unesco's Evaluation and Research Unit, and reports and research documents prepared by universities and other agencies, were also used, as well as a number of independent studies and interviews. Much of the background documentation is not available in published form. A more extensive general bibliography that than given in the volume is however available from Unesco's Literacy Division.

Assumptions

The report neither develops nor defends a 'model' for literacy action. Nor does it uncritically accept the assumptions underlying EWLP objectives. The tone of the analysis is qualitative (of necessity) and questioning by choice; the result, as intended, is "a basic compendium of the programme's lessons".

Summary

I   The National Profiles describe the national projects in Algeria, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Iran, Madagascar, Mali, Sudan, Syria, Arab Republic, and the United Republic of Tanzania. Each gives information about timing; policy and objectives; participants; administration and organisation; teachers and other personnel; curriculum and methods; teaching materials; and costs. Each gives as well a brief evaluation and summary.

II   The <u>Analysis</u> considers the background of EWLP; then its where-
withal-- the resources, institutions and instruments that contributed to it;
then problems and procedures during its implementation; and results. These
sections are summarised in what follows.

(a)   <u>Why EWLP? The intentions</u>

The authors begin by noting that motivations and intentions that lay
behind EWLP were unique both independently and in combination. The intentions
included the notion of "functionality" and the particular idea of "strategy".
As all these factors influenced planning, implementation and results of the
EWLP programmes, they are analysed in the report at some length.

The authors agree that the <u>motivations</u> behind EWLP were altruistic and
ethical, and strongly so. But they also point out that some analysts have been
able to detect on the part of some EWLP adherents a certain determination to
retain the <u>status quo</u> through adoption of the literacy programmes, or a desire
to overcome dysfunctionalities in the respective national systems, this last
whether by fostering or discouraging revolution. A theme of "stewardship"
pervaded most aspects of the EWLP programme: the illiterates' interests were
defined and interpreted by literates, who tended also to accept definitions of
the former as "marginals". The authors conclude that in future greater efforts
must be made to understand illiterates on their own terms, and greater modesty
-- particularly concerning such questions as who is marginal? and to what? --
be evinced on the part of literacy personnel.

"<u>Functionality</u>" in EWLP terms refers to the idea to combine literacy and
numeracy with a programme of education in basic vocational skills directly linked

to the occupational needs of the participants. Literacy was meant to be
"relevant", in this case to development. Among the issues thereby raised,
the authors point out, is that in order to determine what aspects of develop-
ment literacy should be harnessed to, it is necessary to determine -- if only
for planning purposes -- what and where the impediments to development are.
Especially in its early stages EWLP tended to accept the idea of the "under-
developed" person as the impediment, 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 pre-
requisite to foster it. Consistent with this 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.

The idea and fact of a "strategy" was enunciated by EWLP largely to
demonstrate (at least at the outset) organisational efficiency, and hence
attract satisfactory levels of money per project. Here, the authors feel,
the concomitant focus on a single (if complex) development problem inevitably
leads to questioning of the usefulness of emphasis on sectoral problems, or
problems defined in sectoral terms, as literacy was. Secondly, the "apparent
rationality" of the notion of strategy seems to have been misleading in several
ways, not least important that it implied identification of an enemy, which in
this case tended to shift away from illiteracy towards something tangible, such
as participating national authorities. Similarily inappropriate, the authors
feel, were the frequently used mercantile metaphors: overall there was a feeling,

strengthening and strengthened by ideas such as that of a single "product"
to be "marketed" by EWLP strategy, that individual national incompetence
had to be compensated for by international expertise. It was predictable
that national and international teams would often work at cross-purposes.

EWLP strategy itself comprised three distinct characteristics: its
"intensity", its "selectivity", and its experimental nature. The first, in
general, refers to a great many things being done at once (as in medical in-
tensive care) and in a telescoped manner; the second to choice of limited zones
and selected groups rather than extensive coverage. Here it is noted as un-
fortunate that not more attention was given to the existence of earlier success-
ful mass literacy campaigns, nor the wishes of some Member governments to re-
plicate them. Concerning the "experimental" characteristic, two approaches seem
to have co-existed. The first, or technico-scientific, raises the question of
what was intended to be tested: literacy approaches as such, leading to their
refinement for later campaigns; or the economic value of literacy, i.e. its
demonstrable influence on development. Secondly, and alternatively, an activist-
pragmatist aim might have been to demonstrate what could be achieved against
illiteracy in certain countries, i.e. to serve as a pilot project rather than a
scientific experiment. Ultimately, at great expense, only limited success in
evaluation was achieved.

(b)   The wherewithal: resources, institutions and instruments

In speaking of the resources that were necessary for EWLP development,
the authors first discuss human resources, meaning personnel involved in the
programme at all levels, and then material resources. They continue with an

analysis of the institutional framework that was developed ("who decided what was to be done to whom, when it was to be done and how?"), and conclude this section with discussion of concepts and methods of evaluation.

