BEYOND
LITERACY

SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS

The Beyond Literacy series is published to disseminate information on innovations in literacy and empowering education in the Asia Pacific region. ASPBAE's Literacy Programme has through many years fostered learning exchange, information sharing and innovative experiments across the region.

Today there are nearly 1000 million people worldwide who have not acquired literacy skills, and there are many millions more who are unable to sustain them. Across the region, there exist several innovative efforts to tackle these problems. Information on these small, often private and widely dispersed efforts however do not reach the broader audience of policy makers, academics, NGOs, social activists and other interested civil society groups, who could help influence policy in favour of more context specific and community sensitive approaches to literacy.

The **Beyond Literacy** series emerged through a series of workshops organised by ASPBAE to identify new challenges and priority areas for further action. The documentation of innovative practices aimed at tackling the problem of illiteracy and sharing their successes and failures, emerged as an urgent need. These could provide peers an opportunity to evaluate their own experiences, cross fertilise ideas, and view literacy as an integral part in the holistic process of the empowerment of the marginalised. The Case Studies have not only taken account of the literacy innovations made, but also the nature and extent of follow up undertaken and the impact on people's lives from a broader developmental perspective.

BEYOND LITERACY

CASE STUDIES FROM ASIA AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC

BEYOND LITERACY
SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS

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> "It is true, that what is settled by custom, though it be not good, yet at least it is fit. And those things which have long gone together are, as it were, confederate within themselves. Whereas new things piece not so well; but though they help by their utility, yet they trouble by the inconformity. Besides, they are like strangers, more admired and less favoured". Francis Bacon, *On Innovations*, 1597.
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> "The need for improvement in education is recognised. If education is to improve and to be sensitive to changes in society, there will be a need for innovation" (Nicholls 1983: 88.)

INTRODUCTION

Interest in innovations is not new, but it has grown very greatly during the second half of the twentieth century. The promotion of innovations started in science and spread into business studies before entering the field of education in the late 1950s (Street, 1969: 4). Since then, "the rate of innovation in education .. has accelerated in recent years" (Nicholls, 1983: 10). The study of innovations, their diffusion and their effects, began a little later, in the early 1960s.

Over the last few years, there has been increased interest in educational innovations among bodies such as UNESCO which made a number of studies of innovations in the formal system of education, including a series of publications under the title *Experiments and Innovations in Education* (see Huberman, 1973: Havelock and Huberman, 1980). Rather belatedly, this has spread to adult education and adult literacy learning programmes (for example, Mauch and Papen, 1997). Innovations are seen by many educationalists as the saviour of

education: "Practical ideas that can improve performance merit serious analysis by administrators and teachers alike. Innovation, seen as a fountain of such concepts, is currently projected by policy-makers as a key requirement of new educational and training initiatives" (Rudduck, 1991: 27).

Innovation in education is still largely a concern of administrators, planners and academicians rather than practitioners. "Interest in innovation entered the education system via those in charge of planning, who took over the notion from the administrative sciences, the systems approach and applied science" (Jung and King, 1999: 33-34). But in adult education, planners and practitioners are more closely linked and indeed are often the same persons, so that the relationship of innovations in adult education to field practice is closer than in the formal system of education.

WHAT IS AN INNOVATION?

Much ink has been spilt over what is and what is not an innovation. There is general agreement that an innovation is different from change, although of course it always implies some change. An innovation seems to have four characteristics:

a) **it is planned.** It does not happen on its own (as many changes do). It requires initiative on the part of some agency or individual (Nicholls, 1983: 2). It is intended, a deliberate change; it is "willed and planned for, rather than occurring haphazardly" (Miles, 1964: 14).

b) **it is aimed at progress,** at what is called by some writer as "relative advantage" over the existing programme (Nicholls, 1983: 2). "Innovation in education .. provides more or better inputs, and/or produces observable and measurable changes in teaching proc-

esses, that result in higher efficiency" (Jung and King, 1999: 34). In particular, the purpose of innovations in education is increased effectiveness: "The worthwhileness of an innovation is ordinarily justified on the basis of its anticipated consequences for the accomplishment of the system's goals" (Miles, 1964: 15).

c) **it is new** in some way or other - either new in concept or new in practice. It may involve the "recombination of parts or a qualitative difference from existing forms", but the essential factor is that it is felt to be novel.

d) **it is specific** - that is, it concentrates on a defined, particular area or activity within a real context. When the innovation widens to reach out to cover different actions and different contexts, it ceases to be an innovation and becomes instead 'good practice' (if it remains effective).

The definition of an innovation depends on the person making the definition. What is an innovation to one person will not be an innovation to another person. "Whether or not an education-related event, experience, product or programme is to be identified as an 'innovation' depends on the observer's point of

Multiple Action Research Group, (MARG)

view and field of knowledge" (Jung and King, 1999: 36). An innovation then may be contested, like other areas of education, especially adult education.

INNOVATIONS IN ADULT LITERACY

This booklet introduces a short series of case studies of innovation in adult literacy learning programmes drawn from the Asia South Pacific Region through the work of ASPBAE. They have been extensively discussed in a series of workshops held in Bangladesh and Nepal during 1998-99.

These case studies illustrate the fact that the understanding of the concept of innovation will vary from context to context. They are also revealing of other aspects of our discussion of innovations and how they may be used. The workshops indicated several areas where innovations have been introduced into adult literacy programmes in recent years. For example,

- developing a completely new programme
- reaching a new target group
- using a new approach
- building a new curriculum
- creating a new vehicle for adult literacy learning
  - working with new kinds of associated programmes
  - forming new structures to support the literacy learning programme.

There are of course other kinds of innovations, but these elements will enable us to look more closely at the nature and role of innovations in adult education.

MARG: A New Programme: In India, a voluntary body called MARG,

faced with their concern about women's lack of awareness of their legal rights and many cases of abuse against women, often perpetrated by the police forces themselves, developed a new programme of legal literacy (that is awareness and knowledge development). Using local facilitators whom they trained (the trainers were professional lawyers) and new materials which they developed relating to recent legislation, they worked with many women's groups, encouraging the women not only to learn about their rights but also to exercise these rights in cases such as violence and rape, registering crimes, property and marital rights, and the assertion of their own powers of decision-making. The particular innovation in this case was the use of literate and non-literate facilitators alongside each other; providing both sets of people with the same training, and watching carefully how the non-literate facilitators engaged with their learning groups. This was not a case of non-literate women being unable to exercise the function of facilitator until they had learned the skills of reading and writing, but of assisting such women to work alongside the other facilitators. Some of the women engaged with their own literacy learning through this work - one of the most striking results of this programme has been the increase in confidence of both the facilitators and the women with whom they work. The programme started in a very small way, with some local workshops. It grew as new opportunities arose and new demands were heard - into new publications, into a video, into working with different groups. None of this was expected when the programme started. This was a case where a completely new programme was developed on a small-scale and grew into something bigger.

