Resources File

The readings for this handbook appear in the following order below:

1 Molteno, M. 1988 'Education at the margins'. Keynote paper presented to the International Extension College conference *Education at the Margins*, Cambridge, 15-16 June 1998 (extract: II Marginalisation and poverty, pp 2-5)

2 Molteno, M. 1988 'Education at the margins'. Keynote paper presented to the International Extension College conference *Education at the Margins*, Cambridge, 15-16 June 1998 (extract: IV Research – who? and how? pp 9-18)

3 Warr, D. 1992 *Distance teaching in the village*, Cambridge: International Extension College (extract: Prologue pp viii-xii)

4 Warr, D. 1992 *Distance teaching in the village*, Cambridge: International Extension College (extract: Course research, pp 11-19)

5 Denscombe, M. 1998 *The good research guide*, Buckingham: Open University (extract: Issues concerned with the use of action research)

6 British Council. 2002 *Nigeria Community Education Programme*, London: British Council (extract: Success in adult education, pp 9-13)

7 Voyageur, C. 2001 'Reading, willing and able: prospects for distance learning in Canada's First Nations Community, *Canadian Journal of Distance Education* 16, 1: 102-112

8 Mathie, A. and Dighe, A. 2001 'Participatory project planning (SAVINI): experience and lessons', *Indian Journal of Open Learning* 10, 2: 175-192

Note on copyright

Individuals may reproduce these copyright materials for their own personal educational use only. Reproduction for other purposes or transmission of any such content is *strictly* prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of individual materials.

Note on quality of reproduction

Readers may find the reproduction quality of these readings varies. This is dependent on the quality and format of the original copies. In some cases, alternative web links have been provided.

II. MARGINALISATION, EDUCATION AND POVERTY

What does it mean to be 'marginal'?

Philosophically or culturally it can have no real meaning. We are each the person who experiences – someone can only be 'marginal' in someone else's perspective. A child growing up in Timbuktu is at the *centre* of the known world – known to her or him – not its edge. And when the intrepid westerners arrive – by plane these days rather than by camel, consultants to the government of Mali, come to consider an education reform package in an area where less than 10% of children are in school – they will land in a medieval town on the edge of the Sahara, with mud buildings that have been actively preserved over hundreds of years, including an awe-inspiring mosque that in the 16th century was a university with 25,000 students. The children run about the sandy lanes and get on with life, ignoring the outsiders – who perhaps momentarily experience an uncomfortable sense that in this place it is *they* who are marginal. But they will leave quickly, and go back to write the report in Washington, where the electricity works and they can get access to the statistics they need; so the feeling doesn't last long.

The term 'marginal' necessarily reflects the point of view of those who are dominant, economically or politically. And the concept has come into use to describe a reality of increasingly polarised life chances. The 'marginalised' are the poor and powerless, too busy with life at the edges of survival to be able to acquire the skills or material supports that would let them get out of the trap they were born into, or have been pushed into. They are unable to scramble on board as the engine of change hurtles the rest of us onward – where, we can't quite tell, but we're holding on because the alternative is too scary. The marginalised remind us of that.

Education as a way out?

People who are uncomfortable about these extreme inequalities often look to education as a way out. There is a vivid example in a recent issue of the *New Internationalist* on child labour. The lead article distinguishes two kinds of children's work; the first – common in all poor communities – is work that contributes to family income, and also gives them responsible roles at an early age – either unpaid (herding animals, caring for younger children) or paid (e.g. part time piece work.) At the other extreme are really damaging, exploitative types of work which in many cases condemn children to a near-slave existence – 14 hours a day in a carpet factory; bonded labour in exchange for parents' debts; child prostitution, etc. The article then moves on to considering what can be done – and the word 'education' suddenly appears. The leap of logic is astonishing. No explanation is given of how an improvement in education provision is going to magic away the many intransigent factors which the article itself has analysed as trapping millions of children in poverty, and therefore in the worst kinds of labour.

So here is the challenge. People turn to us, saying, 'Education is the answer, do something.' Our first response may be to feel as a rainmaker must when the droughts get worse each year… Why look at *me*? We all know things are bad, and none of us can work out why or how to stop them… What *can* we as educationalists say? We talk about education having a 'transformational' power, but can it transform situations as damaging as this? Can we even talk honestly about extending educational opportunities to children so trapped? Do we know how to do it? Have we examples of where it has been done?

What do we understand about educational marginalisation?

Over the past year a group of Save the Children staff across seven regions has been involved in analysing what we can learn from the organisation's experience about the link between education and marginalisation. I want to describe some of the issues that arose in this exercise, which I think are relevant for what we are all trying to think about today.

Early on in the process I began to realise that we kept getting trapped by the vocabulary we were using without questioning sufficiently whether it was conceptually useful. This is the familiar language of the international development community, in which the spokespeople are often UN agencies. The words are picked up at international conferences and move around the world at extraordinary speed, and they

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

substitute for analytical thought. There has for many years been a human geography of marginalisation: we know who the marginalised children are, where to find them. They are girl children, in places where adults see no point in educating girls; children with disabilities, in societies where such children are not considered capable of learning; street children, working children, children in ethnic minorities, children of pastoralists; those who have survived droughts, but only just; those who have had to run from wars, or been born in refugee camps and are unlikely ever to get beyond them …

But these categories which we are all so familiar with merely constitute a *list* of all the many different types of disadvantage – and in focusing on their distinctness, it is easy to forget that we have not got any further in analysing the underlying *causes*. When we try to do so, it becomes evident that all these special categories have a *social* definition, not an individual one. That is, it is the nature of the society in which the child exists which defines who will have educational chances. It is the attitudes of adults which exclude girls and children with disabilities, and political and social tensions which disadvantage those in ethnic minorities or cause civil war.

Secondly, the more we try to unravel how one might go about tackling any of these social and political states of disadvantage, the more we come up against one factor which seems to be intertwined with all the others, and which we begin to suspect is structurally linked – and that is poverty. Child labour – clearly, the children who are trapped by exploitative work are there because of economic pressures on their families. Girls – even in the countries with the lowest rates of school attendance for girls, a larger proportion in middle and high income families go to school, go on to university, and despite the pressures of the society around them become lawyers and doctors. Wars, natural disasters – these affect all classes, but even here those who are better off may have more resources for coping with the consequences. And poverty accounts for that large amorphous group of children who belong to no UN-defined category but who miss out on a chance of school – the rural poor, the urban slum dwellers.

Poverty itself is the greatest excluder. And what have educationalists to say about how to reduce poverty?

How do poverty and education interact?

The truth is that while of course we wish we could do something about underlying causes, what our professional expertise equips us to do is to work *within* given social and political contexts. We know very little about how to change them.

In our Save the Children study we realised that we would not get anywhere in working out what kind of external supports to education might diminish marginalisation until we had clarified more precisely *how* poverty limits children's educational chances. And when we began to do that – first in relation to each distinct social/political context, and then overall – we found that our programmes were trying to react to at least three distinct levels of the poverty-education link – simultaneously in most cases, but often without distinguishing them. One is *household poverty* – which prevents particular children from going to school because their parents can't pay the fees. Another is what one might call *'communal' poverty* – the fact that some communities/regions are much poorer than others, and are relatively neglected compared to others in terms of state provision; so children in these areas have much less chance of a usable education than in other areas of the same country. And then, *state poverty* – which defines the overall available level of education resourcing, and results, for instance, in children in Britain having a much better educational chance than children in Mozambique.

The distinctions are important because there may be ways of re-organising education provision to overcome the barriers at one level, but not at others. But more fundamentally, when we begin to break down the problems in this way, we realise that it is more illuminating to talk about *inequality* rather than 'poverty' – inequalities between countries, communities, or households. Being poor is not a state that exists in isolation, but the down-side of a relationship in which others thrive. The idea that we can extend a really usable education to the poor, and hope that this will in turn be a means of reducing their poverty, is naive unless we are willing to confront the fact that the issue is one of grossly unequal distribution – of resources, and of the power to control and allocate them. Only by challenging these inequalities – between and within nations – can we expect a transformational effect.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Molteno, M. 1998. 'Education at the Margins'. Keynote address delivered at the IEC conference *Education at the Margins*, held in Cambridge, 15-16 June 1998. pp 2-5.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

IV. RESEARCH- WHO? AND HOW?

What should aid to education be spent on?

Let us imagine for a moment that donors were providing vastly increased sums in aid to education, and that we were in positions to decide how those sums should be used. What would we spend it on? I have a picture of refurbished buildings, and new ones being built for all the children who are currently too far from a school. Then of equipping of those schools – sensibly, of course, with local materials that help regenerate local economies, and that are relevant to the life challenges of the children, now and later. And of teachers drawn from local communities (and who turn up to school each day) getting training that relates to the real task they face, rather than being excluded from training because they are not qualified. But all this of course presupposes another great leap of the imagination – Ministries of Education round the world spending these new resources sensibly, and children in remote villages and in urban slums sitting on benches with the new books in front of them, despite the fact that their parents haven't the money to pay school fees, or have died of AIDS so the children have to be out trying to support younger siblings .... And before we really get into it, the picture begins to get fuzzy and then collapse. Clearly there's not much point even imagining these things without considering the whole condition of the children's lives.

And that we are poorly placed to do. We are specialists – in how to deliver education, how to evaluate it. Give us a classroom, and we can think of lots of important things to ask about what's going on in it. But we are no more specialist than anyone else in all the other things that may be going on in children's lives outside the classroom; and when faced with children whose life conditions are so entirely different from any we have personally had to endure, we are humblingly ignorant.

WHO?

Before we can say anything useful about the changes that would be needed to produce an education system that would be genuinely useful to these children, we have to start by facing our lack of relevant understanding, and look to see from whom we can go about learning what we need to know.

Who understands life on the margins?

The obvious answer is, the people who live it. But they can't write about it; and the people who do write about them usually do so from such a distance that what they write may be worse than nothing – worse, because however sceptical we may think ourselves, once something is written down we regard it as a source of information, even if a flawed one, and we will use it rather than maintain that we cannot know.

How can we get closer to what the marginalised themselves experience? At a meeting like this, for instance? Of course it is important to make a determined effort to get participants representing 'the south', and but that is only scratching at the itch. We know, but do not often enough publicly recognise, that the distinction is one of class as much as geography. Almost all of us here – academics, development workers, consultants, planners – are part of a global class of development specialists who share a language and a way of thinking that cuts us off from other people's reality. The most valuable interpreters are those rare individuals who in their own life experience have been marked by the problems we are trying to understand, but who have managed to escape them sufficiently to get enough school education to be able to speak something of *our* language too – and I mean language of concepts and intentions. They have become perceptually as well as literally bi-lingual, able to see the issues both as they are experienced by people who have not escaped, and as we are trying to see them, from the outside looking in. Local level project staff in NGOs are often of this kind – and a very under-utilised resource, for they have usually not had the kind of analytical education that makes it possible for them to hold their own in meetings where jargon and acronyms fly, or express their understandings in forms that translate easily into the headings the organisation requires, let alone write papers that will be considered appropriate for distribution, even internally. So their perceptions are simply not heard beyond their

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

immediate locality. And yet most of these people come from oral cultures in which being articulate is second nature, a skill far more widely practised than in our own.

It is a terrible irony of the way our society constructs knowledge that we cut ourselves off by our too narrow concept of form from being able to listen to people who could so greatly expand our understanding.

What children experience

Taking the logic one step further – if we accept that we will learn most by trying to understand how life is seen by those living it, rather than taking as given the perspective of those who administer the systems, we will not understand how to improve schools unless we start listening much more systematically to children. It's extraordinary that this should need saying – particularly extraordinary given currently fashionable notions of participation. And simply because that word is so widely used, yet so little practised by those who make the decisions, it is difficult even to get it discussed realistically. Almost no one will openly say that they don't believe in asking questions of powerless people, but the attitude is there, implicit, in the fact that they don't do it, or do it only in the most tokenist way. People who regard themselves as serious researchers see it as going around chatting to children – something that at best might give a lead to what questions we need to ask, but not in itself rigorous enough to rely on. In fact, of course, trying to learn from those who live it is a *surer* way of getting to what is really happening than the supposedly rigorous research methods, which rely on statistics everyone admits to be unreliable, asking questions framed outside the context (which may therefore not be the relevant ones) and using a logic of assembling data to reach conclusions which often bears no relationship to how the issues are understood locally.[5] All of us as children could have told our teachers and education departments a lot about what was wrong with the system they landed on us, and just how relevant or irrelevant it was to the things that really concerned us; and they would not have had to use statistically significant sample questionnaires to find that out. But no one asked, as we in our turn hardly ask today's children.

The other misconception about trying to learn from children is that it is a 'soft' kind of activity – easy to do a bit of, takes a trick or two ... Again, nothing could be further from the truth. There were reasons no one asked us when we were children, and the same reasons still apply – it is seen by adults as a subversive activity. Subversive of discipline, of adult authority. Where the researcher is an outsider to the culture, this is an even more serious issue, and it is a real challenge to explore ways of doing it that find a balance between sensitivity to local (adult) perceptions, and not simply going along with local (dominant) structures. Again, this is no new dilemma; it has been faced with the related issue of including women among those we listen to in societies where women are not thought to be appropriate people to consult. In most societies adult perceptions are that children are not mature enough to understand, they cannot have the whole picture. True, but who has the whole picture? Certainly not us, and we equally certainly won't get nearer it without finding out how children perceive the experience of school that adults design for them and then compel them to go through.

There is no easy way to learn from children when this always has to be mediated through adults – parents, teachers, the people doing the listening who will write up what they learnt. When we are considering children who are particularly ignored, neglected, or oppressed by the (adult) systems that structure their lives, the difficulties may be correspondingly greater. But it should also be particularly obvious that we won't get very far in understanding the mismatch between their lives and the system unless we have some understanding of both.

What about international expertise?

How, then, do we value our own kind of experience? In the kinds of work most of us here are involved with, it is generally assumed that someone who has worked on a problem in several countries will by that fact have a better understanding of it. That's how CVs work, that's how consultants are chosen, that's what international NGOs like to think that they bring to the problems in each place they work. The question is relevant here because the idea of international experience being all-important appears to be in conflict with the idea that the people who know best are those in the situation itself.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

'Knowledge' and 'wisdom'

It may help to draw a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. At a simplistic level, one can say that knowledge is constructed, by a complex process of gathering information, deducing and generalising from it, and wisdom is acquired, by processes much less clearly understood, and more to do with perception, personal interaction, innate qualities of person. And again being over-simple, what our kind of educational background and work experience prioritises is knowledge; what we primarily need when faced with very serious problems we do not know how to solve is wisdom. Wisdom may be acquired by travelling the world and experiencing a range of human situations; but the wisest person may also be one who has spent a lifetime in one remote district, working with the same people on the same issues.

And as for knowledge: anyone who has worked in a range of contexts among people who are seriously disadvantaged will know that there is a complex relationship between particular and general kinds of knowledge. I am an outsider to almost all the situations I have worked in, but I nevertheless feel I have a reasonable awareness of the problems experienced and a repertoire of ideas on ways of tackling them. From all those different experiences I have generalised (as one must, to construct knowledge.) But each time I arrive in a new place – not just a new country, but a new locality, a new group of people – I am useless until I have listened long enough to understand the *particularity* of the situation. Only then will my experience of other contexts come into play. Even then, it is tempting to latch onto similarities of problems and assume that therefore there may be similarities in appropriate strategies. We say, 'In Brazil they did this,' forgetting for the moment what worlds of experience separate children in Brazil from those in the Philippines, and what different structural possibilities there are for adults to manoeuvre in trying to achieve change. Behind this too-quick generalisation lies the discomfort of feeling incompetent. Perhaps this is a psychological need of professionals, the need to know, to have a solution; but it is dangerously exacerbated by current political forces, which put those of us with western professional expertise in a position to pronounce in contexts about which we are essentially ignorant. We did not create our inappropriately powerful position, but to maintain any integrity while working within it, we need to resist the pressure to jump in with pre-packaged solutions.

HOW?

Learning from those who know is not simply a question of drawing information from local people (adult or children) and slotting that into existing mental categories – and out will come the analysis, and from the analysis, a model for action. It is our categories and models as much as anything which distort.

Global models, local perceptions

To get anywhere meaningful we are almost certainly going to need a new way of conceptualising what education might mean for children in these contexts – yet we operate in an environment more dominated by one kind of discourse than in any previous time this century. Everywhere we are pushed to think in global terms, to use global models which can be dumped on people in any country. Training packs are produced which can be used anywhere. The pressure is always to replicate, to scale up. Drop out of the sky in any major city in the world, and you can find local NGO staff going through 'capacity building' exercises where they learn to use logframes, and look for verifiable indicators that are the same as the verifiable indicators someone else is being trained to use half way round the world, in a totally different context. One international NGO openly describes its early childhood provision in conflict situations as based on the MacDonald's model – one recipe for all, rapid turnover, lowest possible cost. It works for the donors – maximum cost effectiveness; without the donors it couldn't happen, so it works for the people who get their MacNurseries.

