

Chapter **9**

Good policy, good practice

The preceding chapters, particularly Chapters 2 and 7, show that the global literacy challenge is huge in terms of the hundreds of millions of people who do not benefit from literacy. Scale is therefore an important aspect of any policy response to this challenge. The challenge is not just one of scale, however. It is also one of scope. The thrust of this Report is that literacy policy should have the goal not only of literate individuals but also the much broader goal of literate societies, in which all people can use their literacy to pursue freedoms, opportunities and personal development and in which literacy contributes to the development of the economy and the society. This chapter suggests policy priorities and good practices for countries and for the international community to assist them in meeting the literacy challenge. It advocates a three-pronged approach to literacy – assuring quality schooling, scaling up literacy programmes for youth and adults, and developing literate environments. The chapter focuses particularly on youth and adult literacy programmes, as school quality was covered in the 2005 Report and the importance of the literate environment is discussed in Chapter 8.

Literacy policy is central to the entire EFA framework

Four policy directions

The evidence of this Report suggests four major policy directions for governments and other literacy stakeholders, especially in developing countries: to consider literacy policy as central to the entire EFA framework; to develop a three-pronged policy for literate societies; to take careful account of multilingualism; and to place literacy firmly within education sector plans and poverty reduction strategies.

Literacy is at the core of EFA as a learning tool, a learning process and a learning outcome, all contributing to the achievement of broader human development goals.

A three-pronged policy for literate societies is essential. Quality schooling for all children is necessary if the entire next generation of adults is to be literate – this means not just universal primary enrolment but also universal primary completion and good-quality primary education. Scaled-up youth and adult literacy programmes are necessary if the hundreds of millions of adults without literacy skills are to have the means to acquire and use these skills; simply waiting for universal primary completion is not the answer. Nor are ‘one size fits all’ solutions: strategies need to respond to diverse needs and contexts. Rich literate environments are necessary both for the acquisition and the retention and use of literacy skills; literate environments in turn depend on language, book, media and information policies. The weight accorded to each of the three prongs will vary across countries, reflecting relative needs and the availability of resources. The challenge is further compounded by the fact that the countries in which the majority of adults lack minimal literacy skills are also those in which the attainment of a good basic education for all children is still many years away, at current rates of progress. These countries are mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia.

Multilingualism is a crucial factor for all three prongs of literacy policy. Use of mother tongues is pedagogically sound, encourages community mobilization and social development, and provides for political voice. At the same time, there is strong demand for learning dominant languages to increase economic opportunity, mobility and engagement in national development processes. Consistency and coherence must shape language, literacy and education policy.

Only if literacy and the goal of literate societies are placed firmly within education sector plans

and poverty reduction strategies are the necessary institutional, human and financial resources likely to be provided. This direction is also important if the international community is to recognize the magnitude and complexity of the task and include literacy within aid programme frameworks.

Three strategic considerations

To achieve the policy directions outlined above, there are three important strategic considerations. First, strong and sustained political commitment to literacy is essential. The general absence of such commitment and the resulting lack of sufficient resources for developing holistic literacy policies partly explain the failure to reach higher levels of literacy (Jones, 1990; Lind and Johnston, 1990). In evaluating the Experimental World Literacy Programme (1967–1973), UNESCO concluded that unless the political will to implement literacy programmes was explicit in both theory and practice, individual programmes would have limited success (UNESCO/UNDP, 1976, cited in Lind and Johnston, 1990).¹

Where significant national gains in levels of adult literacy have been achieved, both national and local leaders have stressed the value of literacy for nation-building and/or for the achievement of particular aspects of human and economic development. Financial and other resources have been allocated and responsibilities have been shared. The public has supported adult learning. This was true in the United Republic of Tanzania after independence² and Mozambique in the 1970s, and it is true today in countries undergoing rapid economic growth and transformation, including China and India.

Local community leaders are well placed to acknowledge the real constraints on people’s participation in literacy activities. In Indonesia, for example, support for learning groups in a literacy campaign was sought through endorsement by village chiefs. The groups did well where the chiefs were aware of the need for literacy, and much less so where they were not (Downing, 1987, cited in Lind and Johnston, 1996).

The second strategic consideration is partnership. Outside schools, literacy programmes are diverse, and their providers varied and often institutionally insecure. But the involvement of the media, universities, ministries

1. The majority of the enrolled learners who became literate in the eleven countries participating in the Experimental World Literacy Programme were in the United Republic of Tanzania: 96,900 out of 120,000, or 12% (Lind and Johnston, 1990).

2. In the United Republic of Tanzania, literacy was clearly identified as a national priority. President Julius Nyerere was a strong advocate of adult education. Illiteracy fell from 67% to 20% between 1971 and 1983 (Lind and Johnston, 1990).

other than education, local authorities, civil society and the private sector is a strength. Different types of competence and capacity are brought to bear. Brokering national partnerships to promote institutional development, enhance programme sustainability and make literacy more visible can increase cohesion in national literacy efforts. In addition, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of agencies, and establishing national and local coordination among providers enhance the national literacy resource base.