HEAL: A New Target Group: In Nepal, World Education, already established in the field of providing adult literacy classes for adults (espe-

*Health Education and Adult Literacy (HEAL)*

MelTrust

daily women), were approached by a new group of women who wished to learn literacy skills. These were persons who wished to become government Community Health Volunteers, a position, which they could not take up without having literacy skills. World Education developed a new learning programme for them (HEAL - Health Education and Adult Literacy), combining health instruction and literacy to meet their particular needs. In this way, a new target group was reached. It started
in a pilot fashion and rapidly expanded. In its second phase, the inclusion of health education with literacy skill learning has been brought from the HEAL project into some of the mainstream adult literacy classes offered by World Education in Nepal.

MelTrust: A New Approach To Adult Literacy Learning: In Vanuatu and other islands in the Pacific, an umbrella organisation called MelTrust re-examined the adult literacy programme it and other agencies were already running. Worried that this programme was not achieving its main goals, it introduced two new features - learning through local languages rather than through the standardised textbook approach, and secondly, developing a critical literacies approach, by which the participants are encouraged to look more critically at their own environment through the literacy learning programme. In many ways, it is argued, this direct engagement with the environment is a going back to early approaches to local learning which had been lost when Western ideas of education were introduced, through missionaries, traders, government officials and development aid workers.

Association for Non-Traditionai Education in the Philippines, (ANTEP)
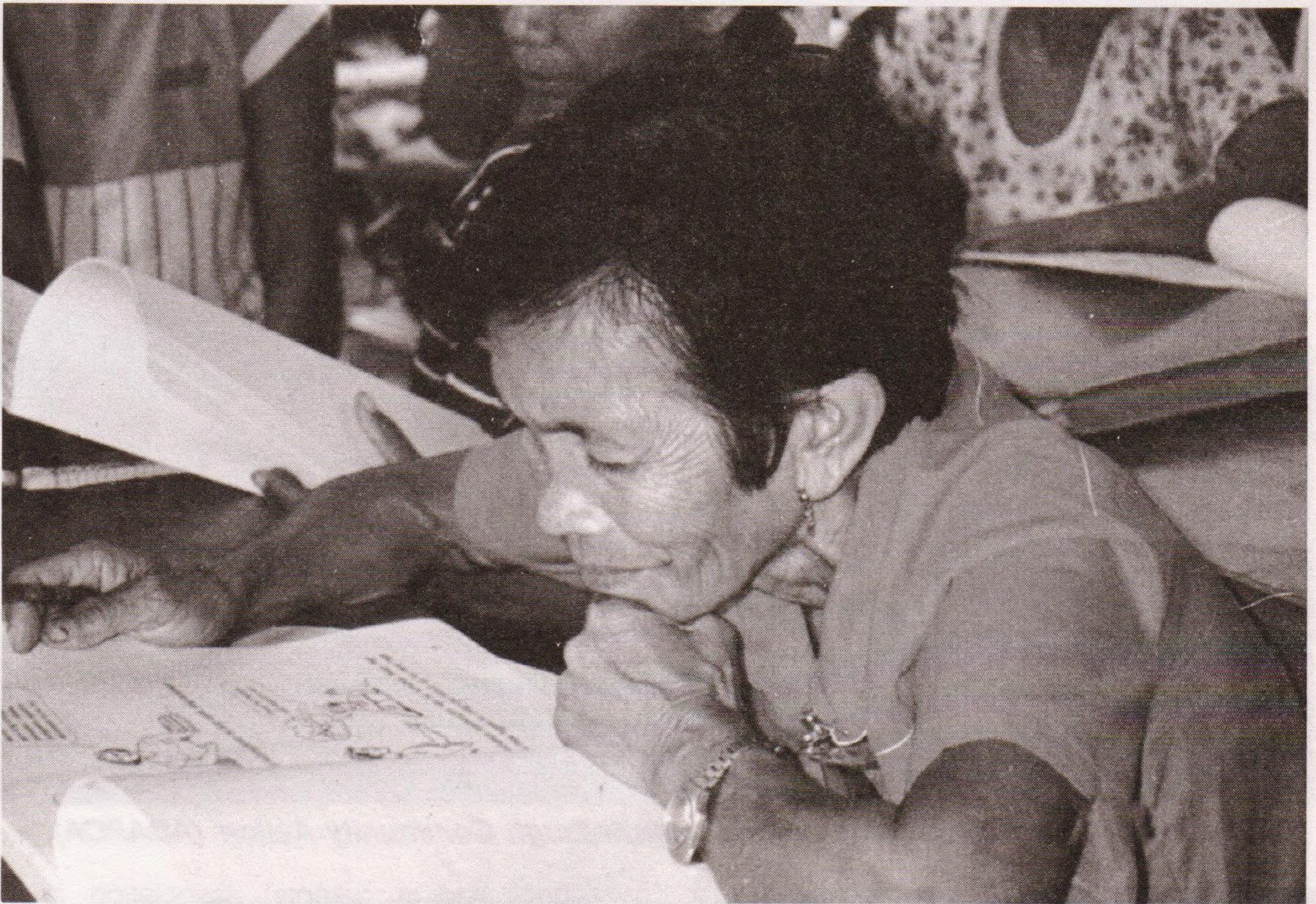
ANTEP: A New Curriculum: In the Philippines, an NGO called ANTEP (Association for Non-Traditional Education in the Philippines), committed as it is to exploring different ways of providing education for both youth and adults, has developed a new curriculum which is in many ways a reversal of traditional curricula. Instead of starting with concrete technical subjects such as health and technical skills and moving onto more abstract conceptual learning related to society and to individual development, this curriculum starts with helping the student participants to come to their own understanding of the major issues of life and society, with religious values and philosophical issues - the kinds of questions many adults (literate and non-literate) constantly ask themselves. The curriculum then looks at social concerns such as living in harmony with people who are different, and communication. It is only at a later stage that the technical skills needed to earn a living are introduced. Literacy skills are developed throughout the programme but more specifically in the later stages, the earlier stages laying more emphasis on oral learning activities.

ADAPCA: A New Vehicle: In Sri Lanka, a new learning programme for farmers was introduced on ways of managing pests, using less insecticides. ADAPCA in Sri Lanka saw this as an opportunity to help some of the farmers to develop their literacy skills at the same time - for some of the farmers involved in the pest management programme were unable to use the texts associated with the pest training. Again using specially prepared teaching-learning materials with content directly related to pests and their control, and specially trained facilitators, a new and spepific literacy learning

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Association for Development and Peace through Community Action (ADAPCA)

programme for farmers was launched - a programme which laid heavy emphasis on numeracy as well as literacy skills.