The MacNurseries are only an extreme example of a pressure we are all under. All externally funded work has become necessarily more logically defined and predetermined, and the culture this engenders spreads even to types of work where that pressure of funding does not operate. There are positive aspects to this, but there are also dangerous ones. We forget that it is a specific style of thought, that in other times and other places people use quite other ways of getting things effectively done. I encountered an interesting example the other day, not in this case in education, but in an evaluation of a credit programme in a food-scarce district in the Sahel. Seen from the point of view of local people, the programme could hardly have been more effective. In almost all cases individuals were able to use loans

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

to make significant extra household income, and most of that was used in making the family more food-secure. There was over 90% loan repayment. But seen from the point of view of project management, the evaluation had criticisms – and almost all on questions of organisational culture. The project had been devised with the help of an expatriate consultant, but managed entirely by local staff, who managed it in the way that came naturally to them. Possibly, in African style, they were vague when it came to time, weak on record keeping. They did not work out beforehand which things might be evaluated and set up systems to regularly collect information that would enable them to be monitored. But they got the results – and that is almost certainly because what they were strong on was people-to-people work, and in responding as things came up. They had taken the underlying *intention* of the project, and made it happen.

In this case the people who took part in the credit programme were lucky. If the local staff had been less confident in doing things their way, the people might have got less out of it. Setting overprecise objectives can preclude us from responding sufficiently to things that had no place in our original formulation. If we are too focused on trying to achieve what we said we would – and therefore what the evaluation will look for – it is likely to distort what should be an organic process, constantly adaptive to new developments or new understandings. These are pressures at the practitioner end of the spectrum, but there are equivalent implications at the research or advocacy end. To allow local perceptions to have a *formative* influence on our approaches to education issues, we will have to experiment with ways of undertaking research very different from those which currently dominate the field.

A working approach that builds on complementary strengths

Essentially, the task of relating international experience with local is to be clear about what each can more appropriately contribute. We need to recognise that while those of us who are researchers from western universities or senior staff in western based INGOs may have relevant skills, and certainly have better access to generalised types of information, we have very limited understanding of the experience of life in any particular context. On the other hand we have been exposed to a range of stimuli and contexts, and have easy access to sources of information, are in a better position to be able to analyse and understand them than people in one of the under-resourced and therefore intellectually isolated places where the marginalised are trapped. This gives us personal opportunities – to do the kind of work we do, from which we continue to learn. But it should carry also a responsibility, to find appropriate ways of sharing that. Not to hand it over as if it were a language, a body of knowledge to be learnt before one can be accepted as a full participant in the debate; but to stimulate people themselves to ask relevant questions about a context they know intimately, but who may not have seen how it connects with remoter forces.

The appropriate way to handle the collaboration is therefore as a mutual educational process, a dialogue in which we as the international-experience-bearers are genuinely open to having our perceptions challenged and our understanding enlarged, and in which we find ways of lifting the understanding of local people beyond their immediate situation, so that it can become part of a wider knowledge base that can be shared and debated – but *without losing its particularity.*

Documenting local experience

In the Save the Children research project – supported by DFID funding – we are attempting to work on these principles, that is, to learn systematically from the *existing* understandings of local workers, combined with perspectives or presentation skills contributed by their more western-educated colleagues, and to document this in a form that can reach beyond their bit of the margins.

The first stage was to invite all staff with experience of education programmes, at whatever level, to contribute their understanding of the education issues facing children in their area. At this stage we kept the question as broad as possible, so that the detailed formulation would arise out of their perceptions.

Several mechanisms were used to try to side-step the usual barriers that might prevent national staff from contributing. Most of them are more articulate orally than in writing, but to enable their experiences to be shared beyond each country they need to be written. So we suggested that while one or two people might do the actual drafting, a larger group could discuss what to include, and discussions be held in whichever

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

language would allow for wide input. It was made clear that the format / language / level of presentation of the 'theme paper' each group would produce were not important issues, but drawing on a depth of experience was. The process was supported by a research co-ordinator who gave editing help where needed.

Over 40 initial papers were produced, with several hundred people being involved in group processes to identify issues, suggest points to prioritise, and comment on drafts. Some are analytical overviews based on a range of experience on one issue; a larger number are case studies that use the experience of one education programme in a particular cultural/political context to analyse an issue which is likely to have relevance in other country/culture contexts. Almost all the papers include results of recent research which has been conducted by local staff – some are based on participatory exercises undertaken for programme design or evaluation purposes which had produced findings that have a wider significance but for which there had been no other obvious outlet beyond local programme participants.

Analysing, and using the results

A working group then spent two weeks together analysing this body of material and drawing together some preliminary conclusions. The group included two people from each of seven regions, of whom one was a national staff member and the other someone with experience of work on education issues in more than one region. Two of the group then took these conclusions and wrote them up into a handbook for practitioners, something which would summarise what could be learnt from all this experience for people working in each of the countries, so that what they were trying to do to improve children's educational chances could benefit from the wider experience. This booklet, *A Chance in Life,* has just been published.

The next stage was to revisit a select group of cases that seemed to have the most to teach us about how to improve educational chances for marginalised children. Staff in these countries have been invited to work on a more detailed case study, with the participation of a research officer who helps frame the questions, develop the methodology, and give editing support. About ten such case studies are currently being undertaken, from which we expect to publish findings early in 1999.

The questions, and what we hope to learn

One of the central things to note about the questions we are asking is that we started at the opposite end of a problem from that of most funded, published education research – not from an analysis of education systems, but by trying to understand the life conditions of the children those systems are supposedly intended to serve. In doing this we have drawn on a broad base of development work on issues of food security, social policy, the effects of HIV/Aids, health, disability, and a range of emergency contexts.

It may be helpful to spell out what this approach illuminates, and what it does not:

?? Because we start from people, not the system, we do not expect to provide solutions to the traditional service-delivery dilemmas. But it is already providing insights into how they miss the point, and we might be able to use this to say to service deliverers, 'You're tackling the problem from the wrong end.'

?? The collected body of material includes a fund of imaginative ideas, developed independently in many remote parts of the world. While few of them will seem new to professional educationalists, what is significant is that they which suggest how even *with very limited resources* it is possible to come nearer to providing an educational experience that is relevant and developmental for children in really disadvantaged situations.

?? The subject of study is education in the rather narrow sense – whether children get into school and what if anything they get out of it. But because it starts with questions not about school but about children's lives, it provides practical starting points for a conception of education that is much broader – education for a purpose, both humanist, and political.

Molteno, M. 1998. 'Education at the Margins'. Keynote address delivered at the IEC conference *Education at the Margins*, held in Cambridge, 15-16 June 1998. pp 10-18. Reproduced with permission.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

[5] A parallel example of this contrast is seen in the methodologies used to predict vulnerability to drought and famine in Africa. The approach conventionally used by donor/UN agencies relies on gross statistics, which are unreliabl e to start with, and do not show up vital local variation in the strategies people are likely to adopt in times of economic stress – and therefore cannot predict the likely effects of food aid or other interventions. An alternative 'Risk Mapping' methodolo gy has been developed in Save the Children (see various papers by John Seaman, Julius Holt, Penny Allen) which bases its analysis on information from people who cope daily with life in drought prone areas. When systematically analysed, it has a higher pred ictive power than gross statistical analysis. The methodology is now of considerable interest to major food donor agencies.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Prologue

Dhok Gujran is one of the least accessible villages in the project area. The trip starts by Landrover from the project office in the small, bustling, rural town of Dinga. The first ten kilometres are along the narrow *pukka* (tarred) road towards Kharian, up to the point where it crosses the Upper Jhelum canal. From here you turn left and drive along the raised north bank of the canal. On the other side of the canal a series of branch canals lead off to feed distributaries which irrigate most of the area to the south. The land rises gently to the north, however, and all the villages on this side depend on *barani* (rain-fed) agriculture supplemented by small-scale irrigation mainly from shallow wells. (Water is raised from these mechanically by a chain of buckets operated through a simple gear system driven by camels, oxen or donkeys.)

Five kilometres along the canal bank a track branches off to the right near Chimber village. Here you will need four-wheel drive in the rainy season to pass through the gullies and skirt the fields of wheat and cattle fodder. The village of Thhula is only a short distance beyond Chimber, and from here on even a Landrover is of no use. The last two kilometres have to be covered on foot following a deep, narrow, sandy gully that meanders up to Dhok Gujran,

Despite its remote position, the village, like all its neighbours in this part of the Punjab, has an urban feel about it. It must be due to the way in which the buildings are tightly packed into a confined area, hemmed in by high brick or mud walls with narrow winding alleys forming a tortuous network of access to hidden dwellings within. Along one such alley, a mosque stands, its small minarets and elaborate frieze framed against the sky a little above the level of the flat-roofed houses.

The alleys also form the main drainage routes from the village, carrying rainwater and domestic water from the houses to a low-lying area nearby, which fills with stagnant water. Here mosquitos breed, and buffalos and children cool off in the heat of the day. Some of the alleys are neatly paved with brick, with open drains at the side so that it is easy to walk dry-shod. Others, however, have not been surfaced, and here the pedestrian must negotiate eroded gullies, muddy areas and pools of water.

The outer walls are attractively patterned with hand-moulded dollops of cattle dung. These are drying in the sun, ready to be used as fuel for cooking; for, apart from the mango trees dotted around the fields, there is virtually no reliable alternative source of firewood.

Most of villagers live in ***katcha*** houses made mainly of mud, but here and there there are *pukka* dwellings constructed with baked brick and iron sheets. Families who are lucky enough to receive remittances from one or more members working overseas (mainly in the Middle East, but also in Europe or USA) are likely to be able to afford larger houses, and these often stand out as an expression of wealth in an otherwise poor environment.

Turning off one alley, through a heavy wooden doorway, you emerge in a surprisingly spacious yard, bordered on all sides by high mud-lined walls. One end of the yard is occupied by the group leader's house with its ornately decorated veranda. The rest of the yard has a clean-swept surface of hardened mud. Four buffalo are lying in the shade of a large mango tree, chained securely to large wooden pegs hammered into the ground, with a pile of freshly gathered fodder nearby. There are healthy looking goats tethered in a corner and several hens scratching a round for a meagre existence.

A semi-circle of *charpoys* (comfortable wooden-framed beds, laced with string) has been arranged in front of the house. These are already being occupied as seats by a gathering group of women. Some sit quietly and passively watching and waiting. Others are animatedly engaged in the time honoured pursuit of village *gupshup.* All are modestly clothed in flowing shapeless *shalwa kamiz,* their heads covered by *chaddar.*

Many are mothers with a babe-in-arms and young children in tow. Those *who* are unencumbered in this way are mostly either grandmothers, time-worn but self-assured and comfortable, or meekly disposed unmarried girls in their mid or late teens.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

One by one the latecomers join the circle of seated women and eventually the group leader, who has been patiently waiting, seated on a chair near the centre of the group, announces the start of the meeting. Beside her, on a small table, there is a cassette recorder — its plastic and chrome finish incongruous in this setting. Next to this a flipchart has been carefully set up, supported by its own two stiff cardboard covers, ready for the first page to be displayed.

The group leader is quiet and unassertive, but the group settles down to listen in what appears to be a familiar pattern. The proceedings begin with a short prayer to *Allah,* the most mighty and the most merciful. Then the group leader explains that at today's meeting they will be learning about a disease called polio, and she outlines the aims of the meeting.

After this brief introduction, she switches on the cassette recorder and the programme on polio, unit two of the course on child care, begins. An announcer explains that though the name may be unfamiliar to the listeners, polio is a very dangerous disease which attacks children, and she invites the group to 'listen to an incident about this disease.'

In the short dramatic sketch that follows, Zubaida and her friend, Shakila (who has been introduced in the previous programme) are chatting at Zubaida's home. She is treating her son with medicine, and it transpires that Pappoo has been suffering from a fever. This is common enough at this time of year, but Pappoo had also complained of a pain in his right leg, and before that he had been vomiting. All these symptoms had since subsided, but Zubaida was worried because Pappoo could not now move his leg. With some difficulty, Zubaida manages to get a lift to the nearest town where a doctor diagnoses polio and admits Pappoo into hospital.

While the group is listening, the group leader fills in an attendance sheet. Meanwhile a small group of onlookers is gathering behind the charpoys, curious to know what is happening. Most of them are children, but there a few adults who are interested enough to listen in to the programme, but not sure enough to have enrolled with the group and paid their one rupee registration fee. Leaning inconspicuously against the mango tree is the only man in the compound, the group leader's husband, proud, perhaps, of the important role his wife is playing, but a little uncomfortable at being host to such a concentration of ladies.

As the programme continues, the learning group listens attentively. One wonders how they manage this, as there is continual bustle and commotion throughout the meeting. Babies cry and demand to be fed, older children scramble down from their mothers and clamber about on other listeners or wander off and call their mothers from outside the group. Latecomers continue to join the group, and others get up and leave halfway through. All this takes place against a background cacophony of rural sounds: goats bleating, donkeys braying, buffalo lowing, dogs barking and cocks crowing*.

After the story of Pappoo has ended, a narrator takes the listeners through the main symptoms of polio: fever, headache and vomiting, and finally, the paralysis and wasting of a limb. As each symptom is discussed, the narrator asks the group leader to turn to the next page of the flipchart so that the appropriate illustration and caption can be seen. (Examples of some of these flipchart illustrations are shown on the next page.) The women listen and watch with interest and with concern as the narrator goes on to stress that once a limb withers like this, there is no cure for it, and the child will be crippled for life. If a child does contract polio, it must be kept away from other children, for the disease is contagious. The mother should take the child to a qualified doctor and follow the doctor's instructions very carefully. But the positive message for the learners is that although the effects of polio cannot be cured, the disease can be prevented if the appropriate medicine is given at the right times and in the right doses. The narrator explains these precautions carefully.

* The project staff had been seriously concerned that this would make concentration almost impossible and would undermine the whole idea of adult learning groups in the village. Earlier on, however, when some of the course materials were being tested, a questionnaire was used to see if the learners were able to follow a piece of drama and to recall the characters in the story and the main messages intended for the listener. The results showed that the villagers were well able to tune out the extraneous sounds and attend to the details of the programmes — perhaps better than the more educated, urbanised project staff!

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Twice during the course of the programme the narrator asks the group leader to stop the tape. This gives the learners a chance to talk and think about what they have heard and to relate it to their own circumstances. The narrator poses a question to initiate each discussion (for example, Can you think of other reasons why children can get a fever in your village apart from polio?'). The group leader guides the discussions, keeping to the point, doing her best to prevent one talkative grandmother from dominating the floor and encouraging even the most reticent members to contribute.

The programme ends with the narrator recapping the main points and bidding the listeners farewell until the next meeting. The group leader switches off the cassette, takes a pile of papers from the table and hands out one sheet to each member of the group. The handout sheet contains all the illustrations and captions from the flipchart, reduced in size so that they fit on a single sheet. She then turns back the flipchart to page one and asks the group to follow as she takes them through the illustrations one by one, encouraging the learners to recall what had been said about each one. The handouts can be taken home after the meeting and used as reference material. Those who cannot read the captions are still able to recall what was discussed by association with the pictures.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

During a final discussion, one woman declares that she had not he ard about this disease before, and the name 'polio' seems to be new to most of the group. A young mother says that now she is aware of the dangers of this disease, she will take care to protect her children from it. Several others agree that it is important to take precautions, and they want to know where they can obtain the polio

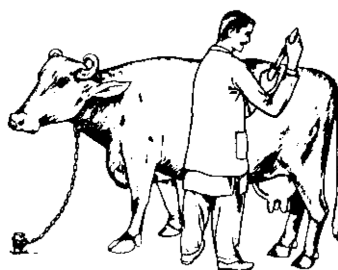
drops. Someone has heard that they were administered by a mobile immunisation team which visited a neighbouring village recently. The group leader agrees to make a note to ask about this. Encouraged by what she has learned, one woman who has been quiet for most of the meeting says 'Tell us about all the diseases our children can get and how we can control them'.

At the end of this discussion, the group leader closes the proceedings with a reminder of the date of the next meeting and a plea for people to be more punctual next time. It is agreed that she will ask the *Mullah if* he would, in future, announce the start of each meeting on the loudspeaker used to call people to prayer. Some of the women get up and leave immediately, but others linger on to chat about the meeting, perhaps in the hope of a cup of tea before they resume the normal chores of the day.

Meanwhile, the group leader is completing a feedback form which notes comments made and questions asked during the discussions. This information will be collected, summarised and conveyed to the course producers in Islamabad. During the last meeting of the course, a final taped programme will be played in which the producers respond to some of the questions raised by the learning groups in this way.