The third important strategic consideration is that responding to demand and creating motivation for literacy are critical. A basic principle of adult education, albeit one not applied uniformly, is that the knowledge and wishes of learners should both inform learning programmes and be their starting point. Gender, age, rural and urban circumstances, levels of motivation and language are important facets of demand, as are longer-term expectations. In Uganda, initial literacy graduates sought continuing education in advanced literacy, English, vocational skills and modern agricultural methods (Carr-Hill, 2001). People who have never acquired basic literacy skills need different channels from those that respond to the demands of people looking to continue their education beyond schooling. It is important to build links between literacy programmes and continuing education.

Building on the above directions and strategic considerations, this chapter gives particular attention to the challenge represented by one of the three prongs of literacy policy – investment in youth and adult literacy. The chapter focuses on:

- promoting good practice in the learning and teaching of literacy;
- scaling up adult literacy programmes;
- bringing greater coherence to national policies on adult literacy;
- engaging the international community.

In so doing, the intent is not to obscure the importance of the literate environment, an issue addressed in Chapter 8. The link between adult literacy and the environments in which learners use their literacy skills receives regular attention in the sections that follow. The relationship between literate environments and types and levels of adult learning is complex and not always direct, but it seems clear that literate environments encourage individuals to become literate and enable those with newly acquired skills to sustain and develop their literacy (see Box 8.9).

Some specialists suggest that opportunities to use and develop literacy should be in place before literacy programmes are offered, arguing that literacy skills are learned and developed throughout life in literate societies.³ The retention of literacy and numeracy skills might in that case depend more on their continued use than on the provision of additional courses (Lauglo, 2001). Accordingly, the importance of providing and disseminating reading materials for newly literate adults is critical, especially where the opportunity to use new literacy skills is otherwise limited (Carron et al., 1989; Carr-Hill, 2001). Several reviews highlight the lack of reading materials in local languages in multilingual contexts (Riddell, 2001; Lind and Johnston, 1996).

Policies related to book publishing,⁴ the media and access to information also play an influential role in developing environments in which literacy can flourish. This Report does not discuss the policies in detail, in part because they are so specific to particular contexts and countries. They require policy-makers' attention, however.

The creation of literate societies involves the promotion of a broad range of policies and activities. Good schools should exist in every community. The reading habit should be supported and acknowledged.⁵ Access to the media and to printed matter in general should be extensive. Time should be made for women and for men to read and write, and explicit links between oral and written cultures and different languages should be encouraged. There should be support for enhancing visual literacy. Multiple paths to learning and to the creation of learning and of literate environments are required (Box 9.1).

Promoting good practice in the learning and teaching of literacy

Sound policy and planning require an understanding of good practice in the learning and teaching of literacy. The diversity of practice in schools, adult literacy classes, homes, workplaces and meeting places is a challenge for government policy-makers and planners more familiar with a one-track approach to provision of formal education. Appreciation of this fact is an important point of departure for policy development.

Providing and disseminating reading materials for newly literate adults is critical

3. See, for instance, Dumont (1990), Ouane (1989), and Lind and Johnston (1990).

4. Despite numerous textbook and curriculum development projects in the 1990s, the establishment of book provision systems has been ineffective in many developing countries (Salzano, 2002). There have been strong calls for the creation of national book development bodies and for national book policies favouring the development, publication and dissemination of printed materials (e.g. Montagnes, 2000; Salzano, 2002; UNESCO, 2004a).

5. Broad reading of self-selected material is associated with the acquisition of vocabulary and comprehension skills, and with the development of the reading habit and of creative imagination. It provides experience in the use and retrieval of information, essential for problem-solving and lifelong learning (Rosenberg, 2000).

Box 9.1 Nijera Shikhi's literacy programme in Bangladesh

An evaluation of the impact of a literacy programme organized by the people's movement Nijera Shikhi in Bangladesh showed that the majority of learners acquired functional and sustainable literacy and numeracy skills even when villages lacked reading materials. A key factor identified as contributing to retention and other gains was the 'post-literacy' part of the course. This third stage of the programme consisted of organized self-education study groups in which learners read, and helped each other read, books on development themes. The sixty-one books, provided by Nijera Shikhi, constituted a 'mini-library' managed by the local 'committee for mass education' and expanded through broad involvement by the whole village.

Source: Cawthera (1997 and 2003).

6. See, for instance, Lind and Johnston (1996) and Beder (2003).

7. Such programmes are of growing importance in the United States and other industrialized countries, and are being tested in some low-income countries. The approach serves broad social groups rather than targeting individual learners.

8. Indirect learning experiences, sometimes referred to as the 'hidden curriculum', can include anything that is unintentionally taught or learned. This might occur through a teacher's biases or sociocultural assumptions, or through those of textbooks. See Box 9.3 for an example related to gender.

Adult literacy programmes are normally oriented around some or all of three main goals: acquisition of basic literacy skills; literacy for particular uses and applications; and literacy for empowerment or 'conscientization', a transformative approach to learning that encourages collective action, and social and political engagement.⁶ These approaches overlap. Indeed, the first necessarily underpins or informs the other two.

Literacy programmes can also be grouped by the strategies they employ. Some are literacy-led, focusing primarily on specific and basic literacy

skills. Others are literacy-informed, aiming mainly at non-literacy goals such as