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Date August 2, 1973

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE NEED FOR AND IMPLEMENTATION OF READING PROGRAMS FOR UNDEREDUCATED ADULTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to direct special attention to the need for and special problems involved in implementing programs to teach undereducated adults the basic communication skills, especially reading.

Literature pertaining to adult learning and its implications for teaching, especially with disadvantaged adults, was reviewed to promote a greater appreciation of the needs of undereducated adults.

To illustrate how innovative ideas can be used successfully in programs for undereducated adults, three demonstration projects implemented in Butte, Montana between 1970-1973 were reviewed. Each project though different in specific purpose was like the others in that an individualized program of needs was brought to groups or to single persons in the security of their own homes or some other non-threatening accommodation.

Suggestions for a reading program designed specifically for adults were presented in Chapter 4 of this paper.

From this study, it can be concluded that the need for reading programs for undereducated adults does exist, and adults with various abilities, interests, and problems can benefit from such programs if they are designed specifically for adults and staffed by accepting, understanding personnel. Even though many adults are very apprehensive about their ability to learn, most adults can learn if they feel that what is to be learned is relevant and useful. Since the age variable seems to affect rate of learning more than quality of learning, an individualized learning environment where adults are able to progress at their own rate is both effective and necessary. The undereducated adult who is treated with respect and acceptance in a learning situation is able to establish a sense of worth both for himself and for the education he missed as a child.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This, the decade of the 70's, has a special meaning for educators in this country. As proposed by the United States Commissioner of Education, Dr. James E. Allen, Jr. in 1969, the goal of education should be to insure:

> . . . that by the end of the 1970's the right to read shall be a reality for all--that no one shall be leaving our schools without the skill and the desire necessary to the full limits of his capacity (Allen, 1969:43).

Dr. Allen, in his effort to make reading the number one priority for education at all levels, called national attention to some shocking facts, namely:

> --One out of every four students nationwide has significant reading deficiencies.
>
> --In large city school systems, up to half of the students read below expectations.
>
> --There are more than three million illiterates in our adult population. [1959 Survey]
>
> --About half of the unemployed youth, ages 16-21 are functionally illiterate.
>
> --Three-quarters of the juvenile offenders in one major city are two or more years retarded in reading.
>
> --In a recent U. S. Armed Forces program called Project 100,000, 60.2 percent of the young men fell below grade seven in reading and academic ability (Allen, 1969:43).

Dr. Allen further stated:

> The tragedy of these statistics is that they represent a barrier to success that for too many adults produces the misery of a life marked by poverty, unemployment, alienation and, in many cases, crime (Allen, 1969:43).

As Dr. Allen has shown by the above statement, adults who cannot read effectively undergo a tremendous handicap in this country. Not only are they undergoing a handicap, but they are being denied a fundamental right. A nation founded on democratic principles and dedicated to equal opportunity cannot continue to deny adults a full and productive life simply because of an inability to read and write. By helping this one segment of society to develop the sufficient reading skills to function competently as adults and citizens, we are in turn developing a stronger basis for democracy.

Statement of the Problem

It is inexcusable in this day of technological advancements when man has made such tremendous steps in the development of his potential that there are some adults who cannot read or have no desire to read. The problem of this paper was: (1) to determine the need for effective reading programs on the adult level; and (2)

to determine what constitutes an effective reading program for adults with various experience and ability levels.

Purpose of the Study

The ability to read and write is generally taken for granted by those who possess such skills. It is hard to imagine functioning without these abilities. Yet there are millions of adult Americans who suffer under the handicap of little or no education.

The purpose of this study was to direct special attention to the need for and special problems involved in implementing programs to teach undereducated adults the basic skills, especially reading.

Questions to be Answered

This paper will attempt to answer these basic questions:

1. What are the special problems involved in teaching basic skills such as reading to adults?

2. What are examples of innovative programs designed to help adults overcome basic educational handicaps?

3. What constitutes an effective reading program for adults?

General Procedure

This investigation of adult illiteracy and what can be done about the problem will be presented in the following manner:

1. A review of literature defining the problem of adult illiteracy and its implications in society.

2. A review of literature concerning adult learning ability and how it is influenced by physiological and psychological factors.

3. A general description of three unique programs implemented in the City of Butte, Montana to help adults, and in one program their pre-school children, overcome their educational handicaps.

4. Recommendations for an adult reading program.

Limitations

This paper will be limited to the following:

1. Due to the vast amount of literature available relating to reading and adult education, only those sources concerned specifically with adult illiteracy and techniques

and programs for teaching adults to read or for improving their reading skills will be used.

2. The examples of unique adult programs will be limited to the three programs recently (1970-1973) implemented in Butte, Montana.

3. The proposed recommendations for an adult reading program will be limited to the writer's personal experiences in working with adults and to selected literature relating to the subject.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they are used in this paper. Other terms will be defined in the context.

1. Illiteracy:

> In 1969, as in past censuses and surveys, persons who were reported as not able both to read and to write a simple message either in English or any other language were classified as illiterate. Figures for 1969 refer to the civilian noninstitutional population 14 years old and over (Current Population Reports, 1971:5).

2. Functional Illiteracy: A term used to describe adults twenty-five years of age or older who have had less than five years of formal education.

Summary

Americans in the decade of the 70's are faced with the challenge of ensuring:

> . . . that by 1980, 99 percent of those under 16 will have the skills to read to the full limits of their desires, and 90 percent of those over 16 will possess and use literacy skills (Education Briefing Paper, 1972:1).

