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ABSTRACT
                This special issue of the "Courier" has been produced
to mark the beginning of International Literacy Year 1990. It brings
together papers from adult educators involved in literacy work about
who needs literacy and why, what literacy is, who can help in
creating the right conditions for literacy to succeed, and how to
evaluate literacy programs. Following an introduction and messages
from the Director-General of UNESCO (Mayor) and from the president of
the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (Pick), the
collection is organized in two parts. Part 1 explores "Literacy: Some
Thoughts on the Eve of International Literacy Year 1990." Papers
included are the following: "The 'International' in International
Literacy Year 1990" (Alan Rogers); "Literacy as a Social Process:
Literacy as a Social Intervention" (H. S. Bhola); "Literacy for
Development: Can Sociology and Anthropology Help Adult Education?"
(Heribert Hinzen); "UNESCO's Rhetoric: Appeal and Reality" (Premadasa
Udagama); "The Promotion of Literacy from the Perspective of
Community Education" (Alan Blackhurst); and "Guidelines for
Evaluating Nonformal Education Programs on Literacy" (Innotech
Newsletter). Part 2 addresses "Literacy Programs in Countries of Asia
and the Pacific." These papers are included: "Study Report of Adult
Education Programs in the People's Republic of China, Philippines,
Thailand, and Pakistan" (Safraz Khawaja); "'Tokples' Literacy in
Papua New Guinea: The Challenge of Vernacular Literacy in a
Multi-Language Environment" (Susan Malone); "Literacy Workshop
Report" (S. H. Waura); "The Psychology of Illiterate Rural Women in
Korea" (Cheong Ji Woong); "Literacy Work in Southern Thailand"
(Mohamad A. Kadir); "What I Need Is More" (Sunthorn Sunanchai);
"Impressions of Literacy Status in Bangladesh" (G. S. Pradhan);
"Report of Literacy Study Visit to Nepal" (M. Hanif); "Rapid Literacy
Learning Method" (Nishat Farooq); "Literacy Activities at the Centre
for Adult Education and Extension, University of Kerala" (K.
Sivadasan Pillai); and "Communication Technology for the National
Literacy Mission" (B. B. Mohanty). Following the papers is an
annotated bibliography of 15 resources and a section titled "Learning
Exchange," which describes activities related to the International
Literacy Year. (KC).

LITERACY: FOCUS ON ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
Special issue to commemorate International Literacy Year 1990

Edited by Yvonne Heslop

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Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education
Canberra, December 1989

LITERACY: FOCUS ON ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
Special Issue to Commemorate International
Literacy Year 1990

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INTRODUCTION

This Special Issue of the Courier has been pi duced to mark the commencement of International Literacy year 1990. The International Council for Adult Education will host the ceremonies to inaugurate this event at its 1990 World Assembly in Bangkok, Thailand in January. The Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education joins with ICAE and other adult education organisations in expressing the hope that International Literacy year will prove to be a worthwhile adult education activity that will result in concrete outcomes to improve the lives of people everywhere who are disadvantaged because of their lack of literacy and numeracy skills, regardless of the cause.

Literacy is regarded as a basic human right. However, it must fight for its place alongside the rights to shelter, clean drinking water, clothing, freedom from political oppression and many other basic human rights. If literacy is to become a central cause then it must be a means to assist people to meet their other basic needs. It cannot be an end in itself given the magnitude of the numbers of illiterate people in the world and the other problems facing us.

This special issue of the Courier brings together some ideas form adult educators involved in literacy work about who needs literacy and why, what literacy is, who can help in creating the right conditions for literacy to succeed, and how to evaluate literacy programs. Literacy workers from Asian and Pacific countries give insights into their literacy programs and some thoughts on why some are successful and others fail.

Papua New Guinea is a country which has enormous problems because of its terrain, multitude of languages and lack of resources. However, the leaders of the PNG literacy campaign have come up with a philosophy and process of literacy activities which meet these problems head on and, it appears, are successfully overcoming them.

ASPBAE has sponsored several literacy exchange visits and some of the papers arise out of those study tours. ASP`AE will be continuing to support worthwhile local initiatives throughout 1990 and beyond.

On behalf of ASPBAE I would like to thank all the contributors to this issue including the Secretary-General of Unesco, Federico Mayor.

Yvonne Heslop
Editor

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO

On the eve of International Literacy Year 1990, it is my pleasure to salute and encourage the ongoing and often unsung efforts of adult educators in Asia and the South Pacific. Adult educators in the region, as elsewhere, have tirelessly sought to provide literacy and adult basic education tuition, frequently in difficult conditions. Their dedication to their task takes them to the most hard-to-reach populations, thereby requiring a consistent re-appraisal of methods and means. This commitment at grass-roots level merits a parallel long-term commitment on the part of governments. Such a joint commitment is a prerequisite for a fully literate world.

Through the combined efforts of governments, non-governmental organizations, United Nations Agencies, adult educators, teachers, communities, families and individuals, we can help the world community to enjoy one of its most important human rights, the right to education.