As soon as the Landrover has returned to the project office at Dinga, it is grabbed by another fieldworker who is scheduled to visit two groups in another area. These learning groups de cide on their own meeting places and times, and different groups elect to meet at different times *of* the day (the men prefer early morning or late afternoon, before or after their work in the fields; the women opt to meet nearer the middle *of* the day after the morning's chores). Thus, with the help *of* a carefully planned schedule and judicious use *of* transport, the project staff are able to attend many *of* the group meetings in the area each day. At the peak *of* group learning activities there are up to 40 me etings a day.

Six kilometres south *of* Dinga a group *of* men is studying livestock management crowded under the shade of a verandah. Great interest is being shown in the illustration of an instrument referred to as a 'tricanulla', which is being injected into the side of a buffalo. The narrator in the programme explains how this is used to release gas from a swollen stomach. There are many questions about this device during the discussion. The learners can see its advantages over the normal practice of punct uring the stomach wall with a knife. The inclusion of this topic, and others on the prevention and control of common livestock diseases, makes this one of the most popular courses. It has, in any case, been produced at the request of villagers participatin g in earlier courses.



Distance teaching in the village xi

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Dhakkar village is situated next to one of the main distributive canals in the area. Here another group of men is meeting, seated in the open air with only their turbans to protect their heads from the sun, and passing a communal *hookah* bubble pipe between them. They are following a course on electricity in the village, which is a topic of considerable interest since many villages in this area are being included in an electrification programme.

The course helps the learners to understand what electricity is, how it is produced and how it can be used in the village. It covers safety precautions and first aid for those suffering from electric shock, and it explains the procedures for applying for connection, reading the meter and checking the bill, making simple connections, mending a fuse and rectifying other simple faults.

A local qualified electrician has been enlisted to help the group, and he is clearly enjoying his new-found role of demonstrating how to test for a faulty switch and answering technical questions from the group.

On the western extreme of the project area, at Chak 35, a lively women's group is discussing poultry rearing. Their enthusiasm is infectious, and they have already persuaded the government veterinary assistant to visit them to inoculate their birds. In

this meeting, the group leader is demonstrating how to make a simple drinking water dispenser from a tin and a shallow bowl. No-one in the group can read or write, not even the group leader, but this does not deter them in the least. Now they are talking of setting up their own chicken-rearing cooperative, using the new improved breed they have learned about. A scrawny village cockerel perched on a low wall behind the group protests loudly, but the women are too engrossed in discussion to be amused.

In a number of villages in the area, men or women who have attended the poultry course meetings will be pleased to show you their newly constructed *darba* or poultry house. Their buildings are never quite like the diagram shown in the handout sheet, but the principles of space, light and ventilation have been clearly learned and applied.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

With these images of village group activities in mind, we leave the project area to take a closer look, in the rest of this account, at the learning methods being used, how these were developed and put into practice and what the outcomes were.

Warr, D. 1992.. *Distance Teaching in the Village*. Cambridge: International Extension College. pp viii-xii (Prologue) Reproduced with permission.

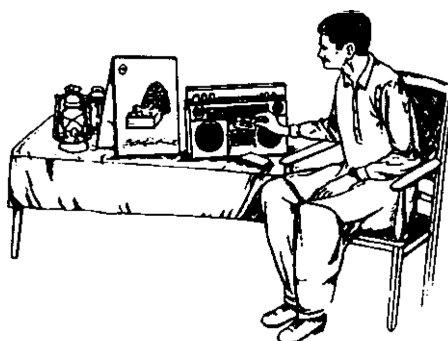
Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

The course cycle

The period during which each course was run was referred to as the 'course cycle'. Activities involved during this period included the formation of learning groups, the selection and training of group leaders, the holding of study group meetings, and a final review meeting with group leaders.

The courses developed during the FEPRA period each consisted of five to seven units (although longer courses could equally well have been prepared), and the groups met approximately twice a week to study these units. In each course cycle two additional meetings were held. The first was a preliminary meeting when the groups assembled to register formally for the course and to listen to a special introductory tape (with a message from the Vice Chancellor) which described the study group method. Secondly, about three weeks after the last of the study meetings, a final session was held. On this occasion, the learners listened to and discussed a tape recording made by the course producers in which they responded to questions and comments received via the group leaders' report forms about the earlier meetings.

The total studying time, from the preliminary to the final meetings, was about six to eight weeks, and a complete course cycle, from group formation to final review meeting, took three to four months. We found that, with careful planning and some overlapping of operations, it was possible to run two cycles of courses during the period when the villagers were least preoccupied with demanding agricultural tasks. This meant starting the first cycle in October and completing the second in April.



Course research*

Early on in its development, FEPRA established a field centre in the project area and began a programme of research which helped to inform the process of course development at several important stages. These were as follows.

Background research

Formal and informal surveys were conducted during the early stages of the project to familiarise the field staff with the local communities, to introduce them to the project's aims and methods, and to gain an in-depth understanding of their needs, priorities, constraints and capabilities as potential learners. This research helped to inform decisions about the selection of appropriate course topics, and methods and levels of instruction.

* See also Appendix 4: Monitoring and evaluation techniques

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Pre-course studies

These studies related to the topics to be covered in a particular course, and were designed to find out what the potential learners already knew, did and felt about each topic and how it might best be presented to them. These types of surveys are often referred to as KAP studies since they deal primarily with existing knowledge, attitudes and practices.

Pre-testing

This was the systematic developmental testing of course outlines and draft versions of the materials on a sample of the potential learners, to see whether any changes needed to be made before the materials were reproduced in final form.

Pilot testing

Finally, each course was put through a pilot cycle with a small number of learners. During this cycle the course as a whole was monitored and evaluated in order to assess its learning effect and immediate impact, and to find out if any final changes were needed to ensure that the course objectives would be attained, and that the outreach system would work satisfactorily.

This rather elaborate research programme derived from the premise that successful education at the basic level (perhaps more than at any higher levels) depends on the course producers knowing and being able to empathise with their target audience. Hence it was important to be able to provide background information about the learners both before and during the production process. Field research was thus given a central part to play in the production of the course materials, and this was perhaps one of FEPRA's most important contributions to the university.

Since the type of information needed is strongly influenced by cultural factors, and since these vary markedly between different areas of Pakistan, it was recognised from the start that separate research studies would be needed for each region, and that this would lead to the production of several local editions of each course. For instance, it would be necessary to produce at least one version for each of the major linguistic regions. Other cultural variations might need to be reflected in the flipchart illustrations, the recorded dramatised sketches, and possibly even in some of the content of certain courses.

Two general points should be made about the nature of this research. First, it was not 'basic' research in the conventional sense of being designed to answer fundamental questions. FEPRA's research activities were highly specific to individual courses and target groups. They were geared to providing information of immediate use to course production teams, and not primarily to add to our general understanding of educational processes.

Second, with its emphasis on quick results and informal feedback, this type of research is often regarded with suspicion; yet its results need not be unreliable or second best. Although time was short and samples inevitably had to be small, FEPRA staff made a special effort to apply proper sampling and interviewing techniques, and to avoid making unwarranted conclusions where the evidence was at all suspect, or broad generalisations from a few subjective impressions.

While conducting this research, FEPRA was often able to bring course producers into direct contact with the learners in their villages. This in itself was an important innovation and was certainly appreciated. At the same time, however, we aimed to back up these first hand impressions with information from surveys conducted systematically and on a broader scale with a cross-section of learners from the project area.

Course planning and production

The first three courses were produced by a specially formed, inter-departmental Rural Course Production Team (RCPT). The idea at that early stage was to enable interested academic staff from the relevant University departments to work together in what was essentially a pioneering venture. Hitherto, the bulk of the university's experience had been with materials aimed at matric level or above. These had largely taken the form of correspondence texts *with* supporting radio and

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

television programmes. At the basic level, materials had mostly been produced for specific project areas where they were used mainly in face-to-face literacy teaching. The production of nonformal distance education materials, suitable for use with illiterate learners on a mass scale, called for new approaches and new procedures.

The RCPT responded well to this challenge, and evolved a working procedure based on the following principles.

?? The courses should be learner centred (as opposed to subject centred). This meant that the information should be relevant to village learners and should be presented as far as possible from their perspective and in a way which they would find interesting and of practical use. This in turn called for full use of the research findings from the field and for an interdisciplinary approach (since practical solutions to village problems are rarely constrained tidily within traditional subject boundaries).

?? Through the use of carefully structured discussion exercises, the learners should be encouraged:
  ?? to relate new ideas and information to their own circumstances
  ?? to learn from each other by sharing relevant knowledge and experience
  ?? to reach consensus as a group over ways of applying the newly gained knowledge and skills to improve conditions in the village (in the hopes that this might lead to possible group action).

The courses should not be dependent on the written word (because of the low literacy rate), but should use a multimedia approach with a strong audiovisual element. Spoken words and pictures would need to form the basis of communication, and they would have to be carefully integrated to provide well structured and stimulating materials. This meant that artists, audio producers and subject matter specialists would all have to work together from the earliest, planning stages of production.

?? The lecturing style, commonly used to present information in many of the University's more academic courses, should be avoided, as this is unsuited to learners with little formal education. Also, where possible, the course materials should aim to help the learners understand the principles underlying any advice or suggestions given, rather than merely telling them what they should or should not do. This would help them to apply the principles intelligently to their own circumstances, rather than blindly following advice which may not always be appropriate in individual cases.

?? The course materials should be designed for presentation by group leaders who were neither trained teachers, nor subject specialists. Hence the materials should guide the group leaders during the study meetings and give them maximum support.

?? The materials should incorporate a variety of presentation techniques to make the courses stimulating and easy to learn from, and they should encourage the learners to take part as much as possible in practical work to reinforce the learning process.

?? The courses should create a dialogue between the learners and the producers on campus by providing for feedback from the learning groups and building in an opportunity for the producers to respond directly to this feedback.

?? They should encourage the learners to apply what they have learned through practical follow-up activities.

?? The materials should be produced in a form which could readily be translated and adapted for use in different parts of rural Pakistan.

As these principles were being established and debated, course production began. This proved to be a slow and difficult time since so much new ground was being broken (see Chapter 4). Much of the work was done by University lecturers in the relevant subjects. For the first three courses, this involved adapting and supplementing existing courses designed for higher levels. Occasionally, expert help was sought from outside (for example, a paediatrician provided advice on the child care

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

course). Illustrations were prepared by graphic artists from the University's Institute of Educational Technology, and audio cassette programmes were recorded by IET producers.

After the completion of the first three courses, and their successful piloting through two cycles, a new course production procedure was introduced. The aim was to bring the production process for basic functional education into line with routines already established in the University for courses at higher levels. Thus production and revision work for each course was allocated to a specific academic department.

Child care thus became the responsibility of the Department of Women's Education; *Electricity in the village* was taken over by the then Department of Technical and Vocational Education; and *Poultry keeping at home, Livestock management* and *Agricultural credit* by the Department of Agricultural Sciences.

A 'course coordinator', who supervised the production work for each course, was appointed by the head of the department concerned. This person coordinated and took responsibility for the work of a course production team which normally comprised:

- the course coordinator
- possibly an additional academic (distance teaching) member
- a subject-matter specialist (if not combined with the above)
- an illustrator
- an audio producer
- a member of the FEPRA field research team
- a representative of the appropriate development agency (NBD).

The FEPRA research person contributed to the production process by providing any information needed about the target group of village learners in order to help the course designers make the materials relevant and interesting. In practice, FEPRA field staff could attend course team meetings only occasionally since it meant travelling to campus from the field. However, they were represented at all other times by the Materials Coordinator, a campus-based member of FEPRA staff.

Representation on the production team by a member of the appropriate NBD was sought to encourage close collaboration with the development agency concerned. At various stages during the project, FEPRA and course production staff worked with representatives of a number of organisations, including the Women's Division, the National Institute of Health, the Poultry Research Institute, the Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan, the Water and Power Development Agency, and the Livestock Department.

There were three main reasons why this collaboration was considered important. In the first place we needed to ensure that the course content was in line with official policy and priorities. Not to have done so would have been to risk confusion and possibly even contradiction between the content of the courses and that of development messages from other sources. Development communication is fraught with enough difficulties without such additional contributions.

Secondly, FEPRA wanted to establish a link between the learning groups and development staff permanently based in the field so that long-term support (for example, further information, advice and materials) could be provided to those group members seeking to put into practice what they had learned from the courses. One short course (or even a series of such courses) may help to raise awareness of issues, introduce new ideas for development, encourage group discussion and decision making, and even initiate some concerted action, but for development to be effective, it must be sustained. This is likely to call for continued guidance, encouragement, further information, materials and other assistance. The University could never expect be able to provide this level of support which in any case is the responsibility of the various development agencies.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Finally, we were keen to explore ways in which Nation Building Departments with their own infrastructure and staff at field level would assist in supervising the presentation of appropriate courses in other areas. Thus if agricultural and health extension services were to adopt the AIOU course materials and FEPRA methodology, the courses could be given coverage and impact on a scale far beyond that which could be achieved by the University alone.

An early start was made in this direction when a UNICEF team purchased copies of the child care course and, after training with FEPRA field staff, supervised the formation and running of learning groups in their own project areas.

As the course production teams became established, a new mechanism for initiating and monitoring the production process - was introduced. This proved necessary in order to formalise the procedures, to give the new basic level courses official status and an agreed share of the University's resources, and to take into account certain special requirements not applicable in courses at other levels and therefore not covered by existing procedures.

A Basic Functional Courses Committee was established in response to these needs. Formally approved by the University's Academic Council, the committee was chaired by the Vice Chancellor and manned by the heads of all the University departments and institutions involved in course production at this level. The committee was given responsibility for authorising course research, production and evaluation, and overseeing the gradual build-up of a coherent, well balanced programme of basic functional courses. To achieve this, the committee allocated course production assignments to relevant departments within the overall quota set by the University. It then authorised expenditure and monitored the course production progress.

The outreach system

The mechanism developed by FEPRA for carrying the courses to the learners and supervising group activities, was based on the idea of a mobile outreach team of four or five field workers (later referred to as an Educational Development Team). During a particular cycle, this team operated from a field base within a defined geographical area. The team was responsible for the presentation of all the courses on offer during that cycle.

During the project, FEPRA field research staff performed this role in order to test the feasibility of the proposed system. The functions of the outreach team included:

?? setting up learning groups

?? selecting and training group leaders

?? distributing the course materials

supervising and monitoring course activities

gathering feedback from the groups and communicating this to the course producers at campus.

Each of these functions is described in more detail below.

Setting up learning groups

The area in which the outreach team would be operating was drawn on a map at the start of each cycle. Factors affecting the location and extent of this area included its general level of development, the size, distribution and accessibility of its villages, variations in socio-economic characteristics and the position of administrative boundaries used by other local organisations. (During the project, the FEPRA teams worked within the test-bed area shown on the map on page 6 and described in Chapter 1.)

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Having delineated the outreach area, the next step was for the team to hold meetings with local leaders and representatives of Nation Building Departments and with the Union Councils (responsible for groups of villages) to explain the programme. After this, the team toured the area systematically, visiting all villages, and holding public meetings at which the education programme was explained and each of the courses on offer was outlined. Care was taken to describe the learning methods involved, and to point out the difference between them ('no books and no teachers'), and what normally happens in schools. (Most people knew something about this, even if many had little or no direct experience of primary education.) If there was then sufficient interest in any of the courses, the villagers were asked to form their own learning groups of about 20 people, and to consider within these groups which members would be suitable candidates for the role of group leader.

This exercise was time consuming. Initial enthusiasm did not necessarily ensure prompt decisions amongst the villagers, and it often proved necessary to make one or even several return visits before groups were finally formed and potential group leaders identified. We found, however, that it was a stage of the cycle that should not be rushed. Groups which were formed in a hurry, or which were imposed (by the expedient of nominating the group leaders first and then asking them to recruit enough people to form their own group), were the most susceptible to dropout.

In FEPRA's first two experimental cycles, the numbers of villages involved was small (eight in cycle one and 14 in cycle two) and the time taken over group formation was not critical. In the third cycle, however, the project area was expanded and its coverage increased significantly. Then, the process took several weeks and involved visits to 70 villages. In 21 of these, there was insufficient interest to warrant their participation in the programme, but the remainder of the villages responded positively, some of these forming two or even three learning groups. By the end of the exercise, 89 groups had been formed from 49 villages.

Selecting and training the group leaders

For each group, the outreach team selected two of the candidates proposed by the members as their group leader. The criteria for selection were made explicit: they should be respected members of the local community, they should not have other heavy commitments, and they should not be teachers. (This last condition was made in an attempt to avoid confusion with the traditionally authoritarian, didactic conception of formal education.)

The team also looked for people who showed self-confidence and enthusiasm for the exercise. An additional factor was their social position in the village, since affiliation with a particular faction or *biradry* could greatly influence group membership and cohesion.