Concerning human resources, it is noted that a constant problem was lack of continuity of personnel at all levels. A suitably "innovative" spirit was also difficult to maintain. In any future programme greater stress should be laid on permitting policy makers so inclined to generate their own innovativeness rather than constraining them within a framework that assumes their task is to administer a pre-packaged product. Mid-level (i.e. national) staff was not always numerically adequate to the tasks involved, and morale was not always high. EWLP did show the range of skills necessary in administering and implementing a vast literacy programme. It also showed that, when an integrative approach is desired, i.e. of combining literacy and technical instruction, technical personnel with some teaching training may have greater success than regular teacher personnel. In either event, greater stress in the future should be laid on in-service as well as pre-service training.

International headquarters staffs were too often at the call of too many masters and often, too, caught between the necessity for administration and for action. The authors recommend regular in-service professional improvement. For "experts", it seems that social commitment as well as professional competence is a necessary trait; as well, they might in the future be selected at least in part according to criteria established by people with whom they will work. A new "pedagogy of briefing" would seem to be called for, as well as development of the notion of the expert as an international "animateur" rather than an importer of precise skills and concepts.

Concerning material resources, the authors agree that EWLP showed conclusively that basic education can take place in a variety of very basic physical

settings including, weather permitting, the outdoors. Pedagogically such
use of varied settings has the advantage of helping link education with daily
experience. Similarly printed educational materials can be related to import-
ant and familiar problems. Inadequate provision for follow-up reading materials
was a serious problem in many national projects; indeed, creation of adequate
production and distribution facilities may be tantamount to setting up the
material infrastrucutre of a literate society. Newspapers as opposed to books
may be more flexible and generally suitable for post-literacy activities.
Appropriate tone and style remains a problem; creation or encouragement of
unmanipulated horizontal communication among new literates remains a promising
approach. Audio-visual aids, to the extent used, revealed a variety of cultural
rather than technical problems, not helped by the fact that in many instances
graphics designers tended to act as if illiterates possessed no symbolic worlds
of their own; identification and study of these is strongly recommended for any
future programmes. Logistics of resource distribution, both between countries
and within them, remained a continuing EWLP problem. With some exceptions, not
enough use was made of locally available materials and facilities.

At national as well as international level, as well as between the two,
basic issues concerning EWLP institutional framework arose repeatedly. Autonomy
of action at national level was a desired objective; this in turn posed problems
for co-ordination with other national development work. Settling on an appro-
priate degree of decentralisation congruent with national traditions was also
a tricky issue in many countries, although nowhere did a correlation appear
between this and success or failure of a programme. "Self-management", i.e.
active participation of the learners involved, was one of EWLP's basic tenets,
but failed to materialise in almost all settings. Institutional co-ordination
and diversification on the international level remained a problem as well, i.e.

what agencies should be involved and in what forms. This held true also for relations with the Unesco-related non-governmental organisations. International co-operation between the developed and less developed partners should be enhanced in future programmes, especially of the scale and ambition of EWLP, so that a mutual flow of information and deliberation is encouraged.

Concern for evaluation was and remained high. Unfortunately, clearly designed programme objectives were never present in the EWLP programmes; as well, there was genuine and longstanding conflict between technico-scientific and activist-pragmative approaches to the programme as cited above, 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-focussed 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". Much of the data provided proved unreliable and/or invalid. Future such programmes would be well advised to implement rather more clearly designed, flexible and modest procedures that might prove far more successful in informing on-going and future activities.

(c)   Doing the job: implementation

The basic question addressed by the authors in this section is "what happened". They divide their discussion into parts dealing with curriculum, learners, methods, language, and timing.

Curricular design was intended to ensure practical relevance, although some countries misunderstood or did not accept this premise. "Problem" based

curriculum design seems, however, to have worked satisfactorily where tried.
The optimal degree of specificity remains a question, although this seems not
to matter so much in vocational subjects. The principal of integration was
meant to apply to organisation and presentation of curricula, as well as to its
preparation. In practice, however, the literacy and the technical aspects
of the curricula often were quite separate (e.g. even two instructors) which
may have made learning more arduous than it otherwise would have been. For the
most part, integration was not achieved, i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic
were not allied with the practical material to be learned. Where this did
happen, the results are judged to have been successful.

Consistent with the EWLP concept of "functionality", and to a large
extent self-fulfilling, a certain ideal learner profile was projected by the
programmes. Participants tended to be the more favoured of the impoverished,
a kind of elite. The proportion of women was, however, high (some 55% in all
programmes), arguing that a certain kind of equity was achieved. Participation
rates, although far from satisfactory, were on par with other literacy efforts
and forms of basic education. The number of drop-out's and degree of absenteeism
may have reflected material that was not, after all, "relevant" enough and/or
an inadequate psychological (in this sense even political) climate at local
level. Creation of group identity, and group spirit, important in any kind of
adult education, seems to have been under-emphasized; so too was peer teaching,
which the authors point out to be still a lively tradition in at least some of
the relevant societies. Class size and instructor attitudes seem to have been
important determinants of success, although ideal parametres of the former in
particular is difficult to determine. There seems as well a "vital link"

between quality of participation of the learners within the literacy classes and quality of the activity's relation with the surrounding community, although the important point is made that good relations per se with the milieu are not necessarily equivalent to a positive influence. Existing popular institutions, i.e. traditional non-western ones, were not used nearly as often or as much as they might have been as a base for literacy programmes.