Federico Mayor
Director-General of Unesco

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF ASPBAE

Some years ago I was invited to the opening of a training workshop for village managers in Southern Thailand. In his opening address, the Governor of Southern Thailand said, When a man is hungry, he looks for food. When he is sick, he looks for a doctor. But when he is illiterate, he never looks for a teacher". This is very true in rural areas of many Third World countries where most villagers are still unaware of the importance of education in general and the usefulness of literacy in particular.

The problems of illiteracy are extremely complex. Some blame the governments for their failure in implementing effective policies on literacy; some blame the social systems which neither encourage individual learning nor promote mass education; some blame the non-governmental organisations for their lethargy in adult education movements; and, some blame the illiterates themselves for not making any effort to improve themselves. From these arguments, it is clear that the problems of illiteracy cannot be solved by just one party alone. Close cooperation and concerted coordination among all parties concerned are required.

In the promotion of literacy, the first and foremost task is to make people aware of the usefulness of literacy and its relevance to their life and culture. There are various strategies for this awareness exercise, viz., popular education, national campaigns, mass media, mobile road show, mobile library, walking teacher etc. In our war against illiteracy, if illiterates are made to be aware of their handicaps and motivated to learn, half our battle is already won.

I hope this special issue of ASPBAE Courier will provide its readers with much food for thought on literacy. It should augur well for the forthcoming ICAE World Assembly and the UNESCO Literacy Year 1990.

Lim Hoy Pick
President

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PART I:
Literacy: Some Thoughts on the Eve
of International Literacy Year 1990

> ## THE 'INTERNATIONAL' IN INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR 1990

Alan Rogers

Professor Alan Rogers is currently Director of Education for Development. He is Visiti-? Professor at the University of Reading and Professorial Fellow at the University of Surrey in the UK. He was the founder Secretary General of the Commonwealth Association for the Education and Training of Adults 1985-88 and author of Teaching Adults *(Open University Press) and of a forthcoming book on* Adult Learning for Development. *He has worked extensively in India, Sri Lanka and other countries and is currently engaged in the making of a training video on Literacy in Bangladesh for ILY 1990.*

ILY will undoubtedly arouse further debate about the international dimension to literacy education; and this paper is intended to be a contribution to that debate.

From the international to ...

ILY will tend to see illiteracy (whether on its own or as part of a wider concept of basic education) as a world-wide problem calling for the mobilisation of world-wide resources to overcome it.   This is surely right; for local resources alone cannot meet the needs of this particular task.

So we shall see a plethora of world-wide statistics: such as

* global illiteracy rates
* in which parts of the world these are more concentrated
* differential growth rates of literacy
* The relationship of illiteracy to poverty, under-development oppression and marginalisation.

I thought at this stage of including some of these statistics into this paper, but then I decided that I do not want to add my own sets of figures to all these statistics. For one thing, the readers will already have been (or will shortly see) a whole range of such figures from all sorts of sources; for another, every time I see another set of figures, I note that they differ from those I already possess from other sources, so that the more we have, the more confusion seems to reign.

I will content myself making just one or two points about regarding illiteracy and literacy education in this way:

Such an approach will be based on assumptions about the nature of illiteracy (ie often as a sin and a shame, to use Gandhiji's words, or as a disease to be eradicated) and about literacy education (whether functional, basic or other); and we need to examine some of these assumptions very closely indeed. I for one do not see illiteracy as a total disaster - although the denial to people whatever they may want is to me oppression. What I would plead for is some clarity about these assumptions.

To increase our understanding about the relationships between literacy and development (and this can only be done on a world-wide scale) seems to me to be important, but I doubt if in the end it will lead to practical changes - for these lie (as I think we shall see later in this paper) in the political realm.

Perhaps the greatest value of the international dimension to practitioners of literacy education lies in a sense of solidarity. Those who work in the villages, and slums of the Third World are working as part of a world-wide movement. When the National Association for Total Education (NATE) launches its programme in Sri Lanka, those engaged in it can feel themselves to be part of a whole which is larger than Sri Lanka; when Bangladesh embarks on its mass programme "on a large scale, eventually to eradicate illiteracy for millions instead of only tens of thousands", they are not the only ones doing it. This companionship is so necessary in the field of the education of adults which lacks the formal structure of the school system, so that the sense of isolation of the grass roots practitioner is greatly enhanced. ILY is not just a year of launching national programmes, it is a year of a great world-wide movement to help the masses to learn. If we become absorbed solely in our own national programmes, we shall miss much of the point of ILY.

... to the local ...

But the use of the term 'masses' hides reality. Any literacy class is not dealing with the 'masses'; it is dealing with real people, collections of individuals. One of the great diseases of adult education is to regard all 'adults' as alike, all having the same needs and wants, the same life-span development, the same learning processes. This is the great failure of the Basic Human Needs approach to development. Similarly, mass illiteracy, seen on a world-wide scale, is generalised and transferable. But the needs of humanity are not general, and the process of meeting those needs is not transferable. Such an approach overlooks the local, the specific.