Finally, where possible and provided the other criteria were met, the team favoured those who were literate, mainly because they were able to complete the feedback forms after each meeting without help from supervisors. Literacy was not essential, however, and a number of very competent group leaders were unable to read or write. (They were helped by project staff or literate friends with the filling in of the feedback forms.)

Both the selected candidates attended a six-day course held at a temporarily established 'rural training centre'. Each centre was located in a village within easy daily walking or cycling distance of about ten groups in the area. Thus each group leaders' course was attended by about 20 trainees and was therefore roughly the same size as a typical learning group.

The reasons for training two people from each group were that:

- it allowed the outreach team to select the better candidate on the basis of his or her performance during training (the other trainee became a 'stand-by group leader')
- training in pairs gave greater confidence, and, in the case of women, helped to overcome the cultural problems of women travelling outside their own villages
- it provided a safety net for groups in which the leader dropped out for personal reasons, either during the training or in the middle of the course cycle.

16 *Distance teaching in the village*

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

The training courses were run by the members of the outreach team. Known in this role as 'master trainers', the fieldworkers worked in pairs (two men or two women), each pair being responsible for running one course a week. With two pairs of trainers, it was therefore possible to run two courses simultaneously in different areas, and hence to reach 40 trainees (from 20 groups) per week. Applying this approach during cycle three, two pairs of master trainers were able to run 11 courses for a total of over 180 trainees in six weeks.

If the outreach system were to be expanded beyond the level achieved in cycle three, the rate of group leader training would have to be increased in order to avoid too long a period between the formation of learning groups and thestart of the study meetings. (Too much delay at this stage would mean the risk of group members losing interest and dropping out before the course began. It would also eat into the limited time available for running courses between the busy agricultural seasons.)

The rate of group leader training could be increased in several ways. First, more trainees could be included in each course (although experience during the second cycle suggests that groups of 25 or more can become difficult to manage). Secondly, the outreach team could be augmented so that three pairs run courses simultaneously, thus training leaders for 30 groups each week (as was successfully achieved during cycle three). Thirdly, the original rate could be doubled (to service 40 groups per week) if the outreach team ran the courses individually rather than in pairs. This was not attempted during the pioneering phase of the project, but would be a possibility with experienced field workers using the training support materials which were developed by FEPRA (see below). Finally, the rate could again be doubled (to 80 group leaders per week) if only one trainee was taken from each group. There would however be the associated risks of lowering the standard of group leadership and increasing the incidence of group dropout. Also, it might prove difficult in less densely populated areas to locate training centres within comfortable travelling distance of 20, as opposed to ten learning groups, all following the same course.

The aims of the group leaders' training course were:

?? to introduce the trainees to the University, the programme of functional education and its aims, the learning methodology, and the current cycle of courses

?? to explain the functions of the group leader in organising meetings, presenting the materials, leading discussions and practical exercises, and reporting on each meeting

?? to help the trainees acquire and practise the skills needed to perform these functions, and, in particular to develop competence in leading discussions

?? to take the trainees through the course materials, unit by unit, and to help them to prepare themselves to lead the discussions and exercises in each meeting

?? to explain the administrative aspects of the course cycle, including its timing, how the groups would be supervised, how to collect course registration fees, complete attendance registers and report forms, and so on.

The same study group methods were used in training the group leaders as they themselves would later use with their groups. Three 'units', consisting of the usual audio cassette, flipchart and handout sheets, were used. One introduced the methodology, a second described the role of the group leader, and a third concentrated on discussion-leading skills.

These materials were presented to the trainees by the master trainers acting as model group leaders. In this way the trainees became familiar with the kinds of materials and the methods that they themselves would later be using back in their study groups, and this helped to build up their confidence.

The materials also provided strong support for the trainers, who had no special teaching qualifications. A handbook was later developed for the trainers, giving detailed guidelines on how to set up and run a group leaders' training course, and this was used a basis for their own initial training.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

In addition to these study materials, a group leaders' manual formed the basis of some of the training sessions. It also functioned as a reference book which the group leaders could take back to their village and use throughout the course cycle. The manual consisted mainly of illustrations and captions taken from the three flipcharts so that it could be used by illiterate group leaders.

Further support for the group leaders was provided in the form of unit guides which were included with the materials for each meeting. These set out the objectives for the meeting, listed any special equipment needed and suggested questions which could be used to start off group discussions and keep them to the point.

Practical learning was stressed, and much of the course was devoted to simulation exercises in which each trainee practised presenting the learning materials to his or her fellow trainees who acted as members of a study group. At the end of the course everybody had to lead part of a study meeting attended by an invited group of outsiders from the local community. Their performance in this final exercise helped the trainers decide which of each pair of trainees should be appointed as group leader.

Since only the group leaders were paid an honorarium, we were surprised that the 'standby group leaders' usually accepted their fate without complaint, and many later performed useful support roles in their groups, such as taking the register and standing in for the leader during absences.

All group leader trainees had to pay a registration fee at the start of the course, but they received a training allowance afterwards (see below). Refreshments were provided during each day of the course.

Distributing the course materials

The timely distribution of course materials to large numbers of scattered groups presented a considerable challenge. FEPRA's experience during cycle three, in which 89 groups from 49 villages took five different courses between them, demonstrated the need for careful preparation and close supervision.

First there was the matter of the sheer bulk of the materials. Each of the five courses on offer consisted of at least six sets of flipcharts, cassettes and handouts, and there were also models, charts and other materials. All these had to be collated, packaged, labelled, transported from the campus and stored in the field centre.

Next, these materials, together with registration and report forms and a cassette tape recorder and batteries, had to be delivered to the group leaders. In order to minimise costs, the materials (apart from the handouts) were designed to be used again in later cycles, and therefore, like the tape recorders and rechargeable batteries, they had to be issued on loan and recovered at the end of the cycle.

The simplest method would have been to issue these items direct to the successful group leaders at the training centres on the last day of their course. During cycle three, however, a delay in reproducing the required number of sets of materials made this impossible, and it proved necessary to deliver them to the homes of the assistant supervisors, who then carried each set out to their group leaders. This method was more cumbersome and created complications when it came to recording the transfers at each stage. However, the system worked surprisingly smoothly, and the materials and equipment were recovered at the end of the cycle with very little loss or damage.

Supervising and monitoring course activities

The experience of the first two course cycles showed that close supervision was essential. Unless someone from outside the group was on hand during the study meetings, problems went undetected and the less enthusiastic groups tended to lose interest.

A system was therefore devised in which the four field workers in an outreach team each supervised six locally recruited part-time assistants, known as 'assistant supervisors'. The assistant supervisors were each in turn responsible for monitoring the meetings of five learning groups.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

At the start of a cycle, the learning groups were arranged, as far as possible, in clusters of five, according to the location of the villages. (In practice clusters varied, according to the proximity and accessibility of the villages, from about three to six learning groups.) A local assistant supervisor was then appointed who lived within easy reach, on foot or by bicycle, of each of the villages in one cluster. Where possible, successful group leaders from previous cycles were selected.

The assistant supervisors' role was to monitor their study groups by sitting in on the meetings. A special observation form was designed for them to complete, which provided information about attendance, the performance of the group leaders, the way in which the discussions and practical exercises ran and any special problems faced by the group. At the end of each meeting, the assistant supervisor talked to the group leader, checked that the attendance register had been correctly completed, collected the group leader's report form for delivery to the field centre, and helped with any problems.

Other duties included delivering replacement batteries for the cassette recorders when needed, helping to ensure that the groups met regularly according to schedule, and attending a review meeting at the end of the cycle to provide additional feedback to the outreach team.
The assistant supervisors received about two days' training at the project office, and a reference manual was prepared for their use. In addition they attended part of the group leaders training course run in their area for the groups that they would later be supervising. This gave them a chance to meet their group leaders and to see the course materials being used in the simulation exercises. They also practised filling in the observation forms during these exercises.

A detailed schedule of group meetings was planned for each course cycle at the project office. This was arranged so that the learning groups met, on average, twice a week. By staggering the meeting days for each group, it proved possible for each assistant supervisor to attend every one of his or her five groups' meetings throughout the course cycle. The assistant supervisors each received a schedule of meetings for their area showing them where they should be on each day.

This very close degree of supervision was found to be worthwhile: possible difficulties (such as flat batteries, or wrong procedures being followed) were detected and remedied promptly, the interest of the group was more likely to be maintained, and regular attendance was encouraged.

The outreach team members aimed to spend two days a week with each of their assistant supervisors, accompanying them on their visits to group meetings according to the schedule for the day. One of these days was arranged in advance. The other supervisory visit could be on any day during the week. This arrangement combined the advantages of regular monitoring of the course cycle, together with the flexibility needed to cope with unforeseen situations. The element of surprise in the unscheduled visits also helped to encourage the less conscientious assistant supervisors.

In this way, the outreach team, together with its assistant supervisors, could reach about 120 groups (about 2,400 learners) in one cycle of courses, as shown in the figure on the next page.

Since it was possible to run two cycles during the least busy agricultural season (December to March), this meant that a mobile team could carry courses to about 4,800 learners in 240 village learning groups, according to the experience in the FEPRA test-bed area.

The tight scheduling called for by this approach made it necessary for the outreach team to specify the days on which each group should meet throughout the course. However, the groups themselves determined the regular starting time for their meetings, and the place where the meetings should be held. This arrangement proved popular, and was thought to have a positive effect on group participation and sustained attendance levels.

Warr, D. 1992.. *Distance Teaching in the Village*. Cambridge: International Extension College. pp 11-19. Reproduced with permission.

Chapter 2: The methodology 19

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

professional's current practice. It is change which goes beyond *practical* matters that can have a bearing on the way practitioners interpret the task at hand. For sure, emancipatory action research incorporates these, but it also challenges the fundamental framework within which the practice occurs.

Three approaches to action research

1 *Technical* action research aims to improve effectiveness of educational or managerial practice. The practitioners are co-opted and depend greatly on the researcher as a facilitator.

2 *Practical* action research, in addition to effectiveness, aims at the practitioners' understanding and professional development. The researcher's role is ... to encourage practical deliberation and self-reflection on the part of the practitioners.

3 Action research is *emancipating* when it aims not only at technical and practical improvement and the participant's better understanding, along with transformation and change within the existing boundaries and conditions, but also at changing the system itself of those conditions which impede desired improvement in the system/organisation.

(Zuber-Skerritt 1996: 4-5)

5 Issues connected with the use of action research

'Ownership' of the research

The participatory nature of action research brings with it a question mark concerning who owns the research and its outcomes. With conventional approaches to research this tends to be less complicated. To offer something of a caricature, the outsider research initiates the process and approaches practitioners to gain their permission for the research to be conducted (by the outsider). Having obtained authorization from relevant people, research proceeds, with the outsider 'owning' the data collected and having full rights over the analysis and publication of findings. Of course, complications arise with various forms of sponsored research and consultancy, where authorization might include certain restrictions on the rights of the two parties over the research and its findings. However, these are likely to be *explicitly* recognized as a result of negotiating access.

In the case of action research, the *partnership* nature of work can make matters rather less clear cut. Who is in charge? Who calls the shots? Who decides on appropriate action? Who owns the data? These and similar issues need to be worked out sensitively and carefully by the partners to *ensure that there are shared expectations about the natureof participation* in action research.

Ethical issues associated with action research

The distinct ethical problem for action research is that, although the research centres on the activity of the practitioner, it is almost inevitable that the activity of colleagues will also come under the microscope at some stage or other, as their activity interlinks with that of the practitioner who instigates the research. Practitioners are not 'islands' - isolated from routine contact with colleagues and clients. Their practice and the changes they seek to make can hardly be put in place without some knock-on effect for others who operate close-by in organizational terms.

The idea that the action researcher is exempt from the need to gain authorization, as a consequence, evaporates. Because the activity of action research almost inevitably affects others, it is important to have a clear idea of when and where the action research necessarily steps outside the bounds of collecting information which is purely personal and relating to the practitioners alone. Where it does so, the usual standards of research ethics must be observed: permissions obtained, confidentiality maintained, identities protected.

Two things follow. First, there is a case for arguing that those who engage in action research should be open about the research aspect of their practice. It should not be hidden or disguised. Second, the need for informed consent from those involved in the research should be recognized.

Ethics in **action research**

- The development of the work must remain visible and open to suggestions from others.
- Permission must be obtained before making observations or examining documents produced for other purposes.
- Description of others' work and points of view must be negotiated with those concerned before being published.
- The researcher must accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality. (Winter 1996: 17)

Reflexivity and action research

Practitioners who engage in action research have a privileged insight into the way things operate in their particular 'work-sites'. They have *'insider knowledge'*. This can be a genuine bonus for research. However, it can also pose problems. The outsider - 'the stranger' - might be better placed to see the kind of thing which, to the insider, is too mundane, too obvious, to register as an important factor. Because the practitioner cannot escape the web of meanings that the 'insider' knows, he or she is constrained by the web of meanings. The

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

outsider 'expert' may not have the 'right' answer, but can possibly offer **an** alternative perspective which can help the practitioner to gain new insights into the nature of the practical problem.

Link up with **Ethnography and reflexivity, p. 73**

So, although action research respects the knowledge of the practitioners, it would be rather naive to assume that practitioners' knowledge — of itself — provides all the answers. Particularly in relation to *practical* action research, and *emancipatory* action research, their aim is to enhance practitioner understanding and this is likely to call upon some modicum of outsider advice.

Resources and action research

The action researcher's investigation is necessarily fairly localized and relatively small-scale. None the less, the action researcher faces the difficulty of trying to combine a probably demanding workload with systematic and rigorous research. *Time constraints,* alone, make this hard to accomplish. Even if, as should be the case, action research is integrated with practice rather than tagged on top of practice, the routine demands of the job are unlikely to be reduced by way of compensation. In the short run, prior to positive benefits emerging, the action researcher is likely to face extra work.

Generalizability and action research

Given the constraints on the scope of action research projects, it might be argued that their findings will rarely contribute to broader insights. Located as they are in the practitioner's work-site, there are not very good prospects for the *representativeness* of the data in action research. The setting and constituent features are 'givens' rather than factors which can be controlled or varied, and the research is generally focused on the one site rather than spread across a range of examples. Action research, therefore, is vulnerable to the criticism that the findings relate to one instance and should not be generalized beyond this specific 'case'.

Link up with **Case studies, p. 30**

In one sense this reservation needs to be acknowledged. Surely, practice-driven research in local settings hardly lends itself to conclusions with universal application. New truths and new theories will be unlikely to find foundation in such studies alone. And this caution is worth taking to heart for the action researcher: beware of making grandiose claims on the basis of action research projects. However, it can rightly be argued that action research, while practice-driven and small-scale, should not lose anything by way of rigour. Like any other small-scale research, it can draw on existing theories, apply and test research propositions, use suitable methods and, importantly, offer some evaluation of existing knowledge (without making unwarranted claims). It is the rigour, rather than the size of the project or its purpose, by which the research should be judged.

6 Advantages of action research

- ► It addresses practical problems in a positive way, feeding the results of research directly back into practice. In the words of Somekh (1995: 340), 'It directly addresses the knotty problem of the persistent failure of research in the social sciences to make a difference in terms of bringing about actual improvements in practice.'
- ► It has personal benefits for the practitioner, as it contributes to professional self-development.
- ► It should entail a continuous cycle of development and change via on-site research in the workplace, which has benefits for the organization to the extent that it is geared to improving practice and resolving problems.
- ► It involves participation in the research for practitioners. This can democratize the research process, depending on the nature of the partnership, and generally involves a greater appreciation of, and respect for, practitioner knowledge.

7 Disadvantages of action research

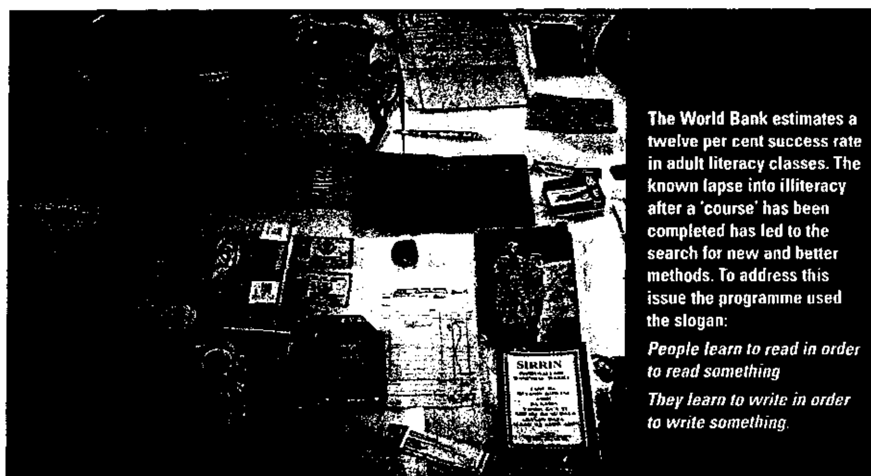
- ► The necessary involvement of the practitioner limits the scope and scale of research. The 'work-site' approach affects the representativeness of the findings and the extent to which generalizations can be made on the basis of the results.
- ► The integration of research with practice limits the feasibility of exercising controls over factors of relevance to the research. The setting for the research generally does not allow for the variables to be manipulated or for controls to be put in place, because the research is conducted not along-side routine activity but actually as part of that activity.
- ► The nature of the research is constrained by what is permissible and ethical within the workplace setting.
- ► Ownership of the research process becomes contestable within the frame-work of the partnership relationship between practitioner and researcher.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Success in adult education

The Community Education Programme was particularly successful in linking adult education to community development. This was because the methods used to teach the adults were rooted in the communities' needs.