Although the National Right to Read effort seems to be directed primarily at public school teachers, Hamblet describes it as:

> . . . a total coordinated effort of communications media, business, labor, the general public, educators, and the government at all levels to insure all Americans the right to read (Hamblet, 1971:92).

Public schools are working so tomorrow's adults will be able to read, but what about today's adults? If the Right to Read is to be a reality for all, special efforts must be made to reach the adult segment of society that lacks competent reading skills.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will begin by examining recent statistics relating to illiteracy. After this overview of the problem, it will go on to discuss adult learning ability, including the motivations and attitudes of adults, and conclude with the special problems involved in teaching adults.

Survey of Statistics Relating to Illiteracy

The statistical information available on illiteracy can make the problem look either encouraging or alarming. The U. S. Department of Commerce/Bureau of the Census report indicated that in November, 1969, only one percent of the population fourteen years of age and over were unable to read and write a simple message in English or in some other language. This figure is half what the illiteracy rate was just ten years prior in 1959 when a similar survey conducted in March showed a 2.2 percent illiteracy rate for persons in the same age group. In 1959, one in forty-five persons was illiterate as compared to one in 100 in 1969. Another

encouraging comparison shows that the proportion of illiterates 100 years ago in 1870 was twenty times as great as it was in 1969. Grant explains that as each generation tends to spend more time in school than the preceding generation, the rate of illiteracy declines as the older people in the population are replaced by the younger people (Grant, 1971:12).

These facts point out the tremendous strides being made in education. Yet, it still remains that according to the 1969 census, 1.4 million adults in America are completely illiterate. To further elaborate, the U. S. Office of Education in its October, 1972 Education Briefing Paper entitled "The Right to Read" indicated the United States had close to nineteen million totally or functionally illiterate adults. These handicapped adults cannot read well enough for reading to be of any practical use. Added to these statistics are the unknown numbers who although have sat through five years of school, function as illiterates because of their failure to learn to read with any proficiency at all. Dr. James E. Allen, Jr. noted that one out of every four students nationwide has serious reading deficiencies (Allen, 1969:43).

The scope of this national problem is overwhelming. In addition to those disadvantaged adults who never did attend school or who attended for just a short period of time, there are the masses of American students coming out of the public schools unable to function effectively because of insufficient reading skills. There is an obvious need for programs to help adults learn the basic skills they missed as children.

Adults and Learning

If educators are to be effective in providing more meaningful programs for adults, an awareness of how and why adults learn is needed. Hopefully, the old adage, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," is passé among educators today. According to Kidd, adults can learn, and they continue to learn throughout their lives (Kidd, 1959:9).

In attempting to define the word "learning" the investigator discovered that it carried a number of meanings and suggestions. Kidd describes "learning" as "change" (Kidd, 1959:17). Long is among those who feel that just being alive can be considered a learning experience for all normal people. Some would limit learning to a description of the behavior that occurs in a specific setting, such as a classroom.

Researchers and theorists differ on an operational meaning. Long explains, "For example, learning is described in terms of product, process and function" (Long, 1971:8).

Research studies devoted to learning must assume that if there is no observable change in behavior, then it is not possible to assume that learning has occurred. Long agrees that this is limiting in that it fails to consider the increments in learning that lead to a change in behavior or learning that confirms other learning. There is also the possibility that a change in behavior regarded as learning may actually be the result of a change in health, motivation, environment or technical changes (Long, 1971:15).

The subjects of aging and ability to learn are complex subjects. Studies on these two subjects assert certain qualities and abilities to certain age groups in general. It must be remembered that there are individual differences within each age group. To generalize that adults in a certain age group have a certain amount of learning ability does not take into consideration variables such as a health, wealth, experiences, education, personality, motivation, and learning climate.

E. L. Thorndike is prominent among those who have studied how adults learn. From his research, Thorndike concluded that adults can learn, and inability to learn will very rarely be due directly to age (Thorndike, 1928: 177). However, his "curve of ability to learn in relation to age" does show a gradual decline in learning ability after the age of twenty-five (Thorndike, 1928:127). Critics of Thorndike are quick to point out that since he largely utilized learning activities that lead to some measure per unit of time, his curve is primarily one of learning efficiency.

Irving Lorge noted that in Thorndike's study of learning to write with the unpracticed hand, the gains in letters per minute after thirty practice periods of a half hour showed a loss with increasing age. But he also noted that the gains in quality as measured by the Thorndike Handwriting Scale showed no decline as age increased. Lorge concluded that:

> . . . when learning is measured in terms of goodness rather than quickness, the learning ability curve probably will not show as great a decline as would the curve of learning efficiency (Lanning, 1966:71).

Lorge agrees that younger individuals tend to do better than older individuals on timed tests of learning but

disagrees with the assumption that this holds true for power tests.

The concept of intelligence is closely related to that of learning ability. Corsini and Fassett, after evaluating previous studies by Yerkes, Miles and Miles, Jones and Conrad, and Wechsler (who all concluded that intelligence scores declined with increasing age), discovered that none of the four studies were entirely free of basic criticisms with respect to sampling techniques and the instrument used. Using the Wechsler-Bellevue Form I on a cross-sectional sampling of incoming prisoners at San Quentin Prison from 1944 to 1948, they concluded that general intelligence does not decline from early to late maturity. They also found that:

> . . .test ability will vary in a downward direction if the subtests contain visual and motor factors, and will vary in an upward direction if the subtests contain material which depends on continued learning (Corsini, 1953:263).