Language in literacy:

Let me take one example (there are hundred of other examples of this) - the question of language in literacy education. Should the learners learn and the

animators teach in the mother tongue (I will continue to use this term in this paper although it has recently been questioned) - tribal language, Creole, patois etc - or in the nationally approved language (Swahili, Hindi, English or French etc)? This has been argued over endlessly.

There are **educational** reasons for both practices. To use the mother tongue and then later to transfer to more standardised languages has been shown in some cases (as in the Seychelles etc) to ease the process of transition and induction); but on the other hand, in other cases (as in India), children taught from the start in the English medium enter higher education with greater advantages than those who learned through mother tongue. There are **cultural** reasons given on both sides. Some argue for standard language versions on the grounds that there is little of value to read in local languages and that exclusive literacy in local varieties of language cuts the people off from access to a wider culture and strengthens parochialism: this is sometimes argued in the Caribbean where there are many different types of Creole and patois, not just one language. But this is seen by others as denying validity to those forms of culture which do already exist within those local languages already. There are 'political' reasons given: that to use local languages is to empower those who use them; but equally to use standardised and approved forms of language for literacy education is to enable those hitherto excluded to enter the corridors of power which exist - for all the main decisions are taken in the standardised language form, not the local vernacular.

All these arguments arise from seeing literacy education in a national and even international dimension. But the local scene may well look different: what does this particular group of learners want to learn now? In St Lucia, for example, in some programmes we saw recently, the large majority of participants wanted to learn standard English even though the literacy classes were offered in the local patois. In Sierra Leone, the United Christian Council ran literacy classes in local tongues since 1956, despite the fact that the most frequently demanded service was for English. The plurality of languages used in literacy education in Mali (Mande, Bambara, Peul, Senghhoy, Tamasheq), in Niger (Hausa, Songay-Zerma, Kanuri, Tamashek, Fulani) and Zambia (Lunda, Luwale, Bemba, Tonga, Lozi, Njanja) has not stopped the urge felt by many minorities in these countries to learn to read and to write in the official tongue so as to overcome their voicelessness and powerlessness and exclusion from the decision-making processes.

So what do we do - what we feel is right for the programme or what the learners themselves want? For this sense of what is in almost all cases the really important factor in adult learning. For most (not all) adult learning is voluntary: people will learn not just when they are interested but when they feel under some compulsion to learn, when they feel a real need. I like (and have used several times) a quotation from the Indian writer R K Narayan:

> "a man in a village will be pre-occupied with the rains, the monsoon,
> his neighbours and the cattle, though he will be aware of the
> important things from outside that affect his life, like chemical
> fertilisers" (and we can add, like literacy)

Until the individual learners find literacy becoming for them a **pre-occupation** rather than an awareness, they will not learn. Our literacy programmes need to be built on the **pre-occupations** of our own particular groups of learners, not on the more generalised subjects of awareness which national and international programmes set for each target group. And so it can be argued that the local is the most important dimension, not the international.

....,to the international ...

But how can I help to create these pre-occupations? How can I help my learners to want to learn literacy?   How can we make literacy education into a mass movement in any count   so as "to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000"?

Here the international dimension may throw some light.   The examples of Cuba and China and Yugoslavia etc (or so I am told) suggest that the literacy spread throughout those countries, that learning programmes were engaged in with a sense of seriousness and purpose by masses of the people, when there was a general climate of creating everything (social/economic/cultural/ political) new – when total renewal was in the air – either by building on but changing out of all recognition existing structures and institutions, or by revolution, the rejection of the old and the creation of the new. The whole country believed in it and therefore they did it. It will be impossible for countries such as India which are not committed to radical and comprehensive change to eradicate illiteracy, for there is no political commitment to the total and revolutionary renewal which would go with that programme.

... to the local

But surely that does not mean that countries like India – and the programmes which exist in them – will be unable to make substantial progress now, without that overwhelming local/regional/national desire for total cultural change. The need that I see, from the programmes I have engaged with, is simply this: how can we help to make the **existing** programmes, whether large scale or small scale, more effective? How can we reduce the drop-out rate; how increase the learning; how overcome the barriers and harness the existing drives, without necessarily aiming at the total eradication of illiteracy throughout the whole of the country of region?

The programmes I have been engaged in are with the animators/instructors.   I know little of politics or money or large scale programme planning: others work at these exalted levels better than I can. But if we can together – at the local level – during ILY 1990 to:

* select those who will be our instructors more effectively
* offer them more and better training
* provide much more and much better ongoing support

then I believe ILY will have done much good.

For we are asking them to undertake on our behalf a most difficult task.   They are the front line troops.   Perhaps we do not need **more** literacy education, just **better** literacy education.   Perhaps if we had a mass movement for animators during ILY 1990, we would have more effective literacy campaigns.

LITERACY AS A SOCIAL PROCESS; LITERACY AS A SOCIAL INTERVENTION

H S Bhola

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Introduction

The argument of this paper can be stated as follows: Literacy is a social process. Each person constructs his or her own "literate identity" and each community constructs its own "literate culture". However, these constructions take place within a reality that is already half-constructed. The world is, of course, both "found" and "made".