The traditional method of teaching literacy is to have a standard textbook containing vocabulary and content considered to be suitable by outside experts. The adult literacy instructors then progress through the textbook, until the class is able to memorise the words in it



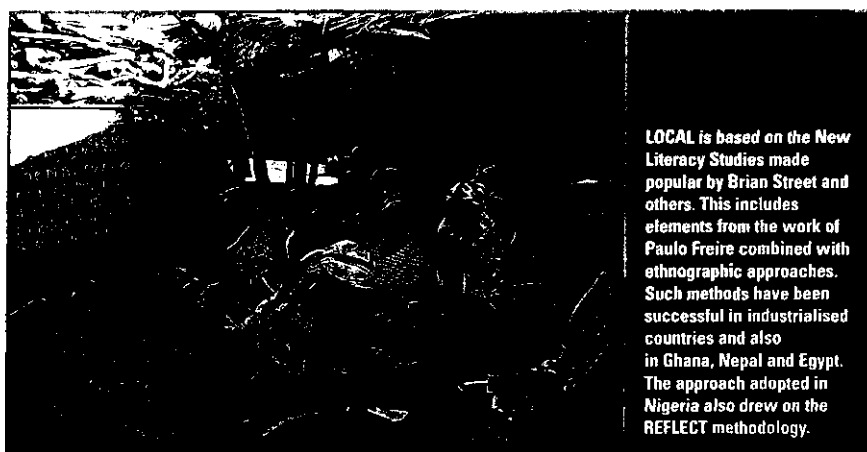
Learner Oriented Community Adult Literacy (LOCAL)

In the Community Education Programme instructors were trained in a completely different method, known as Learner Oriented Community Adult Literacy (LOCAL). When they used the LOCAL method they found that most of their students learned to read very quickly.

Facilitators were asked to identify what the participants needed literacy skills for and to bring materials related to these needs into the classroom. Materials included voter cards, hospital cards, driving licences, birth certificates, receipts and other material used in daily life. These are sometimes termed 'real materials'.

The LOCAL approach draws on the cultural traditions of the communities. It uses the actual words of the learner, who reports a life experience, tells a story or relates a piece of local history. The instructor writes the words down and the learner reads them back.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.



Validity of the learner's own experience

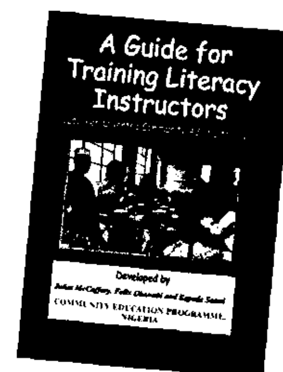
The vital element of the LOCAL method is the use of the learner's own words. The instructor may want to ' improve' what the learner has said, and may even be tempted to translate from the minority language into one of wider usage, but if the words are changed, the whole purpose of the method is lost.

The LOCAL method assumes that learners are responsible adults, rich in experience, knowledge and skills. Learning to read is simply a way of transferring the existing knowledge and skills to the written medium. LOCAL acknowledges the learners' culture and community, in contrast to the traditional method, which sees the learner as an empty vessel and the community as in need of enlightenment by a more 'advanced' elite. LOCAL is a very effective way of teaching people to recognise words in print because they are reading their own words. Learners find it easy to read back their own words and so experience success in their first efforts at reading. The success motivates them to read more, and they go from strength to strength.

It was not easy for the instructors to accept the LOCAL method because it was something quite different from what they already knew. The training they were given on the project had to include ways of changing their attitudes. The Nigerian consultants already had experience of this kind of training, built on the principle of developing critical awareness through the Freirean method popularised by Development Education and Leadership Services (DELES), a Nigerian NGO. The flexibility of the method to be used in class meant that the new facilitators had to be very confident in its use, and they needed a framework to support them as

The LOCAL framework is based on the following sequence:

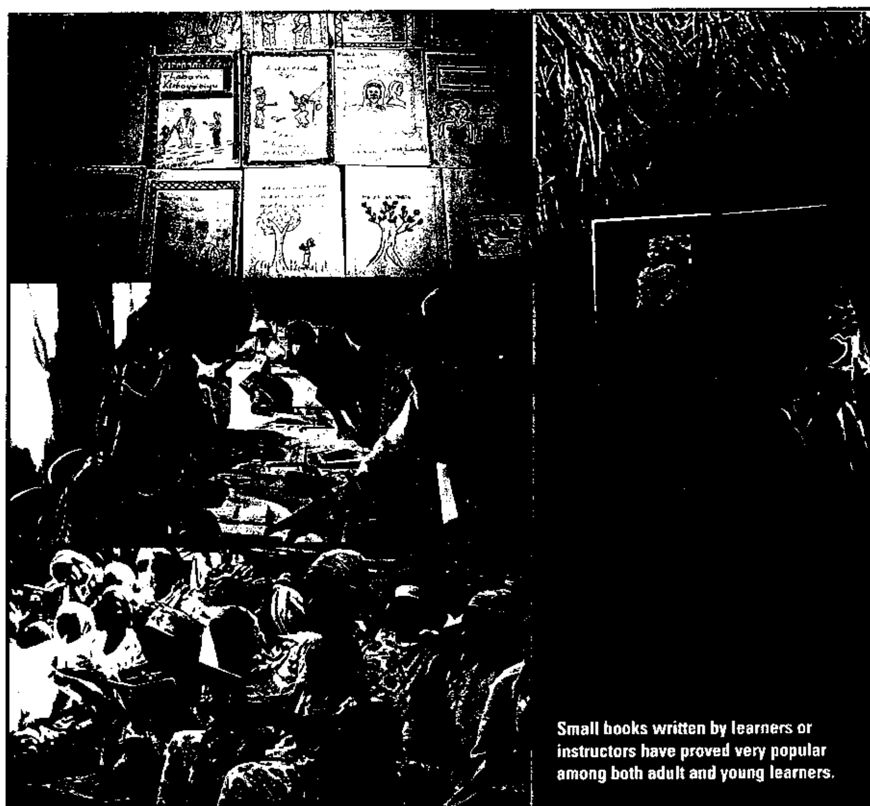
1 Establish learning aims with participants.
2 Prioritise aims with participants.
3 Conduct a survey of literacy and numeracy events with participants.
4 Assist participants to chart their economic activities and their daily routine.
5 Match prioritised aims (2) with related events and activities (3 and 4) and collect real materials relevant to the aims.
6 Identify specific learning points in the materials collected.
7 Identify the teaching task required for each learning point.
8 Develop clear objectives for each lesson.
9 Develop practical and participatory learning activities to engage participants in their own learning.



Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Learner-generated materials

The next stage in the LOCAL methodology is that the oral texts given by the learners and written down by the instructors, are made into small books. In the Community Education Programme the stories were illustrated and published. These books were then used by other learners and they provided a large quantity of locally produced reading materials to use in class. Seventy-two small books were produced in six languages: Igbo, Hausa, Bura, Fulfulde, Ibibio and English. The writers were particularly proud of this achievement.

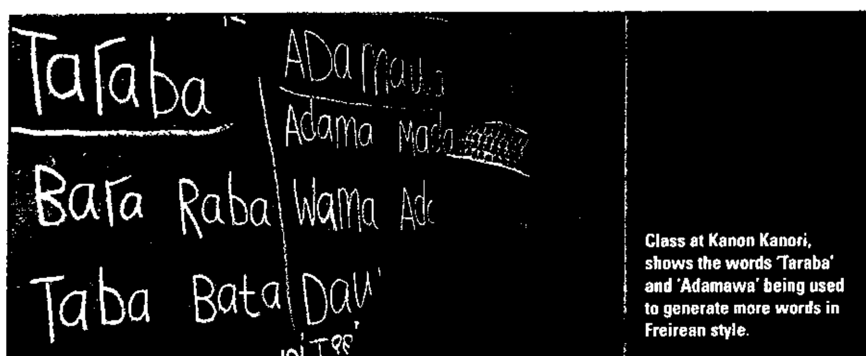

Small books written by learners or instructors have proved very popular among both adult and young learners.

Change of instructors' attitudes

LOCAL makes the learners into agents of their own development and turns the 'instructor' into a 'facilitator'.

The way the instructors were trained to become facilitators used the same empowering methodology that they were being asked to use with the adult learners. Therefore, if they had strong feelings about any aspect of their work, these feelings were taken into consideration. A typical example was that instructors were reluctant to stop teaching the alphabet, and so they were shown a method of doing so which fitted in with the LOCAL methodology. They were asked to choose words which had a lot of meaning to the learners, such as their own names, and teach letter recognition from these words. Another high-interest word was the name of the learner's state, and hence words such as 'Taraba' and 'Adamawa' were used for alphabet teaching.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.



Class at Kanon Kanori, shows the words 'Taraba' and 'Adamawa' being used to generate more words in Freirean style.

Stages of training for adult education facilitators

1 Initial training of facilitators.
2 Facilitators put training into use in learning centres.
3 Monitoring and support visits to facilitators in learning centres by trainers.
4 Follow-up training.

This gave the facilitators a chance to put their training into practice, to identify their difficulties, and then receive further training to help them to deal with their problems in classroom implementation.

Throughout the training the objective was to recognise the existing skills and knowledge of the local instructors. This enabled them to draw on their own resources and not to rely on skills, primers and training from elsewhere. Local trainers now undertake all the training. Despite initial reluctance to change their methods they made their own small books, tried out the methods with their adult learners and found them successful. The slogan here was: 'Rely on your own resources.'

Additional training was provided for selected local trainers on generating materials and on mechanisms for support and evaluation. A handbook for trainers was developed by the training team, showing the sequence of experiences the instructors went through in the process of their transformation into facilitators.

Development of village-level facilitators

Local facilitators developed excellent lessons without formal printed materials. One of the facilitators, who was from a nomadic clan, was exceptionally talented. He understood the LOCAL process and was not only able to develop it himself but also to help others. As a result the literacy learning is locally relevant, and based on local need. Numerous small books have been developed – some printed and some just on folded paper – on a wide range of subjects, including medicines for cattle, police harassment and the reasons for seasonal movement.

A drama developed by one of the communities showed a Fulani man pulled off a bus, harassed by a policeman for his papers, taken to jail, and the selling, by his clan, of two heads of cattle to pay for his release. After going to literacy classes and learning to read, he is able to show his papers confidently to the policeman when next stopped.

The purpose of the drama was to demonstrate that attending literacy classes enables you to show the right papers, speak confidently to a policeman and improve the clan's income through the avoidance of fines.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Achievements

It would be inaccurate to say that the literacy classes improved income levels, but from the participants' comments there is no doubt that the classes contributed to improving the quality of life individually and communally. Some women learners in the south are now able to follow the hymns in church and find the numbers in the hymn book. Many learners are now able to check figures on forms, read dates on medicines and veterinary drugs, record profit and loss in trading transactions, read sign boards, town names and taxi number plates and write to their children.

Although income-generating activities go on, the operators have not been able to consistently. Therefore, it has been difficult to measure percentage increase of income But the fact that they are still in business suggests they are making profit estimated at N4,000 to N6,000 a month.

At the inception of the project there were two adult education centres. By May 2000 there were twenty-eight, with sixty-eight instructors and 2,568 /earners (256 men and 2,312 women).

graduate of the adult education classes was offered employment by a local church as a deaconess on a monthly salary. Her husband accused everybody, instructors, reverend minister and even the bishop, of breaking his matrimonial home. The relationship between husband and wife remains strained but there is evidence of a new lease of life on the part of the lady.

Project manager of the adult education programme in Isuikwuato and Umunneochi

Before attending, writing was just scribbles and meaningless so now writing has become meaningful. I can pick out words and numbers.

Adult learner, nomadic community

As recently as a few years back not one single person in the community could read a letter, and they had to take it to Kunini to be read. Now there are many people around who can read, so we don't have to do that.

Ardo Umaru, nomadic leader

They know how to live with people now. The main thing is co-operation between people. Royal

Head, nomadic community, at Tashan Uda

I talk to people now.

Adult learner, nomadic community

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Journal of Distance Education/Revue de l' enseignement à distance (2001)
ISSN: 0830-0445

Ready, Willing, And Able:
Prospects For Distance Learning In Canada's First Nations Community

Cora 3. Voyageur

Cora Voyageur teaches in the Sociology Department at the University of Calgary. She completed her doctorate at the University of Alberta where the sociology of work and **Native employment** was **one** of her areas of **specialization.** Her academic research focuses primarily **on the Aboriginal experience in Canada,** which includes **women's** issues, justice, employment, education, and economic development. She has worked with many First Nations communities and organizations to conduct community-initiated research in the Aboriginal community. She is a member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation from Fort **Chipewyan, Alberta.**

Abstract

The educational attainment levels of First Nations people in Canada lags behind that of mainstream society. Because many reserves are in rural or remote areas, attending postsecondary institutions has meant leaving the community. However, advances in information technologies and distance education program delivery mean that First Nations people can obtain postsecondary educational credentials without having to leave their home communities. This would be both convenient and less disruptive for the student. However, before programs can be delivered, the current technological competence and usage levels in reserves must be determined. The primary thrust of this research provides baseline information on the access to and use of various technologies and the degree, type, pervasiveness, and availability of technologies such as computers, Internet, e-mail, voice mail, computer networking, satellite systems, teleconferencing, and other communications services. This investigation of information technology usage in selected First Nations communities provides insight into their readiness for distance learning opportunities in the community.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Abstract

Les niveaux de realisation éducationnelle des personnes faisant partie des Premières Nations du Canada affichent du retard par rapport aux niveaux éducatifs de la société dominante. Etant donne que plusieurs des reserves se situent dans des regions rurales ou éloignées, frequenter des institutions postsecondaires a voulu dire pour ces personnes quitter la communauté. Cependant, les progrès des technologies de ('information et l'offre de programmes d'éducation a distance signifient que les personnes des Premières Nations peuvent obtenir des certifications postsecondaires sans devoir quitter leur communauté natale. Cela serait a la fois pratique et moins perturbateur pour l'étudiant. Cependant, avant que les programmes ne puissent être offerts, les niveaux de competence technologique et d'usage qui existent actuellement dans les reserves doivent être évalués. Le premier aspect de cette etude fournit de ('information de base sur l'accès et (' utilisation des technologies telles que les ordinateurs, !'Internet, le courrier electronique, la messagerie vocale, les réseaux informatiques, les systèmes satellites, la teleconference et d' autres services de communication. Cette recherche sur les utilisations des technologies de ('information dans des communautés choisies appartenant aux Premières Nations donne un aperçu a savoir si oui ou non, ces communautés sont prêtes a saisir les occasions d'éducation a distance.

Introduction

We are living in an information explosion. Technological advances such as bigger and faster computers, e-mail, electronic bulletin boards, the Internet, voice mail, and facsimile machines have changed the world we live in. They have also changed the *way* we do business, how we gather information, and how we communicate with each other. Indigenous people in Canada recognize their need to gain access to and develop competence in new digital telecommunications.

First Nations people are also embracing technology. Cellular telephones are a staple at meetings, and band administrators rely heavily on fax machines to transfer documents to government agencies and to other First Nations. A recent First Nations Trade Fair, held in conjunction with the joint Assembly of First Nations and the Congress of American Indians Annual General Assemblies, highlighted extensive information services such as specialized computer programming designed to accommodate specific First Nations needs (band membership or community demographics); interactive CD ROMs that assist language instruction; numerous Indigenous subject-related Web sites; and e-commerce.

Youth are becoming more familiar with communications technologies. Many First Nations schools are participating in the Schoolnet program that links them to the Internet. Students are taught computer skills as part of their curriculum, and computer labs are being set up in schools.

Indigenous peoples of Canada are increasingly pursuing education and

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

credentialism. For example, First Nations' enrollment in postsecondary institutions has increased to more than 27,000 according to the Department of Indian Affairs' *Basic Departmental Data, 1997* (Government of Canada, 1997). However, the educational attainment level of Aboriginal people in Canada falls below that of the general Canadian population. This document shows postsecondary enrollment rates for First Nations people between the ages of 17-34 years at 6.0% compared with 10.4% in Canadian society in 1996. This causes grave concern to First Nations leaders who wish their people to be more integrated into the mainstream economy. Education is seen as a means of achieving this goal.