Corsini and Fassett's second conclusion was substantiated by Droege, Crambert, and Henkin. In a study showing the relationship between G.A.T.B. aptitude scores and age for adults, evidence was found that all aptitudes except Verbal Aptitude show some decline with age. They point out, though, that the declines for Intelligence and Numerical

Ability were not large. The largest declines were obtained for Form Perception, Finger Dexterity, and Manual Dexterity. Smaller declines were obtained for Spatial Aptitude, Clerical Perception, and Motor Coordination.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the performance of adults in learning activities tends to decline with age when the performance is timed and/or involves visual or motor capabilities. Needless to say, all results of studies are only indicators as to what may be true under certain conditions. This means that predictions of a particular individual's abilities made simply because he is younger or older are not appropriate.

Long reports that other cognitive areas, such as memory, critical thinking, and creativity tend to decline with increasing age. It is interesting to note that Friend and Zubek, in their study of the effects of age on critical thinking ability, found that the poorer scores of elderly subjects were partly due to lower objectivity and greater inflexibility. Older individuals did tend to allow their prejudices, biases, and emotional feelings to influence their decisions to a greater degree than did the younger subjects.

Until now, the discussion has centered around aging and its effect on the cognitive aspects of learning. There are also non-cognitive variables that can affect an adult's learning ability.

Physiological factors such as loss of visual acuity, impaired hearing, and changes in muscular ability are sure to interfere with the learning performance of some adults. It has already been noted that Lorge examined the impact of timed tests on intelligence. His studies conclude that there is generally a loss of speed with age, and the more important speed becomes in a response, the greater the loss for an older person. It seems evident that the state of one's health will affect to some extent one's learning performance.

Self-concept is a psychological factor that seems to be a major variable in learning performance at any age. A stereotype commonly associated with adults can be simply stated, "I'm too old to learn." Many adults have serious doubts about their abilities to perform. Kidd asserts that this is especially true if there was failure or unpleasantness associated with childhood learning. As Ulmer states:

> The biggest disadvantages of being an adult student are those the student creates for himself: anxieties and inferiority feelings about his ability to succeed in the classroom (Ulmer, 1969:9).

The adult who was expelled or "dropped out" is most hesitant about returning to a venture that was so disastrous before. In addition to feelings of anxiety, this adult will be extremely suspicious of a setting that brings back such unpleasant memories.

On the more positive side, a mature individual usually regards himself as a certain type person and consequently recognizes most of his strengths and weaknesses. In comparison to children who see no limit to what they can do, an adult usually recognizes those tasks that are beyond his ability. Fay, in a collection of works edited by Lanning and Many, reminds us that adults tend to underestimate themselves and thus may need counseling services in planning and appropriate program (Lanning, 1966: 88).

Need fulfillment is another characteristic of adults. Knowles feels that the primary and immediate mission of every adult educator is to help individuals satisfy their needs and achieve their goals. On the surface, an adult may be motivated to attend classes to

achieve an immediate goal. Some attend to qualify for a better job or simply a job, some want to help their children in school, some want to complete their high school education, or some may want to learn to read and write. Job oriented goals probably bring most adults to the learning environment. Whatever the reason, the goals are usually immediate in that they are set for the not-too-distant future.

Aside from these immediate "wants," there is the ultimate need of human fulfillment. Carl Rogers describes this as ". . . man's tendency to actualize himself; to become his potentialities" (Rogers, 1961:351). He further describes this directional trend as ". . . the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature--the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, of the self" (Rogers, 1961:351).

Maslow uses the term "self-actualization" to describe the tendency ". . . to become everything one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1954:92). He arranges human needs in the following hierarchical order:

1. Physiological Needs
2. Safety Needs
3. Belongingness and Love Needs

4. Esteem Needs

5. Need for Self-Actualization

One cannot attain a higher level of gratification unless the lower levels are satisfied. The adult educator should help each individual learn what is required for gratification of the needs at whatever level he is situated.

The adage, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink," is relevant to the discussion of what motivates an adult to go back to school. As a child, many teachings were simply not relevant at that particular time. As the child matured into an adult with adult responsibilities, he realized the need and advantages of an education. An adult may be ready to learn those tasks he considered useless as a child. Since he is usually in an adult education program because he wants to be there, the adult will be highly motivated in the learning activity because it will be one of his own choosing and one in which he has a definite interest.

One last factor that is a distinct quality of adults is their greater experiential background. Although individuals differ, experience and knowledge of certain skills will more than likely facilitate the learning

process. On the other hand, unwanted habits may have to be unlearned.

Special Problems Relating to the Disadvantaged Adult

A reading program designed to help adults improve their reading skills or to start them with the basic fundamentals will probably attract what has come to be known as "the disadvantaged adult." Kaple explains that although everyone is disadvantaged in some respect, more specifically:

> . . .the disadvantaged are those who have been deprived of certain educational opportunities, job-training, and employment opportunities comparable to the average person in society (Kaple, 1971:11).

They may be discriminated against because of race, usually live in substandard housing and suffer from disease and illness more than the average American.

There is always a danger in attempting to label a diverse group of people. Generalizations tend to make one forget that these are all individual persons with separate, unique problems. Although these persons must not be prejudged, it would be helpful to consider some problems they have in common.

Kaple has summarized the characteristics of the disadvantaged. He describes them as having consistently low education levels and many are either complete or functional illiterates. This low educational level of course affects their income. Many suffer from unemployment or are able to handle only unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.