There are several agents responsible for the pre-construction of reality, that is, responsible for the world already made. Policy makers and planners at the international, national and sub-regional levels are among such agents. As social interventionists, these policy makers and planners put templates on the flux called reality, seeking to promote particular patterns and modes of constructions by individuals and local communities as the latter engage in encounters with their world. Thus, the process of design of social intervention from the policy maker's perspective must, by necessity, involve clustering social entities, structuring social processes, abstracting from the concreteness of life, generalizing to arrive at typicalities, and standardizing inputs and strategies in achieving results. In so doing, the social interventionist loses on the side of the richness of "thick descriptions" of individual constructions but gains by finding "flat but fertile" descriptions of larger patterns of social reality.

At the implementation stage, the process of social intervention design is made to stand on its own head. The already half-constructed part of the reality is once again reconstructed by individuals in their encounters with the "induced" social intervention. National policy is then joined with individual praxis.

Literacy workers in local communities must avail of their share of the allocation of material and professional resources made available through national and subregional initiatives, reconciling national visions with local community needs. This should, of course, be done by supplementing and complementing nationally designed curricula and materials with locally designed curricula and materials. The challenge for literacy workers is to ensure that national or subregional intervention on behalf of literacy, which in and of itself is a social process, reflects the reality of literacy as a social process; and that, at the moment of joining policy with praxis, the individual learner is enabled to maximize his or her freedom of individual social construction of reality.

Some assumptions clarified

On the eve of the International Literacy Year, 1990, there is considerable literacy discussion and at least some literacy action on the ground. In the area of literacy discussion, both the "ideological" and the "technological" are being examined. The discussion of the technology of literacy covers questions of development and design of systems of literacy instruction at the local, regional and national levels. The discussion of the ideological, predictably, encompasses questions concerning the interface of systems of literacy instructions with the larger social systems and structures. Questions are being raised about the purposes of literacy initiatives, the social and economic uses of literacy, and its political and structural consequences. In the area of literacy actions, there are serious policy questions: At what levels and points in the social system should policy initiatives be generated? What should be the nature of relationships between the nation State and the local community, and between the governmental and non-governmental institutions? How could literacy as a social process be accelerated, if at all? Whose purposes do national campaigns, radical or otherwise, serve and could be made to serve?

Discussion of policy issues listed above is value-laden. A clarification of our value assumptions is, therefore, necessary:

> The nature and level of our knowledge about social systems is such that social interventions can, often if not always, be made within social systems for preferred social outcomes.

> That both our social philosophies and existential social conditions often compel that social interventions should be made within social systems for preferred social outcomes.

> That universal literacy is a preferred future for all humanity.

> That the universalization of literacy will affect all other social, economic and political systems and structures and thereby lead to a better world of peace and prosperity.

The assumptions stated above are not accepted by all. But that is only half the problem. The other half of the problem is that the technology of social interventions is not well understood either. That creates unnecessary conceptual confusion that spills over into literacy actions.

Literacy and Social Change

Change for change sake is not acceptable, of course. But social change, defined as "good" according to some normative criteria is often sought. Two normative criteria of good change are finding wide acceptance: that social change must include modernization and it is thus a material project; and that social change must include democratization and it is thus a moral project. This does not settle much in relation to the literacy and social change connection. The posited connection between the two remains problematic to say the least.

It is not universally assumed that literacy brings economic development and political development. The assignment of such a role to literacy is considered to be no more than pursuing a myth (Gradd, 1979). The assertion has indeed been made that development comes first and then, in turn, creates 'the need for literacy. People are then seen as responding to these new literacy requirements.

On the other hand, there have been some compelling claims on behalf of literacy. Jack Goody (1968) has proposed "the technology of intellect" hypothesis which states that literacy (particularly writing) changes the mentalities of new literates, thereby . changing their modes of perceiving, remembering, arguing, and communicating. Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong, Jerome Bruner and David Olsen have all talked of the effects of literacy on cognition (Kintgen, Kroll & Rose, 1988; Olson, 1985; Ong, 1977).

More recent work seems to put things in a perspective. At the level of cognition, Scribner and Cole (1981), have modified the Goody hypothesis to suggest that earlier claims about the effects of literacy may have been too general, but that more specific consequences do emerge within the particular context of the practice of literacy. Thus, while literacy may not install a brand new technology of intellect, there is no doubt that a brand new social identity is conferred.

At the societal level, the literacy and social change connection in our times is visible even to the naked eye. Literacy does not deterministically bring about development, but it is almost impossible to conceive of development without literacy. There clearly is a mutually beneficial dialectical relationship between literacy and social change. Literacy is not a panacea, but it certainly is "potential added" to individual capacities of new literates whereby they can make more effective translations with all aspects of their environments – economic, social, political, informational, educational and cultural.

Literacy as a Social Process

With the epistemic paradigm shifting from positivism to constructionism, long anticipated in Burger & Luckmann (1966), it is not surprising that literacy has come to be seen as a social process. There is a chorus of voices pointing to it (Heath 1982, 1984; Levine, 1986; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street 1984).