Can First Nations peoples' acceptance of information technologies be used to increase education levels and educational attainment in the community? Athabasca University, in an effort to fulfill its mandate to increase access to university-level studies to all adult Canadians commissioned a study to determine core technological competences in the First Nations setting.

Methodology

The following are results from the Athabasca University Technology Usage Project. Data were collected by self-administered questionnaires and face-to-face or telephone interviews using a variety of open-ended and closed-ended questions. Through a combination of subjective and **objective data I explored** the current levels of technology use and availability in the communities. I reasoned that acceptance and familiarity with information technologies, coupled with the need and desire for postsecondary instruction, could pave the way for distance learning programming in that First Nations community.

I conducted 10 interviews at each of six sites for a total of 60 interviews. Interviews conducted with various reserve-based agency employees attempted to capture their experiences and insights into community technology use. Research participants were individuals working in band administration offices, schools, and agencies. They were viewed as key informants and were chosen because they used various types of technology while performing their work duties, were community members, and as community members had knowledge of technology use and availability in their community.

Self-administered questionnaires and face-to-face or telephone interviews gathered information in seven areas: educational attainment, employment, or training; individual use of technology; frequency of individual technology use; comfort level of individual technology use; availability of individual technology use; community availability; and community use. Participants were asked two types of questions. First, they were asked about their individual technology use while performing duties and, second, their opinion of use and availability of technology in the community.

Related Literature

Distance learning is a viable alternative for those living in sparsely populated regions or for those with domestic responsibilities that make leaving home to attend school a daunting if not impossible task. First Nations people, especially those living on reserves fit both these criteria. They reside primarily in the sparsely populated north and in the west according to Statistics Canada (1998), in 1996, the highest concentration of Aboriginal people in Canada were in the north and on the prairies. More than four out of every five Aboriginal people lived west of Quebec" (pp. 3-4). In addition, the same report cites the high number of female-headed lone-parent families within the Aboriginal community. Home study and distance learning allow geographically isolated individuals to obtain educational credentials.

Distance learning can serve the needs of the institution, the community, and the student. Monaghan (1991), in his article "Ambitious Program Run by U.S. College Offers Hope to Canadian Indians," described a distance learning

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

program run by Gonzaga University at Canim Lake in British Columbia. Students who were forced to leave the community to attend postsecondary institutions often dropped out before completion for many reasons including loneliness, intimidation, and an alien, competitive environment. Gonzaga's program linked students to campus by computer during the school year. Students would then bring their families with them while they attended summer session courses on campus.

Sharpe (1990) detailed the logistics of an Indigenous teacher program delivered in Labrador by Memorial University of Newfoundland. Students obtained either a two-year teaching certificate or a five-year baccalaureate degree in their home community. He stated that the program was constantly under revision to find the best way to deliver it. The logistics of program delivery included the courses required, instructor availability, instructor sensitivity to Native communities, scheduling, student teaching, responsibilities at home, resources, mode of delivery, curriculum content, and living accommodation. Program success depends entirely on resourcefulness and innovation.

Keast (1995) discussed a pilot project from the University of Alberta to remote communities where approximately 70% of the students enrolled were Aboriginal. Such courses were delivered via multipoint videoconferencing to a maximum of six sites. These programs are not without growing pains, with the students' program evaluations citing concerns with program planning and administration. Students also expressed an interest in having more course offerings, more effective program advising, and career counseling. Despite complications, the project was deemed a "moderate success" with a 51% completion rate (p. 41).

Fiddler (1992) detailed the operations of the Wahsa Distance Education Centre for Aboriginal secondary and postsecondary students in northwestern Ontario. The program operates in 23 remote communities associated with the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council (NNEC). This distance learning program, which allows students to remain in their communities, has been funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) since 1990. Radio broadcasts are used to deliver programming to community learning centers. Correspondence courses are also delivered with the assistance of coordinators and tutors. Effective program delivery methods, suggestions for program improvement, and expansion are offered.

Spronk and Radtke (1988) examined the issues faced by Aboriginal women who attempt distance education. They cite Aboriginal women as 80% of the enrollees in distance programs available to Aboriginal people through Athabasca University. They state that distance learning is attractive to Aboriginal women because it is self-paced and allows them to fulfill domestic responsibilities. Distance learning also eliminates transport and child care problems for these women. Various program delivery modes and student services are discussed, and their effectiveness is rated.

Owen and Hotchkiss (1991) examined Athabasca University graduates from 1985-1990 to determine whether the university was fulfilling its mandate to students. They found that 65% of students were female, primarily living in urban rather than rural areas, and "the removal of time and distance, through a flexible study structure, was an attraction to all Athabasca University graduates" (p. 10). The authors concluded that Athabasca University was successful in removing some of the barriers that prevent individuals from obtaining postsecondary education. However, the growth of new technologies raises questions about the level of access, comfort, and experience with technologies in First Nations communities.

Spronk (1995) outlined the historical, economic, cultural, and political situation of First Nations people in Canada. Using this information as a backdrop she then detailed a variety of collaborative distance education and Native studies programs being delivered across the country. She credits these programs with increasing the participation of Aboriginal students in postsecondary institutions

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

through improved accessibility. Spronk surveys the program mandates and explores the challenges experienced with program delivery such as curriculum and course content, instruction and delivery, and political constraints.

The Findings

The data were collected from participants of a Technology Usage Project conducted with First Nations communities affiliated with a tribal council and its administrative offices in summer 1998.

Respondents

The 60 respondents who came from the six communities varied in education, employment, and training; were in different phases of their careers; and ranged in age from the early 20s to the late 50s. Identification data, summarized in Table 1, showed that most respondents (87%) were First Nations and 75% were reserve residents. The vast majority of those who were First Nations members were from tribal council member bands.

Respondents were employed and worked in various jobs in the community, but mostly in clerical positions. Most (80%) were employed in full-time, permanent positions; 10% worked part time; and 10% were employed temporarily.

There was an overrepresentation of women, with 70% women and 30% men. From my experience with First Nations communities, this sample is consistent with the gender ratios of most First Nations administration, school, and service agency work forces. Generally more women than men are employed in band administration.

Respondents' educational attainment levels ranged from less than grade 9 completion to postgraduate university degrees. Slightly fewer than 60%, or 34 of 60 respondents, had some form of postsecondary education. The educational attainment breakdown for respondents with postsecondary education is as follows: 11 (18%) have college training; six (10%) have a university degree in progress; 12 (20%) have baccalaureate degrees; and five (8%) have graduate degrees.

Individual Technology Use

Respondents were asked about their regular personal use of technology in the workplace including telephone, computer, Internet, e-mail, voice mail, computer networking, satellite dish, teleconferencing, fax machine, modem, fax modem, cable television, audiocassette, computer managed learning, electronic bulletin board, videocassette recorder (VCR), or other technologies.

Table 2 summarizes the use of each technology. Some technologies are universally used in the respondents' workplace: telephones were used by 98% and fax machine by 90%; computers had replaced typewriters, with 85% use. Less frequently used technologies were the audiocassette (47%) and the VCR (60%). However, most computer-based communications technologies listed on the questionnaire were used by only a quarter of respondents; computer-managed learning (25%); the Internet (22%); e-mail (23%); modem (23%); fax modem (23%); computer networking (25%); voice mail was used by only by 17%; an electronic bulletin board by 13%. Audioconferencing (18°h); satellite dishes (15%); and cable TV (15%) were also used by only a few participants, but cellular phones were used by 20%.

This means that 70% of the listed technologies were used by a maximum of 25% of the respondents. However, all technologies were used by some individuals in the communities as the data show that no technology listed in the question was unused. Although not all respondents found these technologies essential to the completion of their daily duties, many stated that using some

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

of these technologies would make their daily tasks easier.

Technology use at the six sites varied greatly. For example, individuals at Site 2 used 53% of the listed technologies on a daily basis, whereas those at Site 4 used 94%. The variance might be explained by the types of work performed by the individual respondents, and some were more technologically advanced than others. One individual used the Internet, fax modem, modem, electronic bulletin board, and computer networking several times a day, whereas others used only the telephone, computer, and fax machine.

Respondents were then asked which technologies they used the most while performing their work duties. A majority of the listed technologies, 13 of 17 or 76%, were used daily by the respondents. The telephone, computer, and fax machine were reported as the most frequently used technologies. All respondents used them. These were closely followed by the video tape-recorder and audiocassette, which were used by seven and nine respondents respectively.

Other technologies (Internet, e-mail, modem, fax modem, voice mail, computer networking, satellite dish, cable TV, computer-managed learning, and electronic bulletin boards) were used much less frequently. Respondents were asked why they did not use certain technologies. They answered that they were not readily available for their use; that they were too busy to learn how to use them; or that they were comfortable with the limited technology they had. When they were questioned about their comfort levels with using various technologies, the most comfort was reported with the technologies they used most frequently. The telephone, computer, and fax machine had the highest comfort levels for the respondents. However, most were not keen on learning newer software. Many commented that they would like Internet training. Technologies that were never used were electronic bulletin board (in 5 sites), voice mail (in 2 sites), computer networking (seldom used or never used in 3 sites), Internet (1 site), cable TV (in 2 sites), and satellite dishes (never used in 1 site and seldom used in 3 others).

Community Technology Use

As community members, the respondents' opinion on technology use and availability in the community was solicited. When six to 10 members at a site responded positively, the technology was considered *most available; 2-5* positive responses were labeled *moderately available;* and *least available was* one positive response. Table 3 shows the respondents' opinion on the availability of technologies and the use of technology in the community.

When asked about the availability of technology in the community, all groups stated that the telephone was most available, followed by the computer and fax machine. The VCR was reported as most **available** in two groups and audiocassette was deemed most available by one. Moderate availability technologies most frequently included audiocassettes and VCRs. Cellular telephones were also said to be moderately available by all groups. Least available technologies included e-mail, modem, fax modem, voice mail, computer networking, electronic bulletin boards, and the Internet.

Respondents were then asked about the use of technology in the community; Table 3 shows these findings. All groups stated that the telephone was most used. This was followed by the computer and VCR. The computer and fax machine were reported as readily available and frequently used by almost all the groups. Moderate technology availability and use was recorded for audiocassettes and VCRs. Audiocassettes were moderately used in four of six groups.

The least used technologies in the communities were the Internet, e-mail, modem, fax modem, voice mail, computer networking, cable TV, satellite dishes, and the electronic bulletin board.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Conclusion

Respondents stated that use and availability were closely linked. If a service or technology was available in the community, in their opinion it would be used. For example, they said that if the Internet were more readily available to community members, it would be more widely used. Some suggested that school computers could be made available to community members.

Internet access was viewed as important to respondents. Many feel that valuable and recent information available on the Internet could help them in their jobs. E-mail and voice mail were viewed as time-saving devices that would allow them to leave a message for co-workers and return to their duties. However, this convenience is not available to them in their workplace. Some said they must sometimes make several attempts to reach co-workers for information. This is costly, time-consuming, and frustrating.

The telephone, computer, and fax machine were used regularly by almost all respondents, whereas the Internet, e-mail, computer networking, and modem were used by fewer than one quarter (of respondents). Other technologies such as the electronic bulletin board and the satellite dish were used by fewer than 10 individuals.

Respondents were keen to learn more about the Internet and to upgrade their computer skills. They felt that although many of the new technological advances were making their way to their workplaces or to the reserve, they were being left behind technologically. They believed that if they had more skills they could provide mentorship and support for new learners.

Most technologies were available almost exclusively in the administration offices, service agencies, and schools. Respondents believed that all community members should be computer literate and have access to communications systems, but there was a feeling that if the community members were not "brought up to speed" with regard to technology, they would have a much harder time finding employment in a society that increasingly relies on technology. Greater access to the Internet is essential if students are to have the potential to participate in distance learning opportunities.

The availability of technologies and the willingness of the potential students to gain academic credentials make the reserve setting a perfect location for distance learning program delivery. Delivering distance learning programs makes sense. Many obstacles such as loneliness, lack of a familial support network, housing, child care, and transport that are faced by students who leave their home communities to obtain academic training can be alleviated when students can remain in the community. First Nations people are aware of the increasing need for academic credentials to compete in today's economy. Distance learning is the answer for people who are ready, willing and able to gain academic qualifications, but having an appropriate experienced student support network in place is essential.

References

Government of Alberta. (1998). *First Nations of Alberta: Indian register population, December 1997.* Edmonton, AB: Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

Government of Canada. (1997). *Basic departmental data, 1997.* Ottawa: Ministry of Public Works and Government Services.

Fiddler, M. (1992). *Developing and implementing a distance education secondary school program for isolated First Nation communities in Northwestern Ontario.* (ERIC Microfiche Accession No. ED 400 156).

Keast, D. (1995). Access to university studies: Implementing and evaluating multi-point videoconferencing. *Canadian Journal of Continuing University Education, 23(1),* 29-47.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Canada's Indians. *Chronicle of Higher Education,* May 15, p. A3.

Owen, M., & Hotchkiss, R. (1991). Who benefits from distance education? A study of Athabasca University graduates, 1985-1990. *Research/Technical Reports 143.* (ERIC Accession No. ED 34-301).

Sharpe, D.B. (1990). Successfully implementing a Native teacher program through distance education in Labrador. In D. Wall & M. Owen (Eds.), *Distance education and sustainable community development.* Edmonton, AB: Canadian Circumpolar Institute with Athabasca University Press.

Spronk, B. (1995). Appropriating learning technologies: Aboriginal learners, needs, and practices. Why the information highway? In J. Roberts & E. Keough (Eds.), *Lessons from open and distance /earning* (pp. *77-101).* Toronto, ON: Trifolium Books.

Spronk, B., & Radtke, D. (1988). Problems and possibilities: Canadian Native women in distance education. In K. Faith (Ed.), *Toward new horizons for women in distance education: International perspectives* (pp. 214-228). London: Routledge.

Statistics Canada. (1998). *The Daily,* January 13, 1998, pp.

End notes

Core technological competences are defined as access, comfort, and experience using a variety of communications technologies.

The First Nations communities participating with this study included member bands associated with a central Alberta tribal council and its administration offices. The bands have a total population of 6,000 with 1,600 living off-reserve (Government of Alberta, 1998).

3 I have worked extensively with First Nations communities for the past 12 years.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Participatory Project Planning (SAVINI): Experiences and Lessons

ALISION MATHIE_ and ANITA DIGHE_
_*Coady International Institute, Nova Scotia, Canada.*
_*Center for Extension Education, IGNOU, New Delhi, India.*

Abstract: *This evaluation report examines the pilot phase of the SAVINI Project, an innovative distance education initiative mounted by Indira Gandhi National Open University that targeted at development workers in the NGO sector working for the disadvantaged rural and tribal communities. Through a participatory evaluation process, data was gathered from learners, NGOs and IGNOU staff to assess:*

- *the appropriateness of programme content and materials for the specified constituency of learners that IGNOU is trying to reach;*
- *the effectiveness of the training in terms of learners skills and capacities; and*
- *the effectiveness, including cost effectiveness, of IGNOU's model for delivering distance education in participatory planning.*

The report documents and analyses the findings of this evaluation and identifies the critical factors, the effectiveness of the SAV/NI programme which includes: the quality of the NGOs selected, the mix and calibre of learners, the quality of the collaborative relationships between IGNOU and the nodal NGOs the level of IGNOU support, and the quality of programme design and delivery, including the quality of print materials.

The evaluation of the pilot phase points to which factors need strengthening, and how the questions around cost-effectiveness could be addressed.

We have included this report as a sequel to the preceding paper by Shobhita Jain.

The Evaluation of the Pilot Phase

The Purpose

Occurring at the end of the pilot phase of the SAVINI programme which lasted 21 months, the purpose of the evaluation was to inform decision about content and delivery of the next round of SAVINI, to be conducted in 3 additional sites in Uttar Pradesh (in Dehradun and Lucknow) and Madhya Pradesh (Rupantar, in Raipur) as well as the existing sites in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, from July to December, 2000.

Specifically, the objectives of the evaluation were:

- to assess the appropriateness of programme content and materials for the specified constituency of learners that IGNOU is trying to reach,
- to assess effectiveness of the training in terms of learners skills and capacities,

Indian Journal of Open Learning, 2001, 10(2), 175-192
ISSN 0971-2690. Printed in India. ' Indira Gandhi National Open University

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

- to assess the effectiveness of IGNOU-NGO partner relations in furthering training objectives,
- to assess the effectiveness, including cost effectiveness, of IGNOU's model for delivering distance education in participatory planning,
- to engage stakeholders in a democratic and deliberative process of evaluation consistent with the bottom up philosophy of the SAVINI programme itself.