Concerning methods, efforts to build an adult-centered pedagogy focussed on the non 3-R subjects. Successful use was made of inductive approaches and experiential learning. It seems advisable to use a variety of methods and techniques. There is a suggestion that methodological variety "perhaps facilitated learning by bringing the teaching-learning process closer to the multi-sensoral world in which illiterates (like other people) live". The best mix and balance remains to be found.

On the important subject of language of instruction, the programme numbers among its 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 a number of problems, e.g. of transcription, trans-lation, etc. Materials however were generally first written in a foreign language, and by foreigners, thus creating a kind of twice-over alienation between learner and text. It is suggested this in turn unwittingly may have bolstered a lingering colonial mentality of inferiority vis-à-vis colonial cultures. Also crucial is the inverse relationship that existed in certain projects between EWLP's role of disseminating a national language and its function of transmitting knowledge, i.e. conscious and deliberate use of the programme to spread a national language, it is noted, "clearly undermined the transmission of new knowledge and skills". EWLP evaluators conclude that "the closer the language used to present the content

and materials of the course is to the worker's everyday language, the more
effective the literacy programme".

Concerning timing of the projects, it might be wiser in the future not
to impose external time limits, rather to be flexible in terms of national
realities, including paces of activity.

(d)   Results

The authors in this section are chiefly concerned with the effects of
EWLP on its participants, and the cost of EWLP. They introduce their discussion
by noting that, despite specific problems of evaluation (cited earlier), and
in general of measuring the impact of an innovative programme that cannot be
compared to anything that preceded it, nor to what would have happened had it
not existed, a number of useful general lessons can be said to have been learned
from EWLP. Many of these are implicit in the earlier discussion.

Learner progress is difficult to assess, not least of all because of the
incompatibility of the testing instruments used with the cultures in which they
were used. It appears, however that it is possible roughly to compare the level
of basic training acquired by new literates to the amount of basic training
acquired in a given length of primary schooling in the same country. The
relevant figures strongly suggest the need for further education for post-
literates if these are not to lapse into illiteracy.

Programme evaluation sought to detect success of 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, in-
cluding those mentioned earlier 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.

Concerning cost, it can be said that functional literacy can and did provide important aspects of fundamental education slightly less expensively than primary schooling could have done, although the data are far from definitive. Impacts of EWLP on further educational action are described as "limited, fragmented, and incidental".

Further Research

The report points indirectly to a number of subjects that would be suitable for further research or treatment. They include the following:

(a)   Historical studies of successful, mass literacy campaigns in the past

(b)   Development of methods and content for in-service and pre-service training, particularly for literacy instructors

(c)   Development of printed materials relevant to local and familiar situations and problems

(d)   Development of post-literacy printed materials, in particular newspapers as a vehicle for communication among newly literate persons

(e)   Development of graphics materials congruent with existing and indigenous symbolic renderings of the environment and universe.

(f)   For the above, more investigation of such symbolic traditions

(g)   Investigation of the use of locally available materials and facilities to take the place of imported type and paper

(h)   Development of forms of evaluation congruent with cultures in which they are to be applied

(i)   Development of rigorous cost analysis techniques for adult literacy

       campaigns

(j)   Development of briefing procedures for international "experts".

"Literacy in the Mother Tongue: A Reappraisal
of Research and Practice"

In T.P. Gorman (ed) Language and Literacy: Current Issues and Research,

pp. 271-290. Teheran, International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods,

1977, Available in English from IIALM, Box 1555, Teheran,Iran.*

Author: Thomas P. Gorman, presently at the National Foundation for

Educational Research in England and Wales, and previously

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and the University of Essex, U.K.

Content

The subject of the essay is attainment of literacy in the mother tongue.

Theoretical and practical arguments are advanced that indicate the need for

reconsideration and clarification of the issues involved and suggestions are

made as to ways in which a re-analysis might be undertaken. The starting point

for discussion as for international attention to the subject in general, is

the 1953 UNESCO volume, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, (see

page 3 of this report).