V'EPA: New Associated Activities: In Pakistan, BUNYAD (an NGO working in Punjab Province) was already running non-formal schools for girls throughout the region. Each

Women's Empowerment for Poverty Alleviation

school had a parents' association and a community support group (Village Education Committee). Several of these groups asked BUNYAD to provide some training for their members. The main focus of this training gradually turned into a micro-credit scheme in which loans were offered to the groups, in a programme called Women's Empowerment for Poverty Alleviation (WEPA). Programmes for learning literacy skills were also offered, using specially prepared teaching-learning materials.
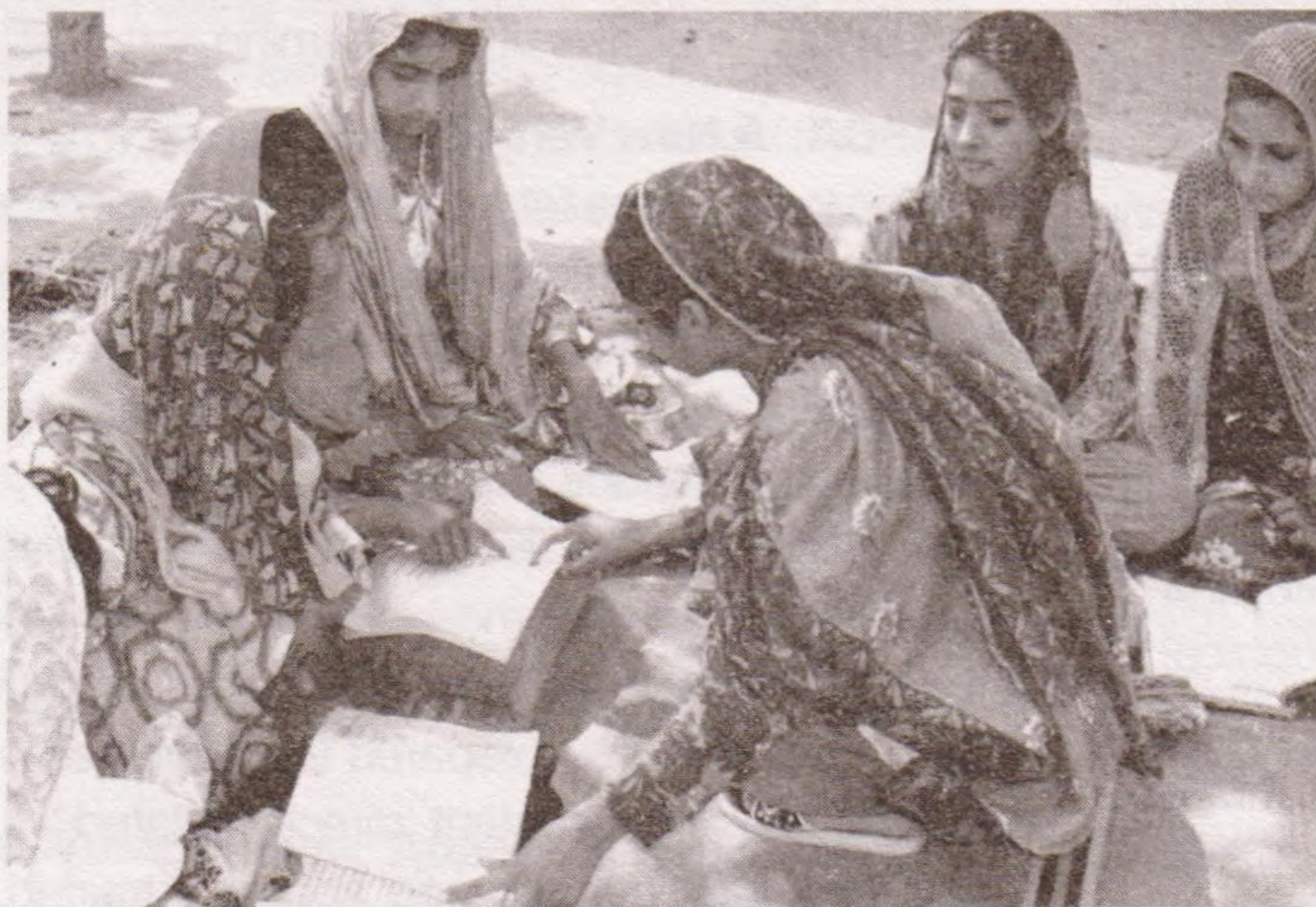
Ganokendra: New structures: In Bangladesh, the Dhaka Ahsania Mission realised that the adult literacy learning programmes which it had been running for many years was not having as great an effect as they hoped, since many of the participants found themselves un-

Ganokendra

able to use their literacy skills in their daily lives. The NGO therefore set up local learning centres called *Ganokendra*. At first, these were only for the participants in the adult literacy classes, but at local request, they became open to other members of the local community; in particular, they serve as learning centres for children in the villages in which they are located. They have a wide range of functions, especially acting as health centres (drawing on government programmes) and some micro-credit centres (using the services of another major NGO in Bangladesh). They are staffed by paid facilitators. The aim of the project is to provide on-going support for literacy learning as well as other community activities.

COMMENTARY ON THE CASE STUDIES OF INNOVATIONS

All of these innovations were specially planned with intention. All of them were planned for progress, to advance the process of using literacy to enhance some programme or activity. All of them were new to the organisation developing them, even though they may have been tried in other countries or locations. All of them were directed at a specific group of participants or a specific goal.

These are not of course the only or even the most important innovations within the Asia-South Pacific Region; but they do serve to illustrate the nature of innovations in adult literacy programmes. They have at least one common characteristic - they all seek to put adult literacy learning into some other context, what may be called **'literacy plus'**. In most cases, they are concerned with helping the participants to use the literacy skills they have been learning in the classroom either in the course of their daily living patterns or to achieve specific new purposes.

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The thing, which seems to bind all of these case studies together, is not just their innovativeness in literacy learning approaches, although they all have some innovative features. Rather, it is the fact that they all go beyond literacy learning to encourage the use of literacy. Every one of these case studies realised that the learning of literacy skills without using these skills in real life would achieve very little indeed.

Each person will of course look at these seven case studies differently; each will take from them what he/she feels feel is appropriate to them at this stage of their personal development in the light of their own experience and current situation. What follows is a personal view of some of the conclusions, which can be drawn from these particular case studies.

All of the case studies seem to suggest that literacy learning on its own is not enough. Each of them has located its literacy-training programme within a particular context. Sometimes it is literacy **+** 'something'. Sometimes it is 'something' **+** literacy. Sometimes it is both combined more or less equally. But always there is that 'something' extra. It may be possible to identify some of those 'somethings'.

What is Literacy plus?

Some of the case studies reveal the use of the word 'literacy' in a wider sense than is normally the case. The MelTrust example talks about 'environmental literacy', reading the environment (perhaps we could do with more being said about 'writing the environment'). The MARG case study concentrates on 'legal literacy'. From the other case studies, we could talk perhaps about 'health literacy' and 'agricultural literacy' and 'income-generation literacy'.

Now, there are both problems and value in this use of the word 'literacy' to mean more than reading written and printed material and writing texts. One of the problems is that this use of the word can on occasion lead us to say that 'the [textually] illiterate are [legally] literate' (for example) - which would sound nonsense to someone who does not know what we are talking about. Some of the case studies understand this; so they talk about 'print literacy' or 'text literacy', to distinguish this literacy from the kind of literacy they are talking about.