Major Stakeholders

The major stakeholders of the SAVINI programme are IGNOU, the collaborating NGOs, their fieldworkers, and Coady International Institute. Stakeholders in IGNOU include the programme coordinator, the project team, and Centre for Extension Education. The collaborating NGOs include nodal NGOs (city-based umbrella organisations) and the smaller, subnodal NGOs affiliated to them. A brief profile of the collaborating nodal NGOs for the first round of the SAVINI and the Coady International Institute is given below.

I. Samarthan

Samarthan (Centre for Development Support) is a voluntary organisation working with voluntary groups, development agencies, and the government of Madhya Pradesh. Its main objective is to support participatory development initiatives through strengthening of local institutions.

Samarthan is a member of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and of its Network of Collaborating Regional Support Organisations. Its work in Madhya Pradesh began in 1995 when this network collaborated in a programme to strengthen the Panchayat Raj in their respective states.

2. Astha

Astha means faith in people . It was on this basis that Astha was founded in 1986 by a breakaway group of rural social development workers who had been working together in another institution, also in Udaipur, Southern Rajasthan. The focus of Astha's work has been on facilitating the development of people's organisations, conducting training programmes, and supporting people in their issue-based struggles and efforts.

3. Urmul Trust

Urmul Trust is a family of organisations working in western Rajasthan for social and economic change. Originally created as a health and education service arm of a dairy cooperative in 1984, it took on the role of mobilising collective action by the poor in the face of the devastating drought of 1987. It has since facilitated three integrated rural development projects to counteract extreme poverty, steadily expanding into areas where the URMUL dairy has already set up infrastructure.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

4. Coady International Institute

Located in Nova Scotia, Canada, the Coady International Institute has been running educational programmes in community-based development since 1959. It is named after one of the founders of the Antigonish Movement, which is known for its mobilisation of farmers and fishermen into producer cooperatives in Canada during the economic depression of the 1930s. In its 40 year history, it has conducted diploma and certificate programmes, notably in adult education, community economic development, participatory planning and evaluation, NGO management, and communications and advocacy. It works in partnership with educational and training institutions overseas.

Research design

This evaluation research employed a mixed method design in a collaborative approach to inquiry. Two of the evaluation facilitators were associated with stakeholders in the programme - one from IGNOU and one from Coady International Institute but neither had direct involvement in the implementation of the programme. A third evaluation facilitator had been involved in the implementation of the programme as a curriculum specialist for IGNOU.

Although this evaluation was consultative and collaborative in its approach, its design and implementation are only moderately participatory. At the design stage, the evaluation objectives were discussed between IGNOU and the Coady International Institute. Facilitators recruited from the nodal NGOs had a free hand in generating feedback from the learners at the third camp, and the issues raised there were incorporated into this evaluation process. However, while the evaluation of the pilot phase was discussed informally with the NGOs, they were not involved in finalising the objectives.

Nevertheless, a collegial, collaborative relationship between IGNOU and its NGO partners should ensure that the findings of this study will be reviewed by the NGO partners before it has wider dissemination. As such, the design falls into the category of Democratic Evaluation (Mac Taggart, 1991) or deliberative democratic evaluation (House and Howe, 2000). Future evaluation exercises, particularly if the NGOs take more ownership of the distance education programme, will have to take the level of participation of the different stakeholders into account, and ensure that the process of deliberative action is brought to completion.

Research Methodology

1. Document review

2. Mixed group and focus group interviews with the learners at the final interactive camp at two of the three sites. (These interviews assessed appropriateness of content, the short-term impact of the programme, the effectiveness of its delivery, and methods of performance evaluation. They were conducted at one site by the evaluation team, and at a second site by an IGNOU representative with the assistance of the facilitators. At the third site, there were delays in the date of the final camp due to the government deploying NGO staff to conduct the Panchayati Raj elections. As a result of the delay, it was not possible for an IGNOU representative to attend.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

3. Interviews by the evaluation team with the training facilitators to assess the above, the facilitators training manual, and the role of the facilitators.

4. A questionnaire survey. This was designed by Coady International Institute to gather feedback from the NGO whose fieldworkers had participated in the SAVINI programme, based on the results of 1 and 2 above. This survey was mailed to the NGO directors with instructions to discuss the survey with the learners from that NGO and fill in the survey form on the basis of that discussion. The survey addressed issues of programme content, programme relevance, mode of delivery, and cost effectiveness (compared to alternative training models).

5. Individual interviews and group meetings. These were conducted at each of three sites. NGO directors at the nodal and subnodal level were invited to give feedback on the SAVINI programme. Those attending the meeting completed the questionnaire survey, if they had not already done so. The interview and survey data were then analysed by developing a category system (Miles and Hubberman 1991) and summarising and analysing the data in each category. A complete list of those interviewed, and the number of returned questionnaire as a proportion of the total is given in the appendix.

6. Summary and analysis of learner profiles and performance evaluations.

7. Dissemination of this report to IGNOU and the collaborating NGOs for verification, discussion and deliberation.

Note: Some of the learners interviewed in mixed groups and focus group interviews ***(2)*** *also participated in (4) and (5). In our view, the more the discussion involved the learners, the greater the credibility of the findings, and the greater utility of the process itself. Such meetings served to strengthen communication and support of the field workers.*

Summary of Findings

Who are the learners? Are the learners in the pilot phase the target group of learners?

Summary Table of Learner Profile (Learners who completed the programme)

	Total	**SC/ST/OBC**		**High School Only**		**Female Learners**		**Years Experience**					
								1 -2		3 - 5		>5	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Bhopal-Gwalior	20	8	**40**	6	**30**	3	**15**	7	**35**	12	**60**	1	**5**
Udaipur	21	13	**61**	15	**71**	5	**23**	1	**5**	5	**23**	15	**71**
Bikaner	28	10	**35**	13	**46**	9	**32**	1		13		7	
Total	69	31	**45**	34	**49**	17	**25**	9	**14**	30	**43**	23	**33**

	Rural		**Age**					
			<25		<25 - 34		>35	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Bhopal-Gwalior	13	**75**	4	**20**	11	**55**	4	**20**
Udaipur	18	**86**	2	**10**	11	**52**	8	**38**
Bikaner	19	**68**	4	**14**	21	**75**	3	**11**
Total	52	**75**	10	**19**	43	**62**	15	**21**

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Overall, the learner profiles reveal the following: 45% of all learners are from disadvantaged groups, a significant improvement on the 6% cited by Reddy (1999) as the norm for IGNOU's courses. Across all sites, male learners were more numerous than female learners, comprising 75% of those completing the programme in the six months. Although programme centres were asked to aim at a 50% female participation, it was not expected that this would be achieved in the first round.

For Bhopal, the typical learner was male, belonging to non-scheduled caste, with tertiary education, and 3-5 years experience. Bhopal had the lowest % of female learners. All the 3 were non-scheduled caste. One had secondary school, and one had tertiary education.

For Udaipur, the typical learner was male, belonging to scheduled caste, without tertiary education but with more than five years field experience. 5 out of its 21 learners were women, and none had tertiary education. Only one was from scheduled caste.

For Bikaner, the typical learner was male, belonging to non-scheduled caste, with tertiary education, and 3-5 years experience. Bikaner had the highest proportion of women learners (9/28) 4 out of these 9 women had tertiary education. None were from scheduled caste.

Is there any relationship between demographic variables and performance?

A partial correlation analysis was run to determine the correlations between caste, level of education, gender, age, and the interactive camp site (as independent variables) and the performance of the learners (the dependent variable) as measured by the final grades awarded to the learners for all components of the programme. From this analysis, the only significant correlation was between site and performance. While this could be an indicator of the quality of facilitation, it could also be an artefact of different grading range used in the different sites. Without a standardised grading system, conclusions cannot be drawn with confidence about this relationship.

For the learners in the pilot programme, was the content appropriate, given their roles and their experience?

At the two NGO sites in Madhya Pradesh (Samarthan and Sambhav) and one Rajasthan (Urmul) site, learners and NGO coordinators stated that the content of the SAVINI programme in some cases provided more of an affirmation of what learners already knew than an introduction to new skills and practices. This was not to underestimate the value of the programme-it is considered an important means of legitimising and reflecting on experience, particularly in an environment where the participatory approach is both central to NGO practice and expected by donor agencies. Given the mix of learners-in terms of age, experience, educational background, it is inevitable that the content was not "all things to all people." However, while some facilitators expressed frustration at the diversity, this comment requires two qualifications based on our observations: Firstly, the larger the number of learners, the more difficult it was to take advantage of the diversity among the learners. Secondly, learners at the third camp at Bhopal spoke about the empowering effect for those with less formal education of having their experience recognised and valued by those with higher formal educational qualifications. Thirdly, given the objectives of this programme to strengthen capacity in participatory planning,

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

the model of engaging a diverse group of participants in a workshop setting is an important contributing factor in the training process.

The added value of a package of skills, opportunities, and reflections on experience seemed to be key, however. While many learners may have been strongly motivated by the opportunity to get the certificate through IGNOU, they also suggested that under the right circumstances and conditions this programme could make a qualitative difference to their work and their thinking.

Both the learners and the NGO leadership were asked about the content of the programme. Typically, the learners expressed more interest in the skill-based content than the issues-based content, while the NGO leadership, with its broader perspective, identified the content issues more frequently. However, this is no means a clear-cut distinction, both groups appreciating the opportunity for learners to step back and develop deeper understanding of development, as well as the opportunity to learn new skills or have the existing skills strengthened or validated. The challenge is in ensuring the right balance.

Content areas mentioned as particularly useful

- The importance of a holistic approach, involving all stakeholders in the community in analysing and planning for change (mentioned by both learners and NGO coordinators).
- Particular content areas: Group formation, participatory tools for problem identification and analysis and tools for project formulation, proposal and report writing, and budgeting.
- The use of a diary, giving participants opportunity to reflect on their work, and preparing for writing up their project for their final assessment (however, while the diary was considered good preparation for writing the proposal), more guidance as to what to write was needed.

Content areas requiring greater emphasis

Tools/skills (What? and How?)

- More training in creative communication skills to reinforce the sections on group formation and group building, particularly as they could be applied to urban slums (Bhopal site).
- More time needed for practicing PRA tools in the camp setting. The appendix on PRA was useful, but more hand-on training was required (all sites).
- Participatory project evaluation (Udaipur).
- Accounting/ project management skills (Udaipur, Bikaner).
- Problem solving skills using real life experience of participants (Udaipur)

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Issues (What? How? and Why?)

- A more thorough treatment of the urban context and the different kinds of social dynamics and issues around group mobilisation that pertain to urban slums (Bhopal, Gwalior, Udaipur).
- How to mobilise, and how to deal with the forces of disintegration. The content should shift field workers away from the notion of social work (and many of them have their formal training in this) more towards how to build pressure groups, how to influence policies, and why people's organisations are important. Forces of disintegration need discussion and analysis as well as strategies for dealing with government bureaucracies and local dynamics (Gwalior, Udaipur).
- More in depth treatment of gender issues, specifically the concept of gender, laws relating to women, activities of women's organisations in India such as the Working Women's Forum and Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), the significance of international feminist activism, and the application of a feminist development approach (Gwalior, Udaipur).
- Coverage of issues such as Naxalism, caste/class conflict, the past present and future of panchayats, distinctions between labourers/workers/the poor, tribal self-rule, human rights, traditional healing practices (Udaipur).
- A stronger emphasis on the analysis of poverty issues and on strategies for change. Field workers need to be able to identify whether change is positive "Are these small incremental steps significant?" (all sites).

What kinds of attitudinal change was noticed among the learners that could be attributed to the programme?

Attitudinal changes were identified as follows:

- Increased self confidence (I can do it), self-reliance, in the face-to-face interactions.
- A deeper understanding of development issues such as the root causes of poverty. One younger learner in Udaipur:

I used to think that people were poor because they were not working hard enough. Now we are asking the What/where/why/who/when questions and understand that there are structural reasons for poverty. I used to see development as food, clothes, and shelter , now I see the importance of helping people to think and act, strengthening community from the bottom-up

- An appreciation for the importance of women's participation in development.
- An appreciation of the importance of the skills and work habits such as writing skills; sensitive listening skills, planning with the community; planning work systematically and efficiently; thinking ahead.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

How have the learners applied what they have learnt?

All the nodal agencies in this pilot are involved in training Panchayati Raj (Local Government) functionaries in micro planning. In this way the training in the certificate in participatory programme planning will have immediate application.

During the 6 month period, learners were required to reflect on and apply what they had learnt to do their own work. The following responses represent the outcome of their experience:

Understanding development in a more holistic way, and acting on this understanding:

There are 47 villages represented by the learners in the SAVINI programme. We had to think holistically about the villagers rather than focus on the segment we have specific responsibility for. This gave us a chance to practice everything .

Mobilising people with greater confidence and greater appreciation for a strategic approach

During the programme I was mobilising women mineworkers. The owners came to know and I was constantly harassed by thugs; so I began to work on health issues with the women as a way of distracting the attention of the employers and of developing the confidence of the women that I was genuinely working in their interests. Since the beginning of the programme, a loose organisation with a membership of 300 has developed (it started with 12).

One of our fieldworkers works at the zonal level in the integrated rural development. She is working with self-help women's groups. She managed to activate the group during the SAVINI programme, figuring out how to organise it, plan with the women, etc.

In the 6 months I have had much greater success in my project. Initially the women's group I was trying to mobilise got off to a slow start. There were difficulties getting accepted, since I was not from the area and had to learn a new language. Initially only one woman had taken out a loan. Now she has repaid and many more have joined

Applying particular tools and skills learnt through the programme:

She was able to use the project proposal she developed during the programme for a successful funding from UNICEF for a women's empowerment project

Our field workers are applying what they have learnt by carrying out micro-planning with people at the block level around water and sanitation issues, and by scaling up this participatory planning exercise at the panchayat level

The fieldworkers have conducted PRA in 50 villages, and helped the communities to plan projects based on the findings

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

He was able to address an International conference on biodiversity in Delhi, using the material he generated during the certificate programme

How effective was the process of delivering the programme?

The Delivery Process

The basic participatory model of delivery was well received, appreciated, and effective. As one NGO director noted in the survey: Each camp takes the learners to a level where they can proceed independently . Respondents saw the value of integrating new learning with field-based practice. Several concerns, however, were raised about the length of time in interactive camps; facilitators and learners both stated that the time was too short for interactive type learning to cover the practical and analytical skills required.

The effectiveness of facilitation (determined by facilitator skills, the number of learners in the interactive camps, and resources available to the facilitators) is a critical factor in the effectiveness of the programme. Feedback on the facilitation varied. Respondents felt that consensus needs to be reached on: a minimum set of learning objectives (descriptive, not prescriptive), how to prioritise learner objectives and expectations, how to respond to heterogeneous needs and expectations, how to budget time and other resources, and how to make best use of a variety of resources.

The experience of other adult education programmes using mixed groups (Srinivasan 1990, for example) document the rich experience that can result from an interface of learners with different technical, social, and educational backgrounds. However, "a mixed group does require very special preparation so that the activities hold the interest as well as capitalise on the expertise of all concerned". This is true of SAVINI, as well especially in the workshop environment which requires experienced and talented facilitators to accommodate diversity.

IGNOU's regional centres had minimal involvement in the delivery of the programme. It was generally felt that the centres could take on more of the administrative functions conducted by the facilitators, but should not take part in training and facilitating.

Mix of Learners

The leaders' educational backgrounds ranged from Grade 8 pass to MA degree, and from 2 years experience to 15 years. There were typically more men than women. Two distinct categories of learners were evident: senior level employees with higher levels of formal education, and field level workers with more experience and less formal education.

In general, this mix was considered beneficial. Those with experience but little formal education were appreciated for their contributions. Those with more formal education and little experience were confident and helpful to others in the group, but also came to realise how much they had to learn. A community of learners could be established in which skills and experience could be shared, and the strengths and contributions of all could be appreciated.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

While there was active interest in the SAVINI programme scaling up to the diploma level, the NGOs were more concerned about ensuring that the certificate programme met the needs of those fieldworkers with least formal education (Urmul, Sambhav).

The level and style of the Hindi used in the print materials was voiced as needing attention. A suggestion was also made to cater more specifically to different learning needs by using a modularised approach by which learner could graduate to different levels, as follows:

Level	**Type of modules**	Purpose	**Type of award**
1.	Simplified module	Affirmation of what candidate knows	Letter of appreciation
2.	Simplified module	Affirmation of what candidate knows	Letter of completion of level 2
3.	Structured modules	New knowledge, deeper analysis	Certificate
4.	Structured modules	New knowledge, deeper analysis	Diploma

Programme Materials

The following suggestions were made with respect to the print materials used in SAVINI (in descending order of frequency);

- ♠ Use more illustrations and improve the clarity of the pictures
- ♠ Include more case studies. For example, on women empowerment, and participation, contemporary local examples are needed
- ♠ Clarify the text in the sections on:
  - ♠ Development, Marx and Gandhi
  - ♠ Women in Power
  - ♠ Labour, work, and power
- ♠ Use recent historical examples
- ♠ Use local issues.