Scribner (1984) writes: "But the single most compelling fact about literacy is that it is a social achievement; individuals in societies without writing systems do not become literate. Literacy is an outcome of cultural transmission; the individual child or adult does not extract the meaning of written symbols through personal interaction with the physical objects that embody them. literacy abilities are acquired by individuals only in the course of participation in socially organized activities with written language...."

Shirley Brice Heath (1982) had brought out another aspect of literacy as a social process -- use of literacy as an occasion for social activities: "Women shopped

together, discussed local credit opportunities and products, and sales; men negotiated the meaning of tax forms, brochures on new cards, and political flyers. The evening newspaper was read on the front porch and talk about the news drifted from porch to port.... The only occasions for solitary reading by individuals were those in which elderly men and women read their Bible or Sunday School materials alone, or school-age children sat alone to read a library book or a school assignment."

The essential meaning of literacy as a social process is that the process of becoming literate is experienced by each individual in his or her own personal terms within the special context of their social reality and the practice of literacy is likewise actualized or constrained by the special context of its use. In other words, literacy is a social process in that it has social **antecedents**, social **correlates**, and social **consequences**. The social antecedents determine literacy's definition and people's **access** to literacy; social correlates of literacy determine the allocation of opportunities and roles and, consequently, the **uses and practices** of literacy; and social consequences determine **rewards** from the practice of literacy.

Social-historical antecedents of literacy are easily described. At the world system level, it has been said that there is underdevelopment, because there is overdevelopment. Without the history of colonization of the Third World by the West, it is conceivable that levels of illiteracy would not have been as high in the so-called Third World as they are today; and the levels of literacy would not have been a high in the developed world as they are today.

Without the process of industrialization in the world, literacy would not have been such a value. And it is because of the particular division of labour internationally that different countries have come to have different levels of functional literacy: the United States requires one level of functional literacy, Japan and Hong Kong about the same, but Botswana and Bolivia quite another level of functionality in their literacy. Within each country, the social stratification would determine how many literacies -- basic literacy, workplace literacy, cultural literacy and higher order literacy -- there would be and who would be provided and or denied what kind of literacy. Socio-cultural antecedents help us understand why there are such drastic differences in levels of literacy across genders, ethnic groups and castes in regard to the access for literacy.

The social correlates of literacy determine uses of literacy. The farmer will only be able to use literacy in reading agricultural leaflets and brochures. The already retired will be perhaps reading the Bible whereas the revolutionary will be reading materials from the underground. Finally, the consequences and, therefore, the rewards of literacy will also be socially determined. Social status will determine the social possibilities of using literacy.

What does all this mean? It does, of course, mean that literacy is not merely technical. However, it should be noted that it does not deny the fact that literacy is at the same time a technical skill.   It is clear that literacy is a process intermeshed with social processes and the social organization surrounding it.

However, it need not imply that the existing social realities are immutable and the social process of literacy itself is not amenable to the process of intervention. Social interventions can be made both in the processes of literacy acquisition and use, and in the social systems surrounding the practice of literacy, thereby, hoping to achieve preferred social outcomes and rewards. Literacy does not, of course, abolish hierarchy. The new literate on becoming literate would not instantly inherit the freedoms of the socially more privileged, but literacy will most likely provide the new literate with greater degrees of freedom relative to his or her earlier condition.

The Literacy Process is Symbiotic

As we have risen above the positivist categories of independent and controlled variables, causalities directly and solely attributable to invariant treatments; and as we have learned to look at literacy as a social process, we have also understood that literacy does not fight with orality, it joins it. A symbiosis developed between literacy and orality that is unique to the individual that becomes literate; and unique to the collectivities where some become literate and others do not. At the same time, the illiterate copes with the literate environment by developing a complex of interdependent relationships with literacy in the family and the community.

Literacy and Media Connections

Literacy as the medium of print has developed another symbiosis: with the folk media and the electronic media. In this symbiosis with media, literacy is becoming the backbone of the structures and strategies of communication. In the first flush of enthusiasm, it had been hoped that literacy will be rendered unnecessary with the arrival of the electronic media. This has not happened. There are pragmatic reasons. TV has not reached everywhere. Radio has not reached everywhere, either; and has developed more as a medium of news and entertainment rather than of development information. Also, and most importantly, educational radio seems to be using the "grammar of print" in its broadcasts, speaking out aloud written scripts that are better understood by the literate than by the illiterate.

Literacy as a Social Intervention

We started with the acceptance of the assumptions that universal literacy is a good value and that social intervention on behalf of literacy is an acceptable value. Social interventions should, of course, be developed and designed so that they are based on the real nature of literacy, that is on the understanding of literacy as a social process.

The problem, however, is that the proponents of literacy as a social process draw from their discussion implications that show a naivete about the process of social change through planned social intervention. To begin with, the one implication that is often drawn is that somehow people should take care of the people's literacy by themselves. Literacy initiatives from the outside are rejected out of

hand as instances of dominant literacy (Street, 1984).   This position, in overemphasising local initiatives and community control, loses sight of the reality of the nation State and ends up excluding the role of the national leadership.