But there is also much truth in this use of the word, if we analyse it more carefully. What is meant by legal literacy, for example, is 'awareness' plus knowledge and understanding. MARG is clear about this: the aim of their project is to help the women participants to become more aware of their legal rights and to know about the law and to understand some aspects of it: this is what they mean by 'legal literacy'. MelTrust also intend to revive traditional ways of being aware of the environment, to know it and to be able to 'read' it. ADAPCA again seeks to help the farmers to become aware of and knowledgeable about the issues relating to pest control.

Thus we can see that the word 'literacy' can mean more than simply deciphering letters and words on a page. In this sense, it means 'making sense of **and** 'being able to use' (the law, the environment, the farming practices etc). So too for textual literacy: the idea of literacy does not just mean being able to decipher more and more words on a page, but 'making sense of these words **and** 'being able to use them' in a particular context.

Traditional approaches to teaching literacy skills to adults usually include some awareness elements, mainly through discussion groups which are attached to the literacy classes. But this is not the same as helping the participant men and women to understand the meaning of

words and sentences in their own context. Most of the discussions on awareness concentrate on other subjects like health or poverty; they do not talk about being aware of and understanding *literacy* itself as it is practised in their own communities. Most adult literacy learning programmes simply teach letters and words, not their varied meanings and their varied uses. All of these case studies are very clear about this. Their goal is wider than simply helping people to read words in a literacy primer; it is to help them to understand the meanings of those words and the way those words are used in their own context.

The lesson from this then would seem to be that programmes which seek to help adults to learn literacy skills need to concentrate on the way words and sentences are being used in a particular context, not just teach the letters and words divorced from a situation.

Literacy Plus Context: Each of these case studies shows a programme that is strongly contextualised. They each grew out of existing experiences within a particular situation. HEAL grew out of the need to train Community Health Volunteers; WEPA grew out of a demand from the members of Village Education Committees in Bunyad's other rural programmes. MARG's programme grew out of increasing concern about abuse of women, and the lack of redress for women in rural areas particularly. And so we could go on.

None of these programmes was 'parachuted in'. **They grew out of local demand.** In most of their activities, they did not therefore have to face the so-called 'problem of motivation' (although keeping the participants in the programme in the light of the many other, often more pressing, concerns which the participants faced is an issue which concerns every development programme).

This would seem to have important implications for the dissemination of these case studies. None of the writers or organisations involved wants their programme to be taken as a universally applicable model to be applied unthinkingly to all situations, since they grew out of a particular local situation. None of them is applicable *in toto to* all contexts, although they all have features, which are replicable. They cannot be transplanted to new fields without much adaptation in at least two ways:

● We all need to approach these case studies by choosing out from them what seems to be the truth to us in the light of our own context and our own experience. Some of these innovations and some parts of them will appear to fit our particular situation and our concerns better than others. **We need to decide** and **to choose.** That is why seven different approaches are described in these booklets.

● We all **need to adapt** these case studies to our own context. Having selected which parts of them we feel will work in our area, we need to change them to fit our own situation. These case studies should encourage us to experiment as these organisations have experimented. No-one is saying that all farmers will want to learn about pest control or want to learn about this topic in this way; and the same is true about credit and savings projects or human and legal rights projects or health projects. Rather, we need to examine our own situation and see what kinds of opportunities we have to build our own innovations on the suggestions which these have provided for us. We need - like these case studies - to spot the growth buds, those points at which new programmes can be developed growing out of existing programmes. These examples will not 'fit' without some adaptation.

The lesson from this then might seem to be that new approaches to teaching literacy skills must grow out of existing programmes, not simply be brought in from the outside without roots. Innovations need to be adapted to the local, until it does not look like an innovation.

Literacy Pius Use

Perhaps the most striking thing about all the case studies is their emphasis on the **use of** the skills they seek to develop among the participants. In every case, the participants used the skills to achieve a goal. Let me give some examples.

MARG is very aware that learning about laws and women's rights will be useless unless this knowledge and the skills which go with it are used in a particular context. The same is true ADAPCA's project for pest management: unless the new agricultural knowledge and skills are used, no-one will benefit. This is especially true of the HEAL programme: World Education are quite clear that unless the health knowledge is applied to local situations, it is useless. There is a valuable distinction to be drawn between 'useless knowledge' and 'useful knowledge'. Much adult literacy learning is useless knowledge, because it is not being used in any meaningful way. Learning literacy skills on their own is useless; they only become useful when they are used.

But the use of literacy skills will depend on the particular context. They may be used for different purposes - for reading newspapers to find out local gossip, or reading fashion or film magazines, for writing greetings cards and so on, rather than reading improving literature and writing more formal texts (for example, 'learner generated materials') for others to read. MelTrust's project in Melanesia points out that the skills of critical literacy which they seek to promote need to be used by the participants for development 'in their own terms'. That is, they do not set universally applicable goals in advance for their groups, but encourage the groups to set their own goals. The same is true of Dhaka Ahsania Mission's approach to their learning centres, *Ganokendra.* Each centre is free to engage in locally relevant activities determined by the participants, their own form of social action. The other projects too seek to help the participants to use their literacy skills to help them to fulfil their existing roles more effectively: to be better mothers (WEPA and HEAL), to be better farmers (ADAPCA). But even here there will be differences. MARG sees the different ways that their field workers are using their new knowledge and skills, sometimes even for uses which went a little beyond the law! Similarly, while some farmers will use their literacy skills for pest management, others will use them for irrigation or for marketing or for machinery - or even for non-agricultural purposes.

The main purpose then of these innovations in adult literacy teaching approaches is to help the participants to use their literacy skills to achieve their goals, not the goals of the providers. This is one of the clear messages of these case studies.

Literacy Plus Confidence

Another very striking feature of these projects is the way they all seek to build up the confidence of the participants. It is of course impossible for people to use new skills if they do not feel confident. The legal literacy workers, the farmers with their pest control, the women engaged in credit and savings and income-generation projects, the Community Health workers - all of these are encouraged by committed and skillful workers to try out and build up their skills in real situations. Increasingly, the control of the programme is being put in the hands of the

participants. In Melanesia, the whole project seeks explicitly to increase the control over the programme by the participants. And with this comes an increase of confidence, an increase of the willingness to experiment, to cope with new situations.

The key to this seems to spring from the positive attitude of all of these projects to the participants. Instead of stressing what the participants **cannot do,** they start off by believing that the participants are able and committed persons, who can become even more committed and able through a training programme in literacy and in a specific set of skills. The concentration is not on the lack of skills (the deficit) but on the task which lies ahead; and the enthusiasm of the project providers carry the participants with them. They begin with what the participants can do and in many cases are already doing, and they build on that. Without such an approach, it would be impossible to build up the confidence of the participants.

The lesson of this would appear to be that every adult literacy programme can seek to build up the confidence of the participants to go out and use the skills they are acquiring. So many programmes tend to stress what the participants cannot do, what they need. These case studies start with what they can do and are doing, and they help them and encourage them to do them even better. The results of these projects, with their examples of men and women who are now working in quite new ways and who are feeling so much better about themselves, are most impressive.