Performance Evaluation Process

The evaluation of learner s performance was conducted differently in all 3 sites. The facilitators assessed participation and diary entries, but in keeping with the participatory nature of the process of delivery, learners and facilitators designed their own evaluation process for the presentation of the field-based project in the third interactive camp, based on guidelines in the facilitators manual. For example, in the case of Astha, the learning group decided on a set of criteria and each project was subjected to self-evaluation, peer evaluation and evaluation by a panel of examiners, based on these criteria. The final grade combined all three.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

performance, although there was less agreement on whether the criteria for performance were clear and consistently applied. In keeping with the participatory approach, the process was empowering for the learners, although time-consuming with larger groups.

For the organisation, what are the costs and benefits of this approach to training as compared to others?

Feedback from the nodals and subnodals was generally positive in response to this question, although it was noted that for fledgling organisations the fees might be unaffordable. Others described the fees as extremely low or nominal compared to other training alternatives and in view of the benefits of the programme. The benefits most appreciated were the fact that participation in the programme could be integrated with on-going project work, and the intensive interactive camps that provided the opportunity for intense hands-on training and discussion. When several learners from the same organisation participated there was potential for these to be added value in the motivation and energy that such a joint experience generated within that organisation.

What is the cost of effectiveness of this programme, from the perspective of IGNOU?

Under the existing arrangements, IGNOU has absorbed the costs of planning, development, and delivery of the SAVINI programme in its pilot phase. Typically, in IGNOU's other course offerings such heavy initial costs are spread throughout subsequent rounds of a course or programme. In the case of the SAVINI programme, however, IGNOU's mandate to reach the most disadvantaged provides a rationale for cross subsidization by other courses and programmes.

Compared to other courses or programmes, SAVINI has particularly high costs because of the interactive camp component, the need for a high facilitator: learner ratio, and the cost of adapting and reprinting of materials in order to ensure continued relevance. If such expenditure proves to be unsustainable, the following options may have to be considered:

- ♠ Increasing the total number of learners by replication in other sites (offsets printing and administrative costs)
- ♠ Increasing the ratio of learners: facilitators at each camp (offsets facilitating costs)
- ♠ Shortening camp durations, or reducing their frequency (offsets facilitation) and accommodation costs)
- ♠ Transferring administrative costs to the Regional Centres (offsets administrative costs)
- ♠ Raising fees

In light of the findings of this study, a higher learner: facilitator ratio or reduced time for interactive camp would seriously threaten programme effectiveness. Investment in optimising facilitation could be explored.

Analysis of Findings

The SAVINI programme comprises:

- a participatory process for the design of distance education in participatory

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

- a collaborative mode of delivery by IGNOU and its NGO partners; and
- materials and resources for training and education in participatory programme planning.

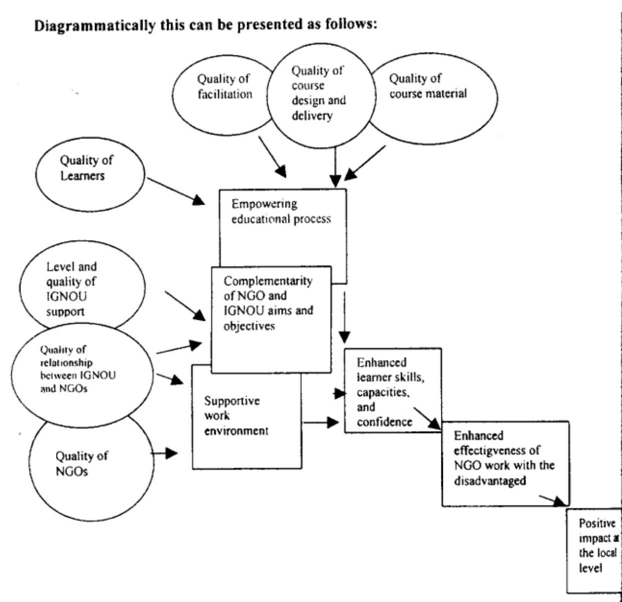
In assessing the effectiveness of this programme in its pilot phase, these three components have been treated as an integrated package. An analysis of the main findings suggests that there are a number of critical factors that influence the effectiveness of this programme in terms of its first objective, namely;

Strengthened capacity of development practitioners working among disadvantaged groups

And it is by understanding these factors and their interrelationships that the programme can be successful in its second objective, namely:

Enhanced capacity of the IGNOU.system in, facilitating participatory development

Contributing to the enhanced capacity of the individual learner are: the calibre of the learner; the quality of the educational process; the overall design of the programme content; the quality of the NGO environment; the quality of the relationship between nodal and sub-nodal NGO; and the relationship between the NGOs and IGNOU.



Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Note that this diagram is a simplified model. Interactions between these factors also need to be taken into consideration. For example Quality of facilitation is a function of quality of NGO capacity in this area and the level of financial support offered by IGNOU.

Critical factors

1. **Quality of Learners:** From this study, the educational or experiential backgrounds of the individual learners appears to be less significant than a mix of backgrounds in the group and high levels of individual motivation. This is consistent with experience of distance education with adult learners from disadvantaged groupings.

2. **Quality of sub-nodal and nodal NGO:** There are two ways in which this factor influences success. First, the three nodal NGOs with their network of sub-nodals that were selected for this pilot phase were NGOs with an extensive track record of working at the community level with a participatory approach. Second, a central premise is that the learner continues his/her work as a development field-worker for the duration of the programme, applying new skills, and reflecting on the work in light of the issues raised in the SAVINI programme. For this reason, a supportive work environment makes a qualitative difference to the learner’s experience and the effectiveness of the programme.

3. **Quality of the NCO-IGNOU relationship:** For the most part a consultative, collaborative relationship was established between IGNOU and the nodal NGO partners. Difficulties were sometimes encountered for bureaucratic reasons such as delay in facilitator payment, and delays in graduation certification. In future, given the very different ways in which NGOs and Government Organisations (GOs) operate it is important to have systems in place that conform to everyone’s expectations, and do not rely on particular individuals. The importance of university credentials should not be underestimated: the fact that IGNOU confers legitimacy and currency to training through an NGO-IGNOU partnership is a critical motivating factor for the learners.

4. **Quality of facilitation:** The interactive camps are essential to the programme. They provide an opportunity for hands-on-learning; they create a community of learners to learn from each other. However, the quality of facilitation is a critical factor in realising this potential. This is dependent on the quality of facilitators (who need organisational training, analytical, and facilitation skills), and the quality of their resources (facilitator s guides, course materials, videos, and other technical resources). Large groups tend to negatively affect the quality of facilitation, depending on the skills of the facilitator and the quality of their resources.

5. **Quality of programme design and delivery:** One of the challenges of a participatory process is that the character of programme design and delivery may vary across sites to suit local needs and conditions. While local responsiveness is critical, this has to be reconciled with the need for standardisation of learning outcomes in the interest of ensuring that a certification can be meaningfully

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

6. **Quality of course materials:** Several recommendations from the learners for improvements in the course material are documented in the earlier sections. Inviting NGO partners to revise the materials would ensure continued relevance of the materials and an appropriate level of Hindi.

Implications for the Programme

The study raises a number of issues, documented here by a series of questions for discussion:

The learners

- ♠ Given the conclusion that mixed groupings (age, gender, caste, educational background) work well, what is the optimum mix?
- ♠ What mechanisms need to be in place to support those with least formal education?
- ♠ What mechanisms need to be in place to support those with ample formal education but least experience?
- ♠ What can be done to encourage those who do not complete the programme in the first 6 months? In particular, what incentives can be introduced to ensure that every one, but especially women, both register and complete the programme within the 6 months?

Sub-nodal and nodal NGO

- ♠ What are the different arrangements made by the NGOs for financial support of learners? What can be learnt from the potential for increasing fees to cover costs, and/or a sliding scale system?
- ♠ Assuming there is added value (for the organisation and for the learner) of having more than one development worker enrolled in the course at the same time, how can subnodal agencies be encouraged to maximise that potential added value?

NGO-IGNOU relationship and the quality and level of IGNOU support

- ♠ How can further roles and responsibilities for the programme be transferred to the NGOs without compromising on critical success factors, and without jeopardising a participatory approach and a minimum level of standardization across more widely located sites?
- ♠ Similarly, what are the implications of scaling up this programme throughout India? How can minimum standards of delivery and minimum learning objectives be accomplished without compromising on the need for local responsiveness?

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Facilitation

- How can facilitation at the interactive camps be optimised? What different strategies might be employed?
- What additional technical resources could IGNOU provide that would enhance facilitation without incurring extra costs over the long term? For example, in what ways could video be used creatively to record learner field activities, or to provide an additional medium for learner project presentations. How can radio and the telephone be used to maximise communication among learners or between facilitators and learners for the duration of the course?
- How should the costs of equipment used in facilitation and the maintenance of that equipment be covered?

Programme design and delivery

- While respondents typically mentioned tangible skills as the most useful, further discussion also revealed the importance to them if reflection on their work experience and an enhanced analytical capacity. How should be the optimum balance between the development of analytical capacity (the Why?), and the practical skills (/What? and How?) be attained?
- What should be the balance between standardised learning objectives and particular learning objectives at each nodal site?
- How effective are the different components of performance evaluation (for example, the diary and the field-based project presentation)? What criteria are used? How comparable are they across sites? Would it be useful to have the results standardised by each site sending a sample of learner portfolios from each site to one external evaluator, and correcting grades for inconsistencies?
- Would there be a demand for the staggered approach to obtaining the certificate, as suggested by the director of Samarthan? The suggestion here was to work towards a diploma in stages.
- What norms are required, agreeable to all parties, that ensure comparability of grading across sites?

Quality of course material:

- In what ways would the programme be enhanced by additional materials and resources (TV, radio, telephone)
- Have the revisions made in preparation for the, subsequent edition of SAVINI been adequate?

Implications for further evaluative inquiry

As the programme moves into its second round, it will be important to:

- Characterise and document the relative strength of critical factors at all sites
- Maintain accurate records of costs of running the second round of SAVINI

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

including IGNOU and NGO staff costs

- Establish computerised data base for learner profiles and learner performance. Ensure its maintenance
- Assess potential trade-offs of transferring responsibility for running subsequent SAVINI rounds to NGOs
- Use focus groups to determine effectiveness of revised print materials for different learner groups
- Assess relationship between NGOs and PRIs, and between NGOs and IGNOU
- Evaluate the programme with a view to its replication in other sites
- Conduct extensive research into distance education for disadvantaged groups across India and the different media being used.
- Continue to track those who registered for the first round of SAVINI, but did not complete the programme in the first six months
- Explore ways of encouraging more women to participate

In future evaluations the following challenges faced in the current evaluation need to be addressed

- **Resistance to questionnaires:** Possible reasons for this are the past experience of questionnaires as an extractive means of information gathering, the lack of ownership and therefore the lack of appreciation of the power of this tool as an instrument of collaborative inquiry, and our own failure to appreciate the different kinds of relations between directors and workers that might make the exercise problematic in some instances.
- **Language:** With non-Hindi speakers (if they are to be part of the evaluation team) a translator is required. In this evaluation, translation often had to be provided by one or the other evaluation team members, which is a constraint on pursuing interviews to the depth and breadth required
- **Timing:** Finding an appropriate time for follow-up interviews is also a challenge; ensuring that interviews do not conflict with other meetings or with reporting dead-lines is an important lesson here. Adequate time must be set aside to ensure that all participants and respondents fully understand the purpose of the inquiry and are willing to devote their time to it.
- **Ensuring adequate representation of the view of the least articulate learners** (typically those with least formal education).

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Summary and Conclusion

The SAVINI programme is a bold initiative, breaking away from IGNOU conventional approach to distance education in the interests of reaching the disadvantaged, and pioneering a participatory approach to design and delivery. Its success in reaching out to learners from disadvantaged groups (and to rural and urban disadvantaged populations through NGOs) is evidence of the quality of NGOs selected, and the quality of IGNOU collaborative relations with NGOs. Its more qualified success in delivering a genuinely empowering educational programme in participatory planning relies on the quality of facilitation, programme design and programme delivery.

As the programme continues, effective monitoring of the programme is critical. This means i) effective *tracking* of the profile of learners (age, gender, caste, educational background) and their progress, and ii) effective supervision and support of course delivery. For monitoring to be effective, a monitoring mechanism acceptable to all parties needs to be in place, supported by an appropriate data-base.

All these critical factors needs to be taken into account, to give the programme maximum chance of success in reaching its ultimate objective, which is to strengthen the capacity of those working with the disadvantaged in the context of a restructured system of local governance, and to do this in a way that respects local knowledge and experience.

In terms of effectiveness in reaching those objectives therefore, it must be recognised that learning is not just about acquiring new knowledge and skills, but about affirming and reflecting on experience and knowledge that learners already have and being motivated to apply it. On-going evaluation of this programme must continue to bear this in mind.

References

Astha: Efforts of Alternative Development, Ten years 1986-1996

House, E.R. and Howe, K.R. (2000) Deliberative Democratic Evaluation *New Directions in Evaluation* No. 85 pp3-13.

McTaggart. R.(1999) When democratic evaluation doesn't seem democratic *Evaluation Practice,* Volume 12 #1 Miles, M. and Huberman. A.M., 1991 *Qualitative Data Analysis.* Newbury Park: Sage.

Reddy. V.V., (1999) Paradigm Shift in the Delivery of Distance Education: Experiences at the Indira Gandhi Open University , Paper presented at the Commonwealth of Learning conference, Brunei, March 1999.

Sohini. Paul, (1999) Micro Planning: Capacity Building in Local Self Governance in CIVICUS: Vio. V1 N No.11.

Srinivasan, L. (1991) *Tools for Community Participation: A Manual for Training Trainers in Participatory Techniques.* New York: UNDP

Urmul Trust, (1999) Moving in Sand and Times. Summer/Ashaad. 1999.

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.

Appendix

Learners assessment of the SAVINI Programme between camps 2 and 3

Selected results relating to programme delivery (combined figures for Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan*)

Statement	SA	A	Neutral	D	SD
Utility value of SAVINI Programme					
1. Program is useful to the development worker	80.5	19		.5	
2. Structure of program is not related to my development	33	65	1	1	
3. Course material is not related to my development work	33	65	1	1	
4. It is difficult to complete the course within 6 months Structure of program is not related to my development	9	16.5	10.5	39	25
Quality of course material					
1. Course content is understandable	52	37	6.5	3.5	.5
2. Language of lesson is difficult	10	21	6	50	13
3. Presentation of lesson is not interesting	8	14	8	53.5	16.5
4. Absence of adequate graphics and examples in course materials.	9	16.5	10.5	39	25
5. Difficult words and concepts without adequate explanation.	16	39	5.5	21	17.5
6. Lessons can be made more interactive	30	57	6.5	6.5	
7. Audio-visual program too few.	22	46	8	18	6
8. Audio visual programs helped in understanding the course	31	52	6	7	4
Maintaining field diary					
1. Daily reporting in the diary is difficult	8	13.5	.5	48	30
2. Tenure of fieldwork is inadequate	15	28		37	20
3. I have noted my thoughts, experiences and difficulties in the course in the diary	22	51	9	6	12
Interactivity in SAVINI Camp					
1. Tenure of camp is too short	23	41.5	4.5	24	7
2. Adequate amount of participatory element in camp	15	28	37	20	
3. Discussion on course material in the camp	44	51	3	.5	.5
4. Difficult to reach the camp	2	2	12	34	50
Suggestions for improvement of SAVINI programme					
Include local issues			41	63	
Use simple language			35	52	
Explain difficult concepts			25	37	
Make it a more job-oriented programme			19	28	
Increase time duration			7	11	
Suggestions for Interactive Camps					
Satisfied with interactive camp			28	43	
Increase time duration			31	47	
More sharing of experiences			26	40	
Should be more activity oriented			21	32	
Suggestions to improve evaluation procedure					
1. Evaluation procedure satisfactory			18	28	
2. Use written and oral procedures to evaluate learner knowledge			21	32	
3. Evaluation should be an aggregate of the various elements: fieldwork, camps, diary, project proposal			24	36	
4. Evaluation of skills and abilities of learners			20	31	
5. Evaluation should he done by a participatory approach			12	18	
6. Through diary work			10	15	
7. Through field Work			7	11	

*9Survey Design by Dr. Nair, results tabulated by IGNOU, April 1999.

[Alison Mathie is associated with Coady International Institute, St. Francis Xavier University, P.O. Box-5000. Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada B2 G2 W5.

Anita Dighe is Director, Center for Extension Education at Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi-I 10068, contact address: CEE IGNOU, New Delhi-I 10068, e-mail address: adighe @ignou.ac.in]

Individuals may reproduce a copy of the third-party copyright materials listed below for their own personal use only: any further reproduction or transmission of any such content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder of the relevant material.