Assumptions

The essay intends to illustrate the fact that the linguistic aspect of

research on literacy is of overriding importance in the solution of

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*Literacy planners and organisers, among others, are strongly directed to study
of the entire volume of which this essay is the concluding chapter. Entries in
its first half illustrate the relevance of a number of recent developments in
theoretical and applied linguistics to literacy teaching; certain of the issues
thus raised are then illustrated and exemplified in relation to existing literacy
situations and literacy policies. The choice of language for literacy instruction
is the point of emphasis throughout. Not least of the volume's attributes is
the definition of literacy offered by Gudschinsky (p. 39): "That person is
literate, who,in a language he speaks, can read and understand everything that
he would have understood if it had been spoken to him; and can write, so that

literacy problems, and that this is particularly so in the case of various assumptions regarding choice of language for literacy instruction. Here both current developments in linguistic enquiry and current practice in multilingual states fail to support the generally accepted view that literacy must be attained in the mother tongue first.

Emphasis accordingly is laid on factors that militate against the attainment of literacy in local languages of restricted communication,

"as it is apparent that the cause of universal literacy has not
been fostered in the past generation by discussions or reports that
have ignored or minimised the manifold technical and sociocultural
obstacles to this desired end".

Sources and Method

The author does not report on his search procedure. However, as befits the concluding chapter of a well-integrated collection, the essay draws upon this collection as its own first basis for integration. Thus the range of theory and situation it considers is broad.

Summary

The author begins by noting that the 1953 UNESCO Report cited above remains a standard source advocating the desirability and even necessity of beginning literacy training in the "mother tongue". However, discussion of this report on a number of theoretical and practical grounds permits the conclusion that the majority of scholars concerned with the issue now

"would be inclined to agree that the medium of instruction is not
necessarily the primary variable in determining educational progress.

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it can be read, everything that he can say." The volume also contains an excellent bibliography.

Rather, <u>literacy should be carried out in a language that</u>

<u>the learner readily understands</u>".

Among the reasons cited for this revision of informed opinion are the

changes that have taken place in the prominence of certain linguistic theories

in the intervening years. For example, that promulgated by Whorf, among others,

that the limits of the first language are the determinants of how the universe

is interpreted, and that any interference with complete mastery of all aspects

of that first language endangers the speaker's ultimate ability to express him-

self, is not supported by either a coherent body of research or experience.

Nor, given the many and complex factors that motivate adult or other learning,

is much comparative data available (nor ever likely to be) to support assert-

ions that it is "best", in terms of learning achievement, for adults to begin

to read in their first language.

In practice, the author continues, the 1953 mother tongue principle has

been widely ignored. Many nations have adopted either a single "national"

language or a restricted number of languages for concentration. Many nationals

inevitably have been and are obliged to become literate in languages other than

their first one. In many states, too, wide mastery of a foreign language may

be necessary if modernization is to proceed. Government or other decrees (such

as those often urged by official or international bodies at their more extreme)

somehow to give all languages official and equal status by fiat is probably

wrong as well as impracticable. Experience suggests that such wishful legislation

cannot be effective; the need for and opportunity to use literacy skills develops

as a consequence of or accompaniment to other types of social change, over which

governments have only limited control. Similarly, formal placement of languages

in an education system does not ensure their greater use elsewhere, nor their greater status or prestige.

Another set of factors not always appreciated by those from outside the community involved is the extent of culture change already entailed when members of non-literate cultures are introduced to literacy activities. Only part of this is that in many rural areas inhabitants traditionally and actually do not feel a need to read and write; many societies maintain traditional modes of transmitting and interpreting written material which can be viewed as alternatives to individual literacy. Adults often need persuasion that it is useful for themselves (as opposed to their children) to learn to read and write. It is noteworthy that such a need for persuasion seems especially the case when it is first language literacy that is encouraged rather than literacy in a language of wider communication.

Nor is it coincidental, the author contends, that most "functional literacy" projects were in national or official rather than local languages: most were specifically undertaken to further programmes of economic development. Except for localised agricultural development projects, languages are necessary in which semi-technical information can be transmitted, and widely so. This is especially true when "continuous adult education fusing into genuine vocational instruction" is a leading objective.

The relative importance of numerical factors, i.e. relative numbers of speakers, as they relate to choice of language for literacy instruction reflects what the essential benefits of literacy are perceived to be, itself open to argument. Most literacy projects in practice have tended to involve language groupings of 100,000 or more speakers. Notably many states in demographic terms face extraordinary situations, and provision of an associated writing system, as a first stage in literacy activities, for each language in such cases would be

an enormous and difficult undertaking.

Of course, organised efforts may be exerted to extend the range of uses of a particular language or variety in relation to other languages. When this is done systematically by an organised body it is known as "language planning". "Status planning" refers to attempts to extend functions of a language; "corpus planning", attempts to extend its form. The former is more complex, as patterns of behaviour are involved that, again, cannot be changed by technical expertise or government decree. Technical problems in corpus planning are increasingly understood by non-linguists; the reverse unfortunately is not the case. Nor are many of the important decisions ones that the linguists should make. For example, whether people feel themselves to be distinct or not is of great relevance in determination of language and dialect boundaries as well as of selection of the dialect to be used as a basis for transcription.-- a social rather than a linguistic phenomenon.