The rural disadvantaged often prefer to live in isolated areas. This isolation usually means poor education, limited employment opportunities, lack of medical care, and possibly limited speech patterns.

As a result of his poor education and poor socio-economic status, the disadvantaged adult has a poor self-concept and low level of aspiration. He lacks the self-confidence needed to assert himself. Instead, he seems to have adopted a dependency attitude which welfare roles reflect. His failures to attain the "American dream" have so discouraged him that he may become resigned to his fate.

In addition to all his own problems, Kaple continues, the disadvantaged adult is frequently exploited by loan sharks, merchants, and landlords. He also has been over-looked by politicians and, until recently, by educators. Even though his perception of the value of education is

usually low, he should not be forgotten. Through education, the poverty cycle can be broken.

Implications for Teaching

What is so different about teaching adults? Luke gives two answers to this question. One is "not very much." The other is "a very great deal" (Luke, 1971:14). He contends that good teaching is good teaching no matter what the age group. Even so, adults are not simply old children and must not be treated as such.

The most important task for adult educators is to create an educational program designed specifically for the adult. Ulmer describes such a program as:

> . . . one that conforms to the student, his level of ability, his needs, and his desires. It must start where the student is and help him move to where he wants to be (Ulmer, 1969:21).

Adults have many different reasons for attending classes. Through teacher or counselor interview, these basic motivations should be assessed so the teacher and student can set forth reasonable, attainable goals. Scaggs acknowledges that unrealistic goals may need to be reviewed so the adult learner will not experience failure perhaps for the second time.

Knowles feels that student involvement in the process of planning their own learning is basic to the process of adult education. The adult student who can objectively assess his own strengths and weaknesses will hopefully experience a feeling of dissatisfaction about the distance between where he is and where he wants to go. This dissatisfaction coupled with a clear sense of direction for self-improvement tends to encourage an individual to commit himself to a learning experience.

In addition to defining his own goals and helping to plan his own learning experience, the adult student assumes much of the responsibility for his own progress. The teacher becomes more of a resource person or guide--someone who can help another learn.

As with the other phases of the learning experience, evaluation of progress becomes a mutual undertaking. Letter grades are unacceptable in the adult program. If a student is not progressing toward a desired goal, teacher and learner should again diagnose the goal and the method of obtaining that goal.

Luke describes adults as being generally "now" oriented in that they are seeking immediate application of their learnings. This immediacy will probably make an

adult student try harder, learn faster, and be more attentive.

An adult is anxious to learn what he feels is necessary to accomplish his goals. According to Smith and Martin, a grave injustice would be imposed upon adults if, after years of an education filled with irrelevancy and lack of concern for the individual, this second chance at learning be filled with more of the same (Smith, 1972:15). The adult has an easy alternative to an irrelevant learning situation. He will simply drop out.

It is important that adults be able to progress at their own rate. They enter adult programs with different skills, abilities, and background experience. They cannot be expected to learn the same things at the same rate.

The adult may have to miss class for reasons such as his job, health, or transportation problems. He can continue his learning experience from where he left it in a flexible individualized learning situation where he is free to leave and enter at will.

Both Ulmer and Knowles emphasize the fact that an adult's past experiences can be beneficial in a formal learning experience. Many adult students may be better

informed on certain subjects than the teacher. Efforts should be made to tap these reservoirs of information for the benefit of fellow learners. The teacher is by no means the only source of information. Student participation in this manner will help to improve his self-confidence and sense of value.

Hopefully, the fact that some students may be more knowledgeable than the teacher on certain subjects will not pose a threat to the teacher of adults. Smith and Martin suggest ". . . the teacher should at times project himself into the position of co-learner as well as learning facilitator" (Smith, 1972:15).

As was evidenced by Friend and Zubeck, adults tend to develop rigid habits and fixed patterns of thought which may interfere with new learnings. This negative aspect of experience must also be remembered by the adult educator.

The student in an adult learning situation probably brings much anxiety and lack of confidence to the class. It is very difficult for adults to go back (if indeed they ever did go) to school. "One of the first tasks of the adult educator is to instill confidence in the adult student" (Long, 1971:38). The first few days will be

trying for these new students. Attempts to help the student develop some confidence will increase these students' chances of staying with the program. Teachers must try to provide opportunities which will result in some success at the very start of the learning experience.

In summarizing the teacher-student relationship in adult education, a parallel can be drawn to the description Carl Rogers gives of the relationship between counselor and client.

Rogers finds that being genuine is an asset in the counseling relationship. An adult educator must also be genuine in his relationship with his students. Adults can readily recognize insincerity or false role playing.

The acceptance of another individual no matter what his condition, his behavior, his morals, or his way of life is sometimes difficult to do. The participants in programs for adults will represent various races, religions, and ways of life. These adults all need to feel they have worth--that they are important as individuals and that someone does care about what happens to them. The learning climate, like the counseling relationship, should be one which lets adults feel accepted, respected, and

supported. Knowles describes this situation as one in which there is freedom of expression without fear of punishment or ridicule.

Rogers states, "Acceptance does not mean much until it involves understanding" (Rogers, 1961:34). A sensitive empathy with each student's particular situation will free him to explore the possibilities for change. And learning is change.

Summary

The need for programs to help adults overcome their educational handicaps is exemplified by recent illiteracy statistics and also be estimated statistics on functional literacy.