Literacy Plus Challenge

Each of these case studies use their programmes and projects to help the participants to challenge the world they live in. MARG in India deliberately sets out to challenge existing attitudes and actions towards women's legal rights. In Melanesia, MelTrust seeks to encourage critical literacy approaches by the participants. HEAL seeks to challenge existing approaches to health and nutrition, and the cultural and economic systems which bring these about. ADAPCA promotes deliberate challenges to the agro-chemical industries, while using their products when it is in the interests of the participating farmers to do so. WEPA challenges existing credit and savings arrangements available (or not available) to women in that situation.

Many traditional adult literacy learning programmes seem rarely to challenge the world. There are the discussion groups, of course - but these could go on apart from the literacy classes. Few literacy classes challenge the existing uses of literacy in their own society. For example, relatively few literacy learning programmes challenge the biased way reports are written in the newspaper articles which they read out in the classes. There is little of what is called 'critical language awareness' - debates about the way words are used and texts are created.

The lesson of these innovations is that every adult literacy class needs to use their literacy learning programmes to challenge existing uses of literacy in their own locality - who uses what kinds of texts, and for what purpose. In particular, the non-literate participants can join in these discussions, for they have direct experience of these existing uses of literacy.

Literacy Plus Local Literacies

Such discussions of course depend on the meanings attached to words; and as we have seen, meanings depend on the context. The use of words like 'fire' and 'water' in many women's primers, detached from any context,

make it hard for the women to learn to read those words. The use of these words in the context of a newspaper report of a slum fire which destroyed houses and perhaps killed local residents, or of reports of floods which overwhelmed many farmers, makes such words immediately relevant and therefore easier to learn.

In each of these case studies, the development of literacy skills is placed in the context of another area of development (health, law, farming, environment, savings and income-generation, community action), hence, all of them include not just literacy primer learning but what may be called 'learning for real'. The participants are learning to use texts which relate to health, to legal matters, to pests, to credit groups and income-generation activities. Many different methods are being used in these case studies. In Melanesia, for example, the 'whole language approach' is used. There is, it would seem, no one right way to help adults to develop their literacy skills.

MelTrust reports the importance of building on traditional community literacy practices rather than rejecting them or confronting them. This would indicate the significance of not importing a new literacy into the village but of building on what is already there. Both WEPA and ADAPCA report the use of what they call 'real' literacy activities, the use of a 'real' context rather than a typified one, of existing or 'found' texts rather than imported texts.

There is yet another feature of these case studies in terms of methodologies which seems to be important. Because they grew out of existing programmes, in many cases with existing groups (the Village Education Committees in Pakistan, the *Ganokendra* in Bangladesh, the Community Health Volunteers in Nepal etc), many of the groups they work with are made up of groups of people with varying levels of literacy skills rather than all of them being non-literate. Such 'mixed' groups would seem to create a more effective literacy learning environment than the traditional 'class' of all non-literate persons. There is a great deal of peer teaching and learning going on in these groups, as the ADAPCA and MARG innovations indicate.

The most important lesson from this is there is no one right way of helping adults to learn; the facilitators have choices to make, and their training programmes need to help them to make choices rather than restrict their choices.

THE NATURE OF INNOVATIONS IN ADULT LITERACY LEARNING PROGRAMMES

This series of case studies will help us, not only to look again at our adult literacy learning programmes, but also to examine what we mean by an innovation in adult education in more general terms.

The Origins Of Innovations

Innovations can of course be either internal or external, endogenous or imported in origin. In many cases in the formal education sector, "innovation in education has come to be regarded as an expert-defined external process" (Jung and King, 1999: p. 33). But in adult education, many innovations arise spontaneously from within existing programmes, as is clear from these case studies. The ADAPCA innovation was one which had been tried in other countries (for example Indonesia, where literacy and the pest management programme have been combined) and the idea was thus brought into, and adapted to circumstances Sri Lanka. The MARG innovation stood more or less alone from other development and literacy programmes, as did the ANTEP curriculum project,

although in this case, it formed a part of a wider programme provided by ANTEP. All the others were closely related to existing literacy learning programmes but in different ways. HEAL was provided alongside an existing programme, WEPA grew out of an existing programme, the Ganokendra project was added to an existing programme, and MelTrust sought to reconstruct existing literacy learning programmes.

There seem to be three main sources of innovations:

- **Response to Changes.** Changes in society create new opportunities and new challenges. Changes in the way we think bring with them desires to act in new ways. We can see this in particular in the spread of new ideas on 'development as participation' (from Freire, Robert Chambers and many others). Equally, the growth of feminist ideologies and the emergence in recent years of what has been called the New Literacy Studies with the new understandings of what literacy is and how it can be encouraged have brought with them pressure for many innovatory ways of working with adults. MARG, built upon changes in our attitudes towards women in society, is a clear example of this.

  Such innovations may be brought into being to try to defend the existing pattern of educational activities against the changes which new insights introduce; or they may be introduced specifically to adapt to and encourage those more general changes. Innovations are not neutral: they will either hasten or resist change.

- **Concern about Effectiveness.** "Innovation is needed in education systems which fail to deliver.. an acceptable quality of service" (Lewin, 1991: 16). The monitoring and evaluation which all adult education pro-

grammes engage in will frequently challenge the planners to seek and to try out new ways of working - in reaching wider groups or fulfilling the objectives more quickly or more cheaply or more effectively (however that is defined). Such innovations spring from a sense of discontent among the education-providers. Again, these innovations can be seen as either maintaining the existing *programmes(Ganokendra)* or as challenging the existing programmes (MelTrust).

- **Willingness to seize New Opportunities.** As we have seen, many innovations grow out of existing programmes, even by happenstance. Both HEAL and WEPA took advantage of an opportunity to meet newly expressed felt needs. Such innovations are usually designed to maintain the existing programmes out of which they grew rather than to introduce radical change. They do not spring from discontent so much as from a sense of confidence in the existing programme, in the way things are going.

The Source Of The Innovation

Innovations can come from one of three dimensions.

- they can come **from the outside** inwards, from taking up what is done as good practice elsewhere and adapting this to a new context. These are still innovations in their new context. ADAPCA is an example of this.

- they can come from the **top down**, from planners to teachers and participant groups. Ganokendra and ANTEP are examples of this.

- they can come from the **bottom up**, from local demand or from local discontent with the existing provision. HEAL and WEPA are examples of this.

Research

The fact that innovations may respond to changes, arise from discontent with existing programmes, or spring from new opportunities, will mean that, for an innovation to be soundly based, it will need to be based on a thorough and appropriate study of the context from which the innovation arises. A true innovation is not just a good idea which someone then implements. To be successful, it will need to be built on sound foundations, and this means investigating and surveying the field properly.

Characteristics of an innovation

What does an innovation look like?

First, as we can see from our case studies, **an innovation may not always be a break from the past.** Indeed in some cases such as MelTrust, it may even be a return to a past which has been abandoned for some later, more fashionable approach. But even in these cases, it is not a revolution but an evolution. It "implies progress rather than a break from the previous stage. New things emerge from their own background, even though they may deny it" (Jung and King, 1999: 38-37). Despite its newness, an innovation in adult education will be compatible with the current activity.