The author notes that Pidgin and Creole pose special problems. In any situation, however, social factors tend to encourage adoption of orthographic conventions associated with a language of wider communication, even if these are not the most logical or effective. Generally, three to five years are required for a linguist to develop a preliminary orthographic system, this, again, dependent on many factors.

Apart from the problem of lack of related literary forms for many languages, a large number of literary dialects that do exist are not directly related to the associated languages as they are spoken. Even minor changes in orthographic conventions, moreover, frequently give rise to intense disagreement among speakers, even when written form is relatively recent. As well, early work carried out

frequently by religious or missionary bodies was often done on a relatively unscientific basis, of which one consequence is that few existing African orthographies can bear close critical examination. What this means in practice is that a close fit between significant features of the sound system and the orthographic system is rare, and therefore the ideal psycholinguistic reality is lacking; therefore it is not at all "easy" for the people concerned to learn to read, even if it is their mother tongue. It is also of note that readers may experience considerable difficulty in reading a written text in their own language, but based on a dialect other than their own.

There are also a number of language-related problems that are frequently encountered after an orthographic system has been devised and accepted, and even after the organising and teaching staff has been trained to read and write them. These are essentially related to the matter of providing reading materials (who exists who can prepare them?) as well as to the deeper question of developing an indigenous literary tradition and encouraging indigenous writers, concerning which some work has been and is being done. As well, publishing activities pose large technical and financial problems, and some scripts are unsuitable for matching transcription and mass reproduction.

Concerning the use of local languages as a transitional activity when the objective is achieving literacy in a language of wider communication, it is surprising that fewer programmes utilising diglot material (i.e., both languages at once) have not been developed. They are, however, complex to design and administer and most governments are not able or inclined to expend such efforts on adult illiterates.

Discussion

The author continues his review of experience and research with the

proposition that an adult's spoken knowledge of the literacy medium is a determining factor with regard to acquisition of reading and writing skills. Any attempt to teach both medium and content of instruction simultaneously, and language and literacy skills simultaneously, is almost certain to result in learning problems, even when the second language is relatively widely understood. Further research is needed, for example, on means to ensure that learners have full understanding of the language in a text before they are expected to master the written representation. This would have implications for design of courses very different to any of those developed in the Experimental World Literacy Programme (see page 25 of this report), even if diglot materials were not employed.

In conclusion: it is both desirable and feasible that all languages currently spoken be provided with a written form, both for the creative insights ultimately possible for all to share and for the focussing of cultural pride and development. At the same time,

> " the first essential is that men should become literate. Accordingly national governments and international agencies should initiate or intensify programmes in which a selected language or languages are systematically developed as a literacy medium, and incentives for people to learn and use it provided".

Further Research

Other than those emerging from or noted in the preceding two paragraphs two areas are cited in which further work could usefully be done:

(a)   On the development of indigenous literary traditions and encouragement of indigenous writers, both as theory and in practice;

(b)   On the development of programmes making use of diglot materials.

The author also notes in his text that "language status planning should continue, but not accompanied by oversimplification of the issues involved".

"Characteristics of Illiterates and Programme Hypotheses"

Final Report, AID/TA-C-1203, 4 May 1977. Mimeo. 25 pp.

<u>Authors</u>: Richard Burke and Michael Chiappetta

Content

The brief review of literature relating to the question of whether there are any characteristics that distinguish the illiterate from the literate member of a given society was undertaken as part of a longer review of material relevant to the design and implementation of programmes for illiterate populations.

Concerning the last, the authors conclude that "little had been written about programmes or projects that attempt to reach illiterate audiences with specific, useful information ... without making literacy a requisite first step...." Similarly, they note, there is very little solid evidence about the characteristics of illiterate adult learners. That which they considered valid, however, they included in the appropriate section of their review.

Search procedures

These included ERIC, where several descriptors were matched with the 40 or 50 countries that might be assumed to have large illiterate populations. The psychological abstracts and the Education Index were also scanned. The search procedures seem to have been thorough, but only for extant North American sources.

Findings

1. The authors contend, first, that there is "a certain casualness" about using the words "educated" and "literate", or "education" and "literacy" as if they were synonyms. The literature in anthropology is likewise imprecise, especially with such concepts as "primitive" and the "primitive mind".

2. Michael Cole, Sylvia Scribner and John Gay: "continually remind us ... that there are enormous inherent difficulties involved in cross-cultural

investigation into learning, cognitive delopment and the effects of literacy",
largely because "literacy co-occurs with other cultural features such as the
presence of formal education, increased industrialisation and urbanisation".
Therefore it is immensely difficult to say what features of a culture cause a
difference, even when it can be recorded, for example in the performance of
some cognitive task.

3. Concerning cultural influences on perception, the findings are again
inconclusive to the extent that "it would be inappropriate to make any
generalisations about the capacity of illiterate people to interpret artificial
visual representations". Most relevant research suggests that "formal schooling
in the normal course is not the principal determinant in pictorial perception.
Informal instruction in the home and habitual exposure to pictures play a much
larger role."