The position is obviously extreme and unrealistic about the role of the State, and or other larger government entities. First, we know from historical experience that there is a limit to community initiatives and actions in the community's own behalf; and that most communities do need help to help themselves. Second, the concept of the locality in the old sense has disappeared. Third, the State is not, by definition, anti-people, and in many Third World countries, that State is the only important agent of transformation. Fourth, we have accepted the role of social interventions for most other sectors of social change. Why shouldn't there be a social intervention on behalf of literacy? Fifth, we too often seem to forget that national government initiatives also mean allocation of both material and professional resources. Why should communities forego their share of material resources and refuse help on such things as teacher training, and production of instructional materials? Finally, and most importantly, what are literacy-as-a-social-process people worried about anyway? Since literacy is a social construction, literacy learners will engage in their own unique constructions of their own literacy experiences whatever the State-delivered literacy may seek to purvey and produce through its particular calculus of means and ends.

The Dilemma of Social Intervention

That brings us to the dilemma of reconciling "literacy as a social process" and "literacy as a social intervention". The dilemma is that a social interventionist in developing and planning a social intervention for a whole nation or a region cannot think in terms of assisting each individual separately in the development of a new script unique to each individual construction. Nor can the social interventionist write separate scenarios for all the communities in which the people of a whole nation may be living.

The grammar of social intervention does indeed include three general steps (Bhola, 1989);

1.   ordering and relating;
2.   typifying and hypothesizing; and
3.   experiencing and correcting

In ordering and relating, the social interventionist must in the very process cluster social entities in terms of "least common multiples" and 'highest common factors", structure processes, and abstract from the concreteness of life. In the next step of the grammar, he or she must generalize to arrive at typicalities, and standardize inputs and strategies. In the very process, thick descriptions must become typical descriptions, details must be missed, individuals must become somewhat impersonalized and communities must become locations on the map. Hypotheses must be built in regard to reality now fitted into taxonomies.

The two processes described above could indeed be called "counter-social". In trying to accelerate the social process at the general level, they seem to violate the social character of the process at the individual and local levels. Fortunately, there are possibilities of amelioration at the third stage of the grammar of social intervention, that of, experiencing and correcting. This is where the impersonal part of the process of social intervention must turn around and, again become a social process rich in personal and human values. There is a possibility at this stage, through experiencing reality and through correcting misconceptions to re-invent national visions in local settings. It is possible, at this moment, to give the people blueprints that they could construct into living systems in which they themselves are the actors, speaking in their own voices, engaged in their own dialogue, actualizing their own praxis (Freire, 1970).

GO's and NGO'S; Campaigns, Programs and Projects

Typically, the literacy-as-a-social-process people are against large-scale literacy programs by the State, which they call dominant literacy. We have suggested that policy interventions have to be molar rather than molecular in their scope of coverage and somewhat standardized in objectives and strategies. However, the State need not always be considered anti-people, nor insensitive to the real concerns of its citizens. Indeed, as we have pointed out before, in many Third World countries, the State is the only agent of significant change and the only agent of transfer through budgetary allocations for development and education. We must, therefore, think not about bypassing State institutions but about creating enabling State institutions that allow "the re-invention of national initiatives in local community settings". Some diversification of initiatives can be assured through NGO's who, given good leadership, can play an important role.

The campaign approach to literacy often associated with governmental initiatives need not be rejected out of hand either. Local communities should learn to make transactions with central policy initiatives whereby they can use the national resources to fulfil their own communal interests and accelerate the social processes on the ground. After all, literacy is a social construction. What may be offered as part of the so-called hegemonic and improper literacy will again be "reconstructed". Progressive reconstructions of oppressive structures of literacy have often occurred in history and are occurring today. It happened in 18th century England: "Suddenly the rudimentary literacy skills transmitted by established purveyors of working-class education acquired highly subversive potential -- regardless of the ideological setting in which those were originally organized (Lankshear, 1987, p89-90). Thus, the oppressed were able to develop a counter hegemony. In Iran in the 1960s and the 1980s, under the Shah's rule, the process occurred again as the "Maktab literacy" became "commercial literacy" (Street, 1984). The "autonomous" and the "ideological" models of literacy got mutually reconstructed.

Two related problems: Literacy Content and Literacy Assessment

There are two further related themes that should be commented upon briefly: (1) the social content of literacy; and (2) the social assessment of literacy.

We do not simply read, we always read something. The social content of literacy, therefore, must be given due consideration. There seems to exist today a great divide between those who want to teach functional literacy for the professionalization of labour and those who want to teach literacy for liberation. In the real world, people do not make dichotomous choices between freedom and bread. They want both, in good measure, sacrificing one for the other depending upon what is possible and what price they want to pay for one or the other at a particular historical time. Literacy workers need to avoid thinking in the either/or mode and must develop a generalized concept of functionality and political awareness, all at the same time.