Secondly, **it is an experiment.** "Too often an innovation is introduced as 'the answer' rather than as something good but not perfect that can be improved with experience and careful study" (Miller, 1967: 17-18). It is always problematical, tentative. An innovation has been described as "a promise" (Jung and King, 1999: 38). This is particularly true of WEPA which to begin with did not know where it was going, since the local groups would determine what they wished to do.

Because of this, there will always be a lack of precision about an innovation. It will be a journey on which adult educators set out, not knowing precisely where they are being taken. MARG found that their project was being pushed into unexpected activities to meet the needs of the project participants as the programme developed. Ganokendratoo set out on a unexpected journey. An innovation is action research (and needs to be evaluated as action research). "Innovation in education mainly consists of 'programmes in movement'.. a process that flows with a certain continuity and indetermination" (Jung and King, 1999: 38).

Thirdly, **an innovation in adult literacy is almost always on a small scale.** Very few innovations are on a large scale until they have been fully tested. Most of these innovations were tried out at first with small pilot groups to see if they would work. The scaling-up process from innovation into good practice is a complicated issue which we will discuss later, but the innovation stage will almost always be on a small scale.

Fourthly, **most innovations are people-dependent:** that is, they will rely on the enthusiasm, insights and flexibility of one individual or a very small group of persons who will be committed to the innovation. What has been called "the flood of enthusiasm that often accompanies innovations" is what makes them work (Lewin, 1991: 15-16). Behind each of our case studies lies a group of committed practitioners and planners.

Conditions For Success

This means that there are at least two conditions for the success of any innovation in adult education.

Attitudes and skills: First, as all our case studies show, for an innovation to be successful, there is a need for a number of persons who have a range of first attitudes and secondly

skills which are conducive to the health of an innovation.

On the one hand, there will need to be a willingness to acknowledge and learn from their own failures, a willingness to experiment, to try out new approaches, an awareness of the issues involved. "Innovations involve both possibilities and dangers. The word 'innovation' opens up another world for us, a world of creation and autonomy" (Jung and King, 1999: 39-40). These people are explorers, willing to live with insecurity and the tentative nature of exploration, able to cope with "a process that is open to innumerable configurations" (Jung and King, 1999: 37).

Secondly, they also need to have the skills to analyse a situation, to assess the relevance of the innovation to the issue or situation being faced, the ability to work out for themselves the dangers involved in the innovation, to work in a participatory way to problem-solve.

An innovation team will thus need to be both creative in terms of ideas and practical in terms of implementation. "Creative ideas must be identified and accompanied by a viable means of converting the concept into a product or service which customers need". In other words, each of the persons involved in the project "acts as a researcher, experimenter and innovator à Effective innovation depends crucially on inventiveness, a sense of initiative and enterprise, a willingness to take risks and an ability to cope with mistakes and with organisational rigour" (Roffe, 1999: 27).

Context : Secondly, such innovators need to have the autonomy to act, to make and implement decisions at short notice, to make flexible adjustments to the programme. The organisational context within which the innovation takes place needs to be a supportive one in terms of the climate, the effective communi-

cation systems and the supply of appropriate resources for the innovation. In every case, the innovations listed above rely for their success on an organisational structure which is positive towards the project. In particular, developmental support to the staff involved in the innovation is very important. This is sometimes overlooked, since many innovators give the impression that they do not need such developmental assistance. They often appear to be self-contained and able to engage in their own self-directed learning. Encouragement, confidence building, and a sympathy for the extra workload which most innovators carry are among the most important elements in an organisational context to successful innovations.

An organisation which is accustomed to making innovations will be the better environment in which an innovation can be introduced. This is not only because such an organisation will have developed sympathetic approaches to innovations in general, but because "by a process of trial and error, and over a period of time, [it will have] generated a body of knowledge relevant to the operation" (Roffe 1999: 28). An organisation which is not itself developing innovations is unlikely to be able to adopt one successfully from elsewhere or to encourage those of its staff who see new needs and new ways of meeting these needs.

There is a third element which may yet prove to be of importance to the health of any innovation **- the way in which it relates to other developments in the same field.** There is a tendency for many innovations to be treated in isolation, for them to be reviewed and assessed independently of all other developments. The recent studies of innovation in adult education in Latin America (Jung and King: 1999) revealed clearly the importance of treating all innovations as relating to a specific situation - what the authors call 'innovation in context'.

The conclusion was that in the social and educational field, innovation cannot be defined as [simply] a new step. Rather, it is something created and recreated by the agents involved, in a process that is implemented only when and if it is of relevance to them within the context in which the education programme is developed. By this, we do not mean to imply that each programme develops in isolation. On the contrary, the vast spectrum of educational, organizational and conceptual possibilities created in programmes of this kind allows for exchange and borrowing wherever relevant. (Jung and King, 1999: 2-3).

The innovations listed in this series will continue to develop in a healthy way only insofar as they become rooted in the overall experience of the organisations promoting them. If they remain singular, separate, unique instances of individual action, and not part of the mainframe of the organisation's activities, they will tend to wither.

THE PURPOSE OF INNOVATION

It would seem from our case studies that the main aim of an innovation is to improve the performance of the programme: in particular,

- **to extend its outreach:** to reach new groups of participants (HEAL, WEPA, ADAPCA)

- **to change its contents:** to widen the learning programme (ANTEP, MelTrust)

- **to enhance its quality:** to promote the quality of the work already in hand (HEAL phase 2, Ganokendra).

- **to fulfil its social purpose:** to promote particular social values such as increased equality and wider empowerment of marginalised groups (MARG).

The criteria relating to what is and what is not an innovation spring from the context within which the decision is being made. In the Latin America research project into innovations in adult education, "an educational experience will only be considered innovative if it changes the meaning of traditional practice and contributes to social participation and solidarity, cultural revival, the integration of work and education, and the autonomy and creativity of those involved" (Jung and King, 1999: 36). In other contexts, different criteria will be used. An innovation is not always an innovation. Or rather, any activity is an innovation if enough people feel it is innovative.

EVALUATION OF INNOVATIONS

The evaluation of innovations is of course especially crucial to the project - for as we have seen, an innovation is a form of action research to be assessed in the way research projects are assessed. Any innovation is an experiment. Therefore, its success and failure and the reasons for this need to be constantly monitored and finally evaluated. The evaluation of innovations in adult education/literacy learning will of course take the same format as that of all educational programmes, with two essential queries:

- *What were the effects of the programme on the participants (short-term and long-term)?* did the innovation help the programme to achieve the learning goals (which in the case of adult literacy will, of course, be how far the project helped adults to develop their literacy skills so that they can engage in literacy activities in their daily lives)? How far did the ANTEP new curriculum really achieve the learning goals which the student-participants set for themselves? How far did MelTrust's new programme really develop critical literacy skills among its participant groups (and how will that critical approach to literacy show itself)? How far

did the women who came into contact with MARG's legal literacy programme show by the exercise of their actions in their everyday lives that they had learned something about their legal rights effectively through this innovatory programme?