4. Concerning the experimental evidence on culture and conceptual pro-
cesses, the authors again quote Cole and Scribner who observe that "... it is
clear·that experimental findings do not allow the conclusion that in general
the thinking of any group of people is, or is not, ·abstract ... the one
unambiguous finding in the studies to date is that schooling (and only school-
ing) contributes to the way in which people describe and explain their own
mental operations".

5. Concerning memory, Scribner and Cole are quoted to the effect that
"... when we turn to the experimental evidence, we see no hint of a general
superiority on the part of nonliterate peoples, nor do we encounter qualitatively
different modes of remembering such as ... rote recapitualtion.... "

Conclusions

1. Nothing can be assumed with regard to the learning characteristics of illiterate people.

2. Most of the qualities that we have tended to associate with illiterates are described by Michael Cole as "anthropological folklore".

3. It is not possible to know what aspects of culture, education, experience, rural/urban living and type of work cause differences among people in performance levels with regard to specific learning tasks.

4. The authors "are reasonably certain that there are not fundamental cognitive differences between literates and illiterates if literacy is taken as the operative factor".

<u>A Turning Point for Literacy:</u>

<u>Adult Education for Development;   The Spirit and Declaration of Persepolis</u>

Proceedings of the International Symposium for Literacy, Persepolis, Iran,
3 - 8 September 1975. Edited by Léon Bataille, Executive Secretary of the
International Co-ordination Secretariat for Literacy, Paris.
Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1976. English. 279 pp.

<u>Content</u>

The International Symposium for Literacy convened in Persepolis, Iran,
in May 1975. This marked the tenth anniversary of the World Conference of
Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy which, among other things,
had given rise to the Unesco/UNDP Experimental World Literacy Project (1966-1971)
(see page   of this report). The pre-Persepolis decade was therefore one in
which much experience had been gained in programmes to combat illiteracy, and
much information collected about their successes, failures and possible future
modifications. It was also a decade in which a number of new theoretical approaches
to the subject were formulated. Sometimes these were translated into practical
form, but often not.

The Persepolis Symposium was organised partly to evaluate and take stock of
the decade's experience and partly (if not by intention, certainly in effect) to
codify and give public expression to some of the theoretical approaches. It is
in this second area that the present volume's significance lies. The Symposium
was attended by some 75 participants (each acting in a personal capacity) who
together represented a wide range of countries and socio-political persuasions.
Doubtless this accounts for some of its peculiar formulations and frequently odd
tone, although the evident necessity to translate many of the relevant documents

from another language into English also will have had an effect.

Four main themes were elaborated: "Balance and Teachings of Ten Years of Literacy Work"; "Functionalities of Literacy"; "Changes in the Literacy Conditions and in the Social Structures as a Requisite for Literacy Under-takings"; and "Innovative Role of Literacy Experiments and their Integration into the Global Educational Process". Roughly these refer to background, to purposes of literacy, examples of programmes, and commentary.

The core of the Symposium report is a selection of fourteen working documents that were prepared in relation to these themes. It also contains some technical material about the organisation of the Symposium, a very brief record of its discussions and the Symposium Declaration.

This material for the most part consists of position pieces, or expressions of social or political aspects of the literacy problem, and are often exhortatory in tone. As such, they are of considerable interest on ideological grounds, but have little direct relevance to research. Only those few contributions to the volume that could be of assistance in determining research priorities are summarized below.

Assumptions

These are not altogether coherent, and not all are made explicit.

"Literacy" is defined (in the Declaration) as "not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of man and to his full development".

There are assumptions too in the Declaration about what literacy does, to the person who has acquired it: "... it creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man lives and its aims; it also stimulates initiative and his participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, of transforming it,

and of defining the aims of an authentic human development. It should open
the way to a mastery of techniques and human relations".

Most of the contributions to the volume would be in agreement with this
broad general position, although only one attempt is made (Callaway, summarized
below) to consider the practical implications for programme design. Extensive
descriptions of programmes in Algeria, Vietnam, and Peru also provide some
relevant material.

Literacy, also, is "a fundamental human right". (Declaration)

Illiterates are to be respected, as "working adults already committed to
ways of looking at the world and of carrying out productive activities". (Callaway)

Summary

As noted, only those contributions that present information or a point of
view with direct relevance to research will be summarized in this section.
These are:

A.   "Literacy in the World since the 1965 Tehran Conference: shortcomings,
     achievements, tendencies" -- a background document prepared by the Unesco
     Secretariat. (pp 3 - 34)

B.   "Functionalities of Literacy" -- by Malcolm S. Adiseshiah (Director,
     Madras Institute of Development Studies; President, International Council
     for Adult Education) (pp 65 - 78).

C.   "Learner-centred Innovations in Literacy Work" -- by Helen Callaway,
     Research Associate, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, U.K.
     (pp 183 - 194).