Another important question relates to the social assessment of literacy effects. There are several problems here. Too often the assessment processes are bureaucratic rather than social. The participation of those whose lives are being examined has no part to play. Again, the "subject" of the evaluation study is seen as an economic one. The individual as a social and cultural product is not kept in view. Within the narrow confines of economic evaluating itself, only formal economic structures are examined. The informal sector of the economy, an important socio-cultural reality, is forgotten.

These problems need redress.

Conclusion

We must understand that while literacy is an individual construction, we arrive in a world already half constructed. Individuals and communities cannot engage in social construction in a vacuum but within the context of larger social systems that have historic memory and collective meaning. Our constructions are then a dialectic between the world as we find it and the world as we make it.

In this paper, we have shown the relationship between literacy as a social process and policy intervention as a social process, both at the theoretical and the pragmatic levels. We have not rejected the government role in literacy promotion simply because it is the government that is in that role. Nor have we rejected the mass campaign and the large-scale national program as strategies for the implementation of literacy policies. This is not to say that we believe that everything is right with the world; that governments around the world today are being run by philosopher-kings who can do not harm; that we should only conduct mass literacy campaigns and national programs and never small programs in communities; or that literacy workers should stop their struggle of organizing people on their own behalf, working for critical consciousness among small learning groups, constructing their own literacies, and inventing their own worlds. On the contrary, we believe with Street (1984; 227-28) that there need to be changes in the ideology of literacy workers and institutions of literacy and there have to be meaningful changes in social, political and economic structures. All we are suggesting is that literacy workers do not get carried away with their localism and communitarianism and reject the role of the State and leadership from outside

the community. Nor should they forget the necessity of outside resources, both material and professional.

To put a sting in the tail, let us also state that while literacy is a social process, literacy does not cease to be a technology of codification and decodification of symbol systems; and, therefore, it might be much more appropriate to characterize **literacy as a socio-technical process**, rather than merely a social process.

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│      LITERACY FOR DEVELOPMENT CAN SOCIOLOGY AND            │
│       ANTHROPOLOGY HELP ADULT EDUCATION?                   │
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Heribert Hinzen

Dr Heribert Hinzen is a member of the International Department of the German Adult Education Association. He has had two periods of duty in which he has been the liaison person between ASPBAE and DVV and in between he spent 3 years in Sierra Leone as DVV representative. The following is an extract of a speech he gave at the Sierra Leone Anthropology and Sociological Association on Literacy and Development. Small sections have already appeared in Courier No.33 but are reproduced again for those who have joined since them.

I had to think twice when SLASA invited me to be the guest speaker, I am still relatively new in the country, so I wondered whether I had as yet enough to say. But they argued: "We want your experiences from other part of the world, we shall contribute our Sierra Leonean lessons!" This transformed the invitation into a challenge, for you and for me. We decided to have a debate on the topic: "Literacy for Development. Can sociology and anthropology help adult education?" When we talk of having a debate, we should prepare for it . The introduction mentioned "participation". I shall begin with a puzzle. I shall lay down the first pieces later. Then I shall join again as we progress.

My first piece for the puzzle is a proverb from Tanzania:

> *"If you come to a village for the first time, you open your eyes. open
> your ears, open your heart, but shut your mouth!"*

I usually adhere to this, therefore I shall not say much about Sierra Leone directly. There is a second reason for mentioning this proverb here. For me it is a methodological challenge for all engaged in developmental work including the sociologists and anthropologists. How much do we listen, how much do we try to understand - before we offer our rural people our dishes which taste of modernisation, superficial technology and cultural disintegration? And maybe, because we did not use to listen to them, the people no longer listen or come to us. This is something which we cover up with theories of 'motivation' or 'static societies'.

I am not going to use my time giving or discussing definitions of literacy, development, sociology, anthropology, or adult education. However, the next few words will facilitate understanding and serve as a second piece for the puzzle: Literacy means the ability to read and write and calculate in any of the languages of a given society; the word 'for' in the title stresses the relevance and functionality in the process of participatory development, development of the

community and the individual. Adult Education covers all organised and informal learning for people who are grown-ups.

The third piece for the puzzle carries some of the major concepts in literacy and development and their possible relationships from a more general level:

> Literacy is good and an end in itself, it has **nothing to do** with development. It is a skill which is present and necessary in certain contexts, in others it is not. Development is a continuous process. Our world has been in existence for millions of years. Literacy is a fairly new invention.

> Literacy has to precede development, without literacy development is not possible. In fact, many countries in Africa or Asia claim that their high illiteracy rate is responsible for their underdevelopment. Let's make people literate, development follows automatically.

> Literacy follows development. Sometimes Europe is taken as an example. Around 1850, when the major developments in agriculture, handicraft and industry took place, the majority of the farmers and workers who carried the development load were non-literate. Literacy for the majority came later and became a pre-condition for certain technological changes.

> Literacy has to go alongside with development efforts. Whenever anything is done in the areas of literacy and development, one has to think about the possible interactions so as to reinforce the potential strengths and struggle with the weaknesses.