It is not too late for adults to learn or relearn these basic skills. Studies show adults in general do not lose the ability to learn although this learning may take longer in some cases.

The main difference between adult learners and children is the experience and background adults bring to a learning situation. This experience, coupled with a desire and readiness to accept the challenge of learning, tends to make adults capable students.

Of course, it must always be remembered that each adult is an individual with unique characteristics and abilities. As Long states:

> The teacher of adults who recognizes the individual potential of each student may have already learned one of the most important points that might be made (Long, 1971:5).

Chapter 3

SURVEY OF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMS

Introduction

The City of Butte, Montana has put three innovative adult programs into practice between September, 1970 and June, 1973. Funded for only one year at a time by grants from the U. S. Department of Health, Education & Welfare, Office of Education, these projects were of a temporary nature and as such were all demonstration programs. Despite their temporary nature, Project Homebound, Experiment in Butte, and Project PREPARE proved that the techniques described in the preceding chapter along with new, innovative ideas can work successfully in dealing with adults.

Information concerning these three programs was obtained from the project final reports made available through the Butte Vocational-Technical Center.

Project Homebound

Project Homebound was intended to serve as a demonstration of the use of volunteers in a homebound method of attacking adult illiteracy in urban areas. There are many factors which preclude the attendance of

adults in basic education classes away from home. These include baby-sitting problems, transportation difficulties, time conflicts, and embarrassment because others will then know of the need of literacy training. Thus, the simple theory behind this project was if a person in need of an education could not or would not attend classes, then the educator should go to him.

Project Homebound instructors were divided into six teaching teams, each consisting of one certified teacher who was the team leader, two teacher aides, and five volunteer teachers. Other personnel included the Project director, assistant director, a clerk-typist and a part-time counselor. To provide a means of two way communication between the project and the general public, a permanent Advisory Committee was established from among the citizens of the community.

To eliminate the extensive costs involved in tutorial services, volunteers were used as teachers for what were called "kitchen classes." They donated one evening a week to meet with up to ten students in the home of one or more of the participants.

Experienced teachers or team leaders supervised and supported the work of the volunteers and aides on

their respective teams. The experienced teacher was responsible for designing and devising materials to be prepared by the teacher aide and used by the volunteer in the training session. A master teacher must personally contact all new students on her team to enable her to establish and maintain a relationship of individual importance. In addition, master teachers were available to attend home instructional sessions to support volunteers.

The duties of teacher aides included recruiting students, preparing material recommended by the teacher, and indoctrinating and supervising volunteers. Because the number of volunteers did not remain constant, the aides many times assumed teaching responsibilities. As aides were not qualified for demanding teaching schedules (required to be high school graduates with work experience of any type and proficient typing ability), daily two-hour in-service training periods were scheduled with master teachers to solve instructional problems. Volunteers could also attend these in-service training sessions.

Before any instruction began, a two-week training session was conducted for the six teachers, twelve teacher aides and thirty volunteers. Classes in psychology

and teaching of adults and on the types and uses of instructional materials were held at this time.

Recruitment of students began September 17, 1970, utilizing a list compiled with the help of such agencies as the Employment Office and the Welfare Department. The names were divided into geographical areas and each area was assigned to two aides who served as recruiters. The personal, friendly approach used by the recruiters to explain the program was most successful in introducing the program. Other recruitment techniques were a door-to-door campaign, mass media methods and by word of mouth.

Classes actually began on October 5, 1970, with eighty-one students and terminated June 30, 1971, with 342 students. As students became comfortable with the educational process and individual instruction, attempts were made to group individuals with others of similar abilities and goals. Classes at neighborhood centers for group instruction were taught by master teachers. Students were not forced into group instruction.

The materials used to bring the basic skills of reading, communications, and mathematics to the individuals participating in this program were among those now on the market for adult instruction. These were supplemented with

audio-visual aids, and materials created or designed by instructors for special uses in attaining special goals. Much emphasis was placed upon the use of mass media publications as means of teaching reading, mathematics and communications skills.

The most critical effort in this program was the recruitment and selection of volunteers. They were the mainspring of the project in that they were to eventually take over the program. The utilization of volunteers as teachers was successful only to a degree. Incompetent and unreliable volunteers had to be replaced. A lack of commitment on the part of other volunteers resulted in students' lack of commitment and vice-versa. In addition, replacement volunteers lacked the experience of the initial training period.

In spite of its difficulty with volunteers, Project Homebound demonstrated the feasibility of adult home instruction. A warm, caring teacher-student relationship and the security of one's own home did much to alleviate initial fears and promote a successful learning experience.

Experiment in Butte

The Experiment in Butte was a demonstration project designed to determine the effectiveness of the Joseph Tussman education model in an Adult Basic Education program. The project was in operation from August 1, 1971, to June 30, 1972. Its major purpose was to combine in lessons the teaching of reflective skills with the teaching of ordinary Adult Basic Education skills, such as basic or GED computational and communicative skills. In addition, the project sought to meet certain other instructional aims. These called for drawing students into small groups in which teachers worked to develop an informal, relaxed atmosphere conducive to a spirit of learning and sharing.