● ***What kind of impact did the programme have on the community/society*** in which the participants lived? What were its wider implications? For example, what changes can be detected in the villages of Punjab in which the WEPA innovation was being implemented? Did the pest control methods which were being advocated in the ADAPCA project spread to other farmers in the localities in which the joint programme was offered?

But because of its essential nature of an activity designed to meet a specific need, to overcome a particular sense of discontent within a set context, there are other elements in the evaluation of an educational innovation which need to be asked and answered. Among these are the following questions:

● ***What kind of impact did the innovation have on the immediate context of the programme*** in which the innovation is set, especially on the organisation through which the innovation was developed? how far did it affect the institutional climate? or was it ring-fenced so that it did not affect any other part of that organisation's activities? How far, for example, did the HEAL project change World Education, did WEPA change Bunyad, did Ganokendra change Dhaka Ahsania Mission etc? "To innovate is linked to modifying a.. non-formal education's organizational culture and adding value to its structures, processes, procedures and products" (Jung and King, 1999: 33).

● ***What impact did the innovation have on the wider scene?*** how far has it been disseminated and how far taken up by other agencies? Has it changed the adult literacy scene for the better? Have some of the basic components of the WEPA innovation, for example, been taken up by other agencies in Pakistan or outside of that country? Has the HEAL innovation affected other literacy teaching agencies in Nepal or in the region?

What is more, to be of value to others, the evaluation of any educational innovation needs to include a description of the journey travelled, the routes taken, the different paths followed and the occasions when steps had to be retraced because they led into a blind alley. It has been well said that we gain confidence from our successes but that we learn from our mistakes. The most valuable part of every account of an educational innovation is the recounting of the difficulties met, the errors of judgment made during the design and implementation phases, the barriers faced, and the various answers chosen to meet these situations - in other words, "an account of the problems encountered and solutions developed in introducing and maintaining innovation in specific settings, and the unanticipated consequences growing out of its use" (Carlson, 1965: 4).

CONVERTING AN INNOVATION INTO GOOD PRACTICE

This brings us to the question of the sustainability of innovations, of how to convert them from something novel into something more common (good practice), to the issue of scaling up from the short-term and small-scale innovative experimental phase to the longer-term on-going programme phase.

It has been suggested that every educational innovation

> has a natural history and, in a sense, a life cycle. The full account of the life cycle of an innovation is the story of its invention, development and promotion, adoption, diffusion and demise" (Carlson, 1965: 4).

By 'demise' here, Carlson means the process by which an innovation ceases to be an innovation and becomes good practice.

The key process of developing sustainability and converting innovations into good practice is that of **embedding**, locking the innovation into a programme context which gives it some form of institutional stability and legitimacy. This process is often overlooked: "Proposals for innovation are quite frequently made without accompanying attention to the processes by which the innovation is to be installed" - i.e. the steps involved in it becoming embedded within an organisation's culture and programme (Miles, 1964: 11). This is sometimes called the 'adoption and generalization' of innovations (Huberman, 1973: Havelock and Huberman, 1980), or the 'systematization of pedagogical practices' as opposed to 'innovative education programmes' (Jung and King, 1999: 33). Many innovations remain very local and do not affect the wider stage at all, because they do not become embedded in any organisation's normal procedures. They become a private fiefdom of some worker who is unwilling to share, or they stay on the margins of an organisation's activities because other workers are unwilling to face the challenges which it presents to their own work. It is only as an innovation becomes mainstreamed that it ceases to be an innovation and becomes good practice.

Resistance To innovations

Many writers have stressed the slow diffusion rate and the low levels of take-up of innovations in education (Ross 1958; Mort 1964; Miller 1967). The reasons for this slowness to adopt and adapt innovations still need to be carefully researched, but a number of factors have been identified:

● a fear of being seen to have failed, especially by senior managers

● traditionalism, a reluctance to change, a desire to stick with tried and tested ways, even if these are clearly ineffective

● a worry about the effort and commitment needed, especially when seen in the light of the hard work and enthusiasm of the innovators

● a sense of insecurity, an unwillingness to take risks. The very fact that the origin of innovations may lie in the fact that "we feel obliged to innovate because of some external force or [because we] feel threatened [by some change] that makes us abandon our security zone" (Jung and King, 1999: 40) will cause considerable unease among those who are being encouraged to adopt an innovation into their existing practice

● administrative blockages and educational bureaucracy which tie the field workers (a 'them-and-us' mentality within an organisation); a failure to provide adequate resources, especially adequate staffing and adequate funding, once the innovatory stage is past

● community indifference and resistance

● insufficient training and support for the implementing staff (Miller, 1967: 10-18).

In the past, because of the contemporary identification of development with modernisation, resistance to educational innovations has been seen in the light of the clash between

modernisation and traditional ways of doing things. But this may be a false way of looking at this issue. Rather it may best be seen as a clash of cultural practices, involving realignments of power and responsibilities. Behind every innovation is a whole set of assumptions about power; and an innovation will be more securely founded if such issues are taken into account when building, implementing and diffusing any innovation in education, including adult literacy.

Much more work needs to be done on innovations and their growth into good practice before the main barriers to the adoption and adaptation of innovations in adult literacy programmes can be identified. But all those who evaluate innovations will need to look carefully for such issues.

INNOVATIONS AND CHANGE

This resistance to innovations means that **there can be innovations which do not bring about change.** This has been especially noted in the school system (Rudduck, 1991: 27, Citing House 1979: 10) "We are confounded by the inability of innovations to transform schools"). "Project after project has been shown to produce only minimal or transitory .. benefits or positive outcomes that could not be sustained when the experiment was diffused" (Street, 1969: 5). "The apparent failure of educational innovations to deliver the developmental benefits promised in their initiation" is widely acknowledged. This syndrome has been called 'changes without change' (Lewin, 1991: 11). This would seem to be particularly true of adult literacy. There have been many innovations which have not affected "the way teachers and students think about" literacy learning and literacy activities. Programmes may "change in appearance and not much in depth"; innovations "may only rearrange the technical surface"

of the programme, or "simply recycle and repackage forms of the existing reality" (Rudduck, 1991: 27). Where problems are seen as technical problems which can be solved by technical innovations, without appreciating the deeper cultural implications of both the problem and the proposed solution, the innovation, even if adopted widely, is likely to lead to little change.

It is important to appreciate that some of this reluctance to change may be beneficial for our programmes. This is what has been called 'a proper conservatism' which tests every innovation against itself. "We should be comforted by the thought that schools [and adult literacy programmes] are not easily thrown into disarray by curricular fads and fancies, whimsical novelties and light persuasions. The problem is that they seem almost equally impervious to what we think of as .. reasoned, relevant and legitimate proposals for .. change" (Rudduck, 1991: 27-28). An innovation is by its very nature something unusual, not the normal way of running a programme, and this can be to some people a barrier to adoption and adaptation.