Most probably we shall have supporters for each of these four concepts amongst the anthropologists and sociologists. Perhaps you will raise additional ones later.

The fourth piece for the puzzle are some quotations from pupils' and students' essays which the Sierra Leone Adult Education Association received as contributions to a competition organised for the celebration of this year's World Literacy Day. They were invited to write on "Why is it valuable to be literate?"(1). Let me quote a few passages from some of the essays - and add some questions:

> "Illiteracy is a social evil - a disease. When a man can read what he writes and also what is written, and understands what is said, he has won a war with ignorance, poverty and disease."

Now, looking at the poverty aspect: are there really no poor literates in the world?

(Illiterates)

> "will never be able to fit into our society let alone make meaningful contributions to it."

My question: Are not the producers of most of the food in this country illiterate?

(Literacy)

> *"makes man to have wisdom, knowledge and understanding..."*

Does this suggest that there was no wisdom in the oral cultures of our traditional societies?

> *"The decrease in tension between many different countries has also contributed to the literacy of their countries."*

If we look at the map of wars all over the world during the past 100 years, in which literacy has spread more widely than ever before, could we really say we have a more peaceful world than before?

> *"Literacy also provides employment in countries where working in offices is the only means of earning a living."*

My question: Is literacy alone really providing employment, are all literates employed, and is the 'White collar' society a meaningful dream?

(Once literate)

> *"farmers then can discuss and understand the information on new technologies given to them by the extension workers."*

So illiterate farmers first have to be shaped to meet the extension workers needs, instead of the latter adapting to local conditions?

Well, the pupils and students of today, were not born with these ideas. They are our offshoots. They live in our families, they are taught by us, they are part and parcel of our society. Are they then merely an echo of our own attitudes?

> What are sociology and anthropology doing to change these attitudes?

> Do they assist by clarifying through their research?

> Do they engage in critical discussion of these issues in society?

I should like to add one striking statement from one of the essays:

> *"Even though literacy has numerous benefits, yet, from the African point of view, there is a possibility for the educated African to abuse his traditions and customs with the aim of assimilating the European culture which comes along with literacy. As a result, the educated African easily becomes a victim of the epidemic disease of literacy. He becomes*

exposed to the world of dilemma wherein he is half African and half European. He is therefore completely lost."(2)

In my editorial work for the journal Adult Education and Development, I once used a manuscript from a Namibian colleague, Zacheus Kazapua, titled 'All cultures are different and unique'. As the fifth piece for the puzzle, I quote the following lines:(3)

It is naive to think that Western culture is the only culture with a monopoly of knowledge, and that other cultures have to be judged according to Western standards. It is also wrong to assume that the traditional societies static, because if culture means a continuous, unbroken chain of social, economical, political, religious and philosophical development, then the traditional societies were and are developing culturally. It all depends on who is looking at the specific culture and from which background. However, we must admit that all cultures are different and unique.

Just imagine a situation in which a European or even an urbanised African got lost in the bush. They would not survive very long in the bush without the traditional knowledge of how to get food or even water from wild fruits.

It is rather surprising, that a man with all the knowledge of modern technology cannot survive where a Masai or any nomadic tribesman can survive easily. The answer is not hard to find, the Masai has had many interactions with this kind of environment, while the urban dweller interacted with the environment only through books.

This is a clear indication that a traditional culture is carefully balanced between man and his environment. The example illustrates this clearly and we should never judge other cultures according to European standards because all cultures are not only different, but unique in relation to the challenge posed by the environment.

There is no harm in appreciating and admiring the cultures and civilisation of others, as long as you appreciate and value your own culture as well.

A variety of traditional tribal cultures in Africa have lots of similarities and I am convinced that at the same time each of them is different and unique in a particular way. That is why we cannot talk about African culture, but there is room to combine the different cultures. Unfortunately we as Africans seem to have accepted the European culture as the gospel truth, so we do not worry about our own culture.

Here are some more questions for our colleagues in sociology and anthropology:

> What are you doing to defend the different cultures of the peoples of Sierra Leone as unique and rich heritages - especially when processes of modernisation are employing a "caterpillar approach?"

> How much do you try to guide adult educators when interactions between the "developers" and the villagers demonstrate that these developers have no understanding of the actual conditions in which the villagers are living?

> How much are you trying to strengthen current adult education through research into traditional, indigenous-education covering the life span from childhood to adulthood?

Let me continue with the sixth piece of the puzzle. Years back I received a poem, written by a sensitive Indian colleague, Satyen Moitra, putting ideas together which he had gathered while working with illiterates in his area. The title is 'Why should we become literate?', a question asked by Indian illiterates(4). I shall read part of it:

> What kind of people are we?
> we are poor, very poor -
> but we are not stupid.
> That is why, despite our illiteracy,
> we still exist.
> But we have to know
> why we should become literate.

> To sign one's name means nothing,
> or to read a few words means nothing.

> We agree to join the classes
> if you teach us how not to depend
> on other 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.
> Please do understand that
> the teacher may know things which we don't.
> But we know a lot of things which are beyond him.

> We are not empty pitchers.