Ideas for the Experiment in Butte were derived from the findings reported by Joseph Tussman, who tried an experimental approach to education at the University of California at Berkeley. Tussman suggested that if teachers and students could foster a sharing atmosphere where the teacher is more of a guide than authority, the quality of learning would be superior to conventional situations. The addition of humanities materials to this sharing climate of learning was intended to help students learn to be reflective, responsive and more fully educated individuals

Using these ideas and techniques, humanities materials were used to present topics for discussion. To stimulate reflection, teachers were asked to expose their ABE students to critical thought, to provoke discussion to determine their own ideas, and then to suggest alternative ways of thinking. After practice with reflective materials, it was hoped students would come to recognize alternate ways of thinking and learn to be thoughtful and questioning about others' opinions and statements.

To implement the Tussman model in the Experiment at Butte, six teachers, seven teacher aides, a director, a coordinator, an evaluator, two evaluation consultants, and two humanities consultants were hired as project personnel. Teachers and teacher aides were paired into six teaching teams divided on a GED-basic education basis in order to handle the needs and goals of its 208 participants.

Because of its experimental nature, the teams were further divided into three experimental and three control teans. The experimental teams were to try to introduce reflective materials along with the ABE materials while the control teams were to continue instruction as they

had done the previous year in Project Homebound. In reality, Experiment in Butte was a continuation of the homebound instruction in Project Homebound minus the use of volunteers and plus the use of humanities materials by some teachers to encourage critical thinking among individuals in groups.

Before instruction of students began, humanities consultants from the University of Montana conducted preservice training sessions in order to acquaint the staff with the nature of the Tussman model and ways to encourage reflective thinking.

Instruction of students actually began on October 4, 1971, after recruited students had been placed on teams and tested formally and/or informally to determine levels of instruction. At this time, only one experimental teacher tried to implement the Tussman model. It wasn't until December when misunderstandings about the nature of the experiment were cleared up that the other two experimental teachers tried using reflective materials.

Although this innovative teaching procedure did prove to be effective and successful with many students, it did not appeal to all of them. Those who were interested in obtaining their GED as soon as possible did not

have time for or want any outside materials introduced. Some were not willing to break away from the security of individual instruction even though the merits of grouping were pointed out. Others realized that developing reflective skills might make life more interesting and add to the enrichment of their education in general.

Attempts were made to integrate the reflective materials with skill materials in order to keep the continuity of the lesson. Even so, many students considered the discussions a refreshing change of pace. In addition, the communication skills of the participants were being enhanced.

It was a learning situation where teacher and student became fellow students and all learned from each other. A group togetherness evolved from this sharing of opinions and ideas.

The teachers in this experiment were encouraged to find that ABE students at varying levels could develop their reflective capabilities to deal in differing levels of abstraction. It seems the use of humanities materials integrated with the basic skills of reading, mathematics and communications was successful for many students in enriching their educational experience.

It must be noted that control teachers used the same warm, caring relationship in dealing with their students as did the experimental teachers and indeed used many innovative materials. The two differed in that one group used humanities materials in the learning experience and the other did not.

Project PREPARE

Project PREPARE was a combination Adult Basic Education and pre-school program with a purpose of teaching educationally disadvantaged parents ABE skills in their own homes and then showing these parents how and what to teach their pre-school children. The primary objective of this program was to help the parent overcome basic education difficulties. The secondary objective was the elimination of the pre-schooler's learning problems. This program was innovative in that it not only involved the adult parent, but its influence carried over to the child.

The Project PREPARE staff was comprised of one part-time director, one full time coordinator, six full time teachers, six full time aides, and a secretary. As with the two preceding projects, the teachers and aides

were paired into six teaching teams, each responsible for a certain number of students.

Student participants in the project were recruited in much the same manner as was described in Project Homebound. Emphasis was placed on recruiting students with pre-school children.

Before actual classes began, an intensive three-day workshop was conducted to train the staff in the areas of life style of the disadvantaged, how to use available materials, techniques of teaching ABE skills, and methods of teaching parents how and what to teach their children.

Classes actually began in October of 1972. Either the experienced teacher or her aide visited the homes of the participants weekly and guided the parent and child together in a learning activity. Emphasis was placed on showing the parent how to help the child rather than the instructor teaching the child. This would provide for a workable relationship when the project was terminated.

To permit all the parents to receive family guidance from local consultants, parental attendance at bimonthly group meetings was expected. Such topics as health and nutrition, creative play, safety training, and emotional and physical characteristics of children ages

two to five were discussed. In addition, parents were instructed in the use of skill building toys made from common household objects, recipes for home-made finger paints and play-dough, books, puppets, musical records, finger plays, puzzles, and other similar materials. The projects and art work completed by Project PREPARE children were on display at the final parents meeting.

Field trips for both parents and their children proved to be a source of fun and learning for all involved.

Parents in this program were instructed in the basic skills needed in much the same manner as were those adults in Project Homebound and Experiment in Butte. Both individual and group sessions were held. Reflective works were used when feasible. The home emphasis for the child tended to be on skills of visual recognition, discrimination and association, cognition of picture story sequences, perception, and motor skills. Parents were encouraged to participate in developing these school readiness skills as well as playing with their children.

Daily in-service training for one hour from nine to ten A.M. helped teachers and aides resolve any problems they were having. Various teaching techniques were also shared at this time.

Near the completion of the project in June, the contemporary School Readiness Test was administered to five year olds. Certificates of participation were presented to all pre-schoolers who completed the program.

Summary

Project Homebound, Experiment in Butte, and Project PREPARE were reviewed in an attempt to illustrate three innovative approaches to adult education. Each project, though different in specific purpose, was like the others in that an individualized program of needs was brought to groups or to single persons in the security of their own homes or some other non-threatening accomodation. Responsive, caring instructors acted as guides or learning facilitators in helping these adults over their learning difficulties. Warm friendships often developed between student and teacher.