"Literacy in the World since the 1965 Teheran Conference"

During the decade in question the proportion of adult illiterates has
declined, but the absolute number has increased. In national terms, the highest

illiteracy rates correlate positively with the highest population growth rates. The proportion of female illiterates continues to grow, especially in rural areas. Combatting illiteracy has been like the "task of Sisyphus", in that frequently population growth outdistanced illiteracy eradication. Of the many programmes mounted, some have achieved more than others. Reasons for limited success, in some cases, include lack of serious interest and/or "lack of a literacy environment", i.e. the "social structures and facilities geared to the uses of literacy". In all cases, too, illiteracy is a vicious circle -- "the source of inequalities and a reflection of them".

Reviewing accomplishments in planning, legislation, and administration of various programmes, a few general features can be discerned. For example, illiteracy programmes frequently have been conceived as an intersectoral under-taking, or non-sectoral, e.g. attached to a Prime Minister's Office -- not exclusively education bodies have been involved. A number of new regional bodies have been developed, and there has been participation in several programmes of a number of non-governmental organisations, religious bodies, etc. One lesson learned is that "widespread capillary programmes" are needed, founded on "the authentic energy of the local groups".

A related development, one the writer clearly applauds, is that increasingly illiterates have been called upon to take an active role in their own education. Similarly during the decade, the dichotomy between traditional and functional literacy has been greatly reduced; it is now generally accepted that the process of learning to read and write can be made an opportunity for acquiring informa-tion that is useful on its own terms, but not necessarily narrowly vocation-related.

The existence of methodological and conceptual implications of this view is noted, but not spelled out.

Increased interest in development of activities for new literates, such as special periodicals and newspapers, is cited. Radio has emerged as an increasingly useful form of media assistance.

The report cites too an increased "rehabilitation of mother and vernacular tongues in literacy versus the adoption of a language inherited from the colonizing country". Perhaps incorrectly, (see Gorman, page 38) praise is given to the growing acceptance of the necessity to teach in the vernacular.

Experience with staffing and with training of literacy instructors has revealed the importance of in-service rather than pre-service programmes for the instructors. The importance of "pedagogical counselling" rather than supervision is also noted, and the potential of a form of practical training-in-the-field known as the "operational field seminar".

Much research has been undertaken - fundamental, action, and evaluation; together this chiefly has "contributed to raising the consciousness of the literacy problem". Internationally, awareness of the problem of illiteracy generally has increased, and an overall "humanization" of the image held of the illiterate has been achieved, but the man in the street in the developed world remains less preoccupied with the subject than he might be.

In sum, however, international efforts must not be substituted for national thought and action; "exogenous" help should bolster "endogenous" action.

"Functionalities of Literacy" (Adiseshiah)

"Functionality" is defined as a relationship between an independent variable (in this case, literacy) and a dependent variable (here, ranging from a person's

environment to his "fight for rights of justice and equity"). The author considers literacy to be the initial and initiating instrument for understanding, changing and controlling the real world; as such it is always functional. Secondly, the experience to which it is related covers every aspect of a person's experience and environment. In this context, the paper considers some literacy's (actual and possible) relationship to work; sex- and age-specific groups; individual and social values; and the fight for justice. Especially in the first two areas, it also presents some useful starting-points for action.

(a) Literacy's functionality to work. An inventory of literacy's range of relevance to the life of the agricultural worker in the Third World includes technical information (seed fertilizers, etc.), "sagacious use of credit", and improved levels of farm management. The author identifies two critical problems concerning functional literacy programmes for farmers: First, there are not a priori methods or material in existence that are functional to the farmer's or cultivator's interests, needs, and problems as just defined. Much of what is (or could be) available is far too theoretical: "the literacy tool that (the cultivator) wants is one that can be a continuously problem-solving tool ... not an information inundating one". For this, there is no precedent.

Secondly, a political difficulty, is that the kind of functionality described could profoundly modify the political-social status-quo; "it is therefore allowed to suffer the various administrative maladies ..." that can and do hamper its development. What is called for, the author says, is political will.

The discussion of literacy's functionality to the industrial worker, and to industrialisation of the Third World in general, centres on two areas: the residue of illiteracy in existing (probably not particularly recent or modern) plants and factories, where workers need literacy for successful completion of their tasks; secondly, the "post functional" situation which involves the necessity for more and sophisticated knowledge on the part of many workers about industrialisation processes in general, and their role in them. Here trade unions provide an existing infrastructure that could be mobilised for effective action.

(b) <u>Literacy's functionality to sex-and age-specific groups</u>. The most urgent group is women, especially rural women of which there are some 640 million in the Third World: 81% of these are illiterate. The litany of their needs, to which literacy has significant potential functionality, includes the need for employment; the need to combat infant and maternal mortality, and related, to overcome nutritional deprivation; the desire to lower age-specific fertility rates; and the desire for improved home and family life, itself inextricably linked to women's full and equal participation in political, social and cultural life. Programmes to date have not responded to the last, largely because they have been designed and directed by men. Clearly it is a complex package that is called for, that could answer even a significant proportion of the needs listed.