But there are other reasons for the failure of effective innovations to bring about real change, real good practice. For example,

● There is the process of the transfer of the innovation into practice without a sense of commitment to the idea, or without a true understanding of the background and the logic frame behind the innovation.

● Some innovations themselves have aroused excessive expectations by their claim to be the panacea for all ills - expectations which cannot be fulfilled and claims which cannot be proven, and this may lead to a complete rejection of all the elements in the innovation.

BEYOND LITERACY

- Many innovations are imposed on the implementing staff without being adopted in a fully participatory way. "Innovations where consultation with the [participating personnel] is marginalised and their interests and motivations are not recognised rarely lead to durable change which is recognised positively by [those involved]" (Lewin, 1991: 13). The person or agency proposing that the innovation should be adopted and adapted by others "should be non-directive, rarely if ever violating the integrity of the user by setting himself [sic] up as the 'expert' (Nicholls, 1983: 17). The implementers "must feel as individuals and as members of a working group that they own and are in control of the process of change" (Rudduck, 1991: 31).

- Again, the disruption which the importing of any innovation will cause in existing and often well-established procedures is often not appreciated, nor taken care of. "Innovation is disruptive, resource-consuming and unevenly implemented" (Lewin, 1991: 16). Action needs to be taken to ameliorate this disruption.

Again, this is not a complete list, but it gives some indication of the kind of issues which need to be faced when a wider use of an innovation is being projected.

One key feature in the generalisation of innovations into good practice is **scaling up**. Here the problem is that the initial level of enthusiasm and commitment, the intensive workload, and the generous resources available during the initiatory stages of the innovation cannot be sustained when the innovation spreads onto a wider scale. And the innovators themselves often under-estimate the effects of this: "[Innovators] tend to underestimate the time needed. Innovators are frequently impatient and want to see their ideas put into practice quickly, and this can result in the ideas being insufficiently examined and discussed. The final consequence of such impatience is partial or inadequate implementation" (Nicholls, 1983: 5). .

Planning for such scaling up is needed. "This slow rate [of adoption] can be speeded up under certain circumstances, namely when there is public demand, a receptive professional leadership, ..and inexpensive and all but self-teaching instructional materials" (that is, clear explanations of the nature of the innovation and the way it can be used in other contexts) (Nichols, 1983: 7). Staff development programmes, together with the involvement of the new implementing staff in participatory planning and management (and if possible in the participatory evaluation) of the innovation, will almost certainly help with the process of transfer and diffusion.

Innovations are more likely to be adopted and adapted if they are clear and as far as possible not complex: "Some innovations are clear in their meaning to potential users and some are not .. The complexity of an innovation, as perceived by members of a social system, is negatively related to the rate of its adoption". What has been called an innovation's 'triability' is also a key factor. The fact that an innovation is clearly seen to be practical, that it can be tried out in different contexts, is more likely to encourage its adoption and adaptation than will be the case with one which is thought to be complicated. And the observability, "the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others", is also a key factor in whether any innovation is taken up (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971: 154-155).

But above all else, the deeper and wider implications of every innovation - especially in adult literacy - need to be considered. Innova-

tion in adult literacy is not neutral: it will profoundly alter the way we relate to each other and even the way we think about our activities and those who participate in them. We all need to "try to see change, not as a technical problem, but as a cultural problem, .. we [need to] stop talking just about the management of change - a phrase that has dominated educational thinking and writing for a long time - and start talking instead about the meaning of change" (Rudduck, 1991: 32). The case studies above need to be examined in terms of their meaning, not only their effectiveness, in terms of their implications not only for the local participants and implementing agencies but for us all.

What can be seen from this is that the adoption and adaptation rate for any innovation will depend in the end on **how it is perceived by others.** It is not a matter of how the innovators or external evaluators see the innovation, or even how well they can 'sell' it, but how it really appears to the adopters and adapters in the light of their own priorities. "It is the potential users' perceptions which are significant rather than attributes identified by others" (Nicholls, 1983: 27).

REPLICABILITY

Exactly the same can be said of the replication of innovations into new contexts, especially cross cultural contexts. The so-called problem of the diffusion of innovations has been extensively studied (the classic work is of course Rogers 1962). For a long time, "innovation in education has come to be regarded as an expert-defined external process .. something that can be gestated from without (imported innovation rather than self-generated)"; and this led to "an interest in generating procedures for the adoption, transference and generalization [of the innovation, and an interest in generating] criteria and agents linking the original context with the new field in which the innovation is to be implemented" (Jung and King, 1999: 33-34). But even in the case of internally generated innovations in adult literacy, there will be the replication of the innovation by different agencies in different locales, with different target groups, using different personnel. How far can any innovation really be replicated?

The key problem with replication, whether it is inside the same socio-cultural context or within a quite distinct cultural context, even another country, is how to adapt any innovation to different situations, to regional variety, how to give an innovation "local meaning". An innovation cannot simply de taken up in toto. None of the case studies listed above, however dedicated they may be to the underlying approach or to the surface technologies and methodologies, would advocate an unthinking adoption of the programme. Some elements may be applicable to the new context, others will not be. Sometimes it will be the philosophy on which the innovation is grounded which will be the most appropriate element to be transferred, so that the implementation of the innovation in its new context will look very different from that of the original. "It has been noted that what is appropriate in one school [and equally adult literacy programme] does not necessarily match the needs of another" (Nicholls, 1983: 26). But how far can this adaptation go before the innovation has become lost? How true to the vision and what has been called "the central doctrine" (Nicholls, 1983: 22) of the original does an innovation need to remain when it is taken into another milieu? When another agency in another country builds on an innovation to create something new, are we talking about replicability or the creation of a new innovation? Many

innovations found elsewhere have been adopted with great enthusiasm into another context, only to founder after a short time. The conditions for cultural transfer in adult education are only now being studied (Rogers 1999), and there is still much to learn about this field.

CONCLUSION

The field of innovations in adult literacy is one which is attracting more and more attention. It is one which creates many challenges for us. There is a sense of excitement about this field. But equally, there is also a sense of threat, both to our existing approaches and understandings and to our existing practices.

The tensions we face, when we discuss innovations in adult education, are part of the tensions of all learning processes - how can we fit the new in with the old? how can we find meaning in what we learn? how can we best work within and yet change our lifeworld?

One major danger is that innovations become simply a matter of study. "Concern about the speed with which innovations are dropped or whether they are even taken up .. [has led to the intensive study of innovation in general]; innovation is given the status of an object or phenomenon, subject to observable and measurable changes" (Jung and King, 1999: 34). But innovation is a way of life. It is part of the way in which all of us, individually and in what we do together, learn and adapt to the changing demands of the world we live in. Innovation is a part of the process of living, whether it comes from within our own situation or whether we adopt, adapt and build on the ideas and practices of others.

The real danger is not that we may miss something which others have done, and which we feel we ought to copy. The real danger is that we ourselves will not innovate. In all innovations, as in all living, as Lewin pointed out, we risk failure; but we must not make an error in not *trying* (Lewin, 1991: 20).

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