It can be concluded that adult learners are very responsive to a learning situation when they are treated as worthwhile individuals. Teachers and students have much to learn and gain from each other.

Although each project was only funded for one year, the basic theme was able to continue (with some changes and improvements) for three years.

Chapter 4

SUGGESTIONS FOR AN ADULT READING PROGRAM

Introduction

It has been emphasized that without functional reading skills, adults are handicapped in a society that depends on the written word as a means of communication and learning. In developing their reading ability, adults are provided with an avenue for self-improvement.

Suggestions provided in this chapter for an adult reading program pertain to a classroom setting, as home based procedures have already been reviewed. The information is the result of a review of literature and the investigator's own experiences.

Suggestions

The reading program itself should be easily accessible by the members of the community. If possible, a public school building should be avoided as the site of the program. The stigma of going back to such a setting may keep many adults away. It seems that a college campus would provide an ideal setting since it is already associated with adults and learning.

The physical setting should be comfortable with adequate light, heat and ventilation. As was earlier indicated, adults may have some physical impairments that necessitate a comfortable setting. Informal seating arrangements add to a relaxed atmosphere. Perhaps a coffee pot, Coke machine or other means of refreshment could be made available. Smoking breaks should be allowed. An adult who has already had a tiring work day will certainly not put up with a cold, tense learning environment.

Of course, the key to the adult's whole learning experience is the teacher. The instructor of those adults who have not as yet developed functional reading skills must be aware of the low self-concept these adults bring into the learning situation. Their lack of basic skills is often times a source of extreme embarassment. Many will not even admit to themselves that they have impaired reading skills.

The instructor must be understanding and congenial and at all times promote a friendly open atmosphere in the learning setting. Above all, the instructor must feel that the students are worthwhile individuals and accept them as they are, no matter what their backgrounds. Only then will they feel free to learn. Even though the teacher is

many times thought to represent an aloof part of society, a genuine feeling of caring on teacher's part can do much to alleviate these suspicions.

In addition to wanting to help adults learn, the teacher of adults must know the subject matter. Adequate training is necessary to facilitate the student's learning needs. Knowing what materials to use when and for how long does much to expedite learning.

In order to entice students into the program, more than ordinary advertising techniques are required. Perhaps the door-to-door techniques described in the preceding chapter would be the most productive method of reaching individuals who, for the most part, would not come on their own.

The prospective student's initial interview may be with either the teacher or a counselor. Through this interview, the student's goals can be assessed and needs examined. Utilization of a student profile sheet will help to organize vital information. Teachers or counselors should have access to the student's address and telephone number to follow up on absences.

Teachers need to be alert for visual, auditory, and nutritional problems with their students. These

roadblocks to efficient learning can be removed by referral to a doctor.

A counselor should be available for students who have psychological problems. One cannot be expected to give his full attention to the learning situation if he has outside worries. Both the teacher and counselor should be familiar with community referral agencies.

It has been stated that adult students are likely to be apprehensive about their abilities. Because of these anxieties, formal testing should not be a part of the initial encounter. Informal testing procedures can be quite accurate in assessing a person's instructional level. The Harris Graded Work List and the Informal Textbook Test are two examples of informal tests found in the Curriculum Guide to Adult Education.

The instructor can create her own informal test using available materials that are graded in terms of reading difficulty. Smith advises to begin at a level where the student can succeed and continue up the readability levels until the student has difficulty with ten percent of the words. That should be his frustration level. One level back will then be his instructional

level. While the student is reading, make note of such things as reversals, phonic needs, rhythm of reading, syllabication, prefix-suffix difficulties, ability to get the main idea, ability to note key words, ability to use the context, and critical reading abilities.

For the convenience of the teacher, there are several oral reading tests on the market. Strang, McCullough, and Traxler give the following as examples of such tests:

1. Gray Oral Reading Tests (Bobbs Merrill Company)

2. Gray Standardized Oral Reading Paragraphs (Bobbs Merrill Company)

3. Gilmore Oral Reading Test (Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich)

Scheduling of the reading program could consist of one or two hour blocks meeting at a convenient hour several times a week. Students who are able to read independently should be allowed access to a reading laboratory (perhaps during the second hour) to build rate and comprehension skills. Both Craig and EDL (Educational Development Laboratories) makes available individual

reading machines. Most students enjoy working with these machines and they provide a diversity to the program.

Once a student's ability is assessed, he should be grouped with others with approximately the same ability and goals. A special GED class may be formed for those who want their high school equivalency.

Within these general groups, an individualized structure is both necessary and effective in a program of adult instruction. A plan to fit the individual brings the most satisfying results. This permits enrollments at any time during the year and also allows for absenteeism.

At the introductory reading level, group instruction and discussion may be necessary to develop reading readiness. Individual tutoring may also be more essential at this level.

As adults tend to make rapid progress in reading (especially when they are relearning forgotten skills), a non-graded inter-group approach would allow persons to progress as rapidly as possible.

Any reading program should have some general objectives which act as basic guidelines to the program. As set forth by Bailey, the following are the reading

objectives of the Adult Continuing Education Center at Danville, Illinois Junior College:

1. Teach reading as a developmental process.

2. Determine and provide reading readiness experiences.

3. Develop verbal concepts and word recognition.

4. Develop the ability to communicate ideas and information.

5. Develop comprehension of ideas that words represent.

6. Develop the ability to comprehend and read for information.

7. Develop critical thinking and constructive discussion.

8. Encourage application of reading abilities in solving daily problems.

9. Develop study skills and habits.

10. Instill a desire for worthwhile recreational reading (Bailey, 1969:9).

Objectives such as these provided a general guide for the instruction of reading skills.

Materials devised especially for adults with low reading levels are becoming more profuse as the need for them becomes more known.

Careful selection of appropriate materials will do much to make the reading program successful. Bailey gives ten suggestions to consider when choosing materials:

1. Materials should be appropriate for the kinds of students taught. Are they farmers, migrant workers, or factory workers?

2. Lessons must provide practice for varying abilities.

3. Materials and activities should be about familiar and interesting subjects.

4. Materials, even at the beginning levels, should have vocabularies which are in adult style.

5. Beginning materials should have short sentences, and large type and double spacing should be used.

6. Readability levels of materials should be checked.

7. Each lesson should teach one or two concepts which the student can master so that he can feel successful.

8. Lessons should be in sequential and logical order.

9. Lessons should be presented so that students can go ahead by themselves much of the time.

10. Some materials should pertain to life situations, such as homemaking, vocational opportunities, citizenship rights and duties, and recreational reading (Bailey, 1969:8).

A few examples of possible materials available to adult reading programs are discussed below according to their general make-up.

The worktest approach is used in workbooks such as; Adult Reader, Steps to Learning How to be a Better Reader,

I Want to Read and Write, My Country, Working With Words and Word Power (Steck-Vaughn Co.). A similar approach is used in New Reading Skill Builders (Readers Digest Services, Inc.) with supporting workbooks.

The programmed approach is used in Programmed Reading for Adults (A Sullivan Associates Program, McGraw-Hill Book Co.). Using a linguistic approach in a programmed format, it is practically self-teaching.

The packaged kit approach is used in Reading Development Kits A. B. & C (Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.), the various SRA kits (Science Research Associates, Inc.), and in LSI-Lessons for Self-Instruction in Basic Skills (California Test Bureau - division of McGraw-Hill Book Co.).

Texts to develop specific comprehension skills are Specific Skill Series (Barnell Loft, Ltd.); Tactics I-III (Scott-Forsman), Be a Better Reader series (Prentice-Hall, Inc.), and Reading for Concepts (Webster Division, McGraw-Hill Book Co.).

Paperbacks adapted for high-interest, low-level reading include The Everyreader Series (Webster Division, McGraw-Hill Book Co.) and novels such as The Call of the Wild and Stories of Edgar Allen Poe published by McGraw-Hill Book Co.

Flashcards include Programmed Reading Word Cards for Adults (a Sullivan Associates Program from McGraw-Hill Book Co.) and Phonetic Word Drill Cards (Kenworthy Educational Services, Inc.).

The Language Master (Bell and Howell) can be valuable in helping foreign language students learn English.

Other helpful equipment might include an overhead projector, video tape machine and a tape recorder. The use of acetate sheets and grease pencils can cut down the cost of materials.

Supplementary materials such as newspapers, various instructional manuals (driver's manual), telephone books, cook books, and teacher created materials will add variety and usefulness to the program.

An adult program designed for adults will facilitate a meaningful learning experience. Adult students are not members of a captive audience. Unless they feel accepted, they may become drop-outs for perhaps the last time.

Summary

A relaxed, comfortable learning environment staffed by understanding, caring instructors will help alleviate

the fears and suspicions undereducated adults may bring into a reading program. Counselor assistance may be required when psychological problems create blocks to learning.

Utilizing materials designed specifically for adults, an individualized approach to learning is both effective and necessary. Since adults do not have the same needs and cannot be expected to learn at the same rate, a plan designed to fit the individual brings the most satisfying results.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The primary purpose of this paper was to direct attention to the need for stimulating learning experiences for undereducated adults. Some of the factors which could affect how adults learn and their implications for teaching were presented in the review of literature. Three recent demonstration programs for adults in Butte, Montana were reviewed as examples of the successful use of innovative ideas. Finally, suggestions for implementing a reading program designed especially for adults were proposed.

Throughout the paper, it was emphasized that adults are individuals and as such have individual abilities, interests, and problems. If a sincere effort is made to adjust a learning experience to an adult's needs, it can prove to be a worthwhile undertaking for that adult.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from this descriptive study of adult learning problems and needs. They are:

1. There is a need for effective reading programs on the adult level.

2. Most adults can learn if and when they want to learn.

3. Age seems to affect the rate of learning more than the quality of learning.

4. Adults are very apprehensive about their ability to learn.

5. Adults should be given chances at success early in their learning experience.

6. The teacher of adults must be able to accept her students as worthwhile individuals in spite of their backgrounds or attitudes.

7. Adults learn best in a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere where they are able to progress at their own rate.

8. Home-based adult learning programs can be effective and successful.

Recommendations

On the basis of this study, it seems necessary to make the following recommendations.

1. Efforts to reach and recruit undereducated adults in this country should be intensified.

2. Teachers of adult education should have counseling training in order to effectively help adult students deal with their various problems.

3. Federally funded demonstration programs which prove to be successful should be allowed to continue.

4. More high-interest, low-level reading material should be made available to adults.

5. Adult education should be given greater emphasis in teacher training programs at the college level.

6. Further studies on and evaluations of effective adult learning experiences should be conducted in order to upgrade the entire concept of Adult Basic Education.

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