Of age groups, it is youth that by numerical superiority and relative influence, now and in the future, must be given priority. An inventory of the needs of this age-specific group gives prominence to full social participation and to employment. It is notable that youth as a body, and lacking other forms of organised outlet, tends to participate in games, sports, cultural manifestations, and movements associated with political parties. These could provide the infra-

structure through which literacy programmes could be implemented.

c. <u>Literacy's functionality to individual and social values</u>. Properly organised, and with its values made explicit, programmes of literacy organised as part of the informal sector, could make significant progress in counteracting some of the undesirable social values said to be inculcated by the formal sector. Literacy especially has a role in transforming religious and cultural values and traditions, many of which have become unnecessarily obscure and unattainable by the average man.

d. <u>Literacy's functionality to the fight for justice</u>. Illiteracy is part of the "total subhuman condition", itself a matter of contrast to increasing wealth among the wealthy. It is conceded that "literacy's functionality to this society of injustice within the Third World and between countries of our world is somewhat daunting", but the author sees "no alternative".

<u>"Learner-centred innovations in literacy work"</u> (Callaway)

As remarked elsewhere, many innovations in literacy work in recent years have been designed with greater attention being given to learners within the context of development. Education has become less concerned with literacy skills, more concerned with groups of people and their particular requirements. Thus many experiments have sought to elicit greater participation from learners and to encourage development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. The recent re-discovery of the importance of play, as a learning instrument and as an adaptation technique, is not unrelated.

a. <u>Adult learners and negotiations for better living</u>. Most adult learners in literacy programmes make extreme efforts, and their motivation to persevere will be connected to how they perceive the benefits of literacy. The scattered evidence suggests these in turn are connected to the learners' "structured models of reality". Persuasion from outside sources to be successful must match these.

A basic education programme then becomes a series of negotiations between learners and teachers, between problems presented by the environment and possibilities to solve them, and between traditional ideas and modern ones.

b. Changing concepts of education and development. "Development" is now seen as a complex process in which economic growth is but one variable, albeit a significant one. Improved living conditions for people must accompany it. Development further is perceived as something generated from within communities and within nations. A parallel series of reconsiderations concerning education in developing countries has resulted in the placing of greater emphasis on out-of-school education for youths and adults, and or regarding the process as a means to further social and economic improvement, and to ensure greater participation of the learner in political action and economic initiatives.

c. Special problems of women's education. This is a highly critical situation. Between 1960 and 1970 the increase in the total number of illiterate women was five times that of the number of illiterate men. Economic development and expansion of primary education have acted to create a wider distance between men and women than was previously the case, largely because the former receive preferential treatment everywhere and partly in response, the latter increasingly stay at home. Alleviation of many of the world's more pressing problems, however, depends on women's active co-operation. The constraints of their own minds hold women back more than do men. Instructional strategies for women could well begin with encouragement to them "to discuss their views, to air their reasons for their opinions ... and to try out new ways of doing things".

d. An anthropological approach to learner involvement. Models for the analysis of an educational setting as a pre-requisite to the planning of a

learner-centred programme could profitably be borrowed from anthropology.
Such analysis would begin with identification and description of the experiences
of living as these are reflected in the thought and action of a community's
inhabitants. For educational purposes additional material would be sought
about skills and about existing community organisations, and profiles drawn
of the educational, economic and technological aspects of the community.

Sylvia Ashton-Warner intuitively built her pedagogic processes upon a
foundation of such knowledge and in relation to it. Paulo Freire's procedures
are more elaborate, but basically similar. Many more examples exist,
historical as well as actual.

Anthropological theories and procedures can also be useful in evaluating
literacy programmes, especially if the descriptive and interpretative role of
evaluation is sought, rather than measurement and prediction. Evaluation can
be seen as a means to clarify the processes of education, rather than to measure
its outcomes, and of analysing the sets of relations within the learning milieu.
It would concentrate on the learners and the meanings they assign to their
learning experiences.

e. Learner-centred innovations and 'development from within'. There is
a paradox here, in that if learning experiences are to be closely matched to the
motivations and aspirations of particular groups, how can they be useful for
mass literacy movements? The paradox disappears when 'learner-centred' is re-
garded as a point of view, as "a concept with multiple connotations and
universal extensions". Then numerous strategies can be generated, which have
certain characteristics in common:

i. learner-centred programmes encourage the development of communication skills and confidence

ii. they regard the teacher as a mediator and resource person within a community of learners

iii. communication therefore is regarded as a two-way process

iv. the programmes start with the immediate problems of the villagers as these have been identified as outlined above.

v. the success of the programmes is appraised by "the personal growth of learners, their new perceptions of themselves, and their enhanced capacities as active agents of change".

The Thai process of "khit-pen" exemplified such a learner-centred concept, as do experiences in Senegal with two-way communication between the centre and the village using radio as the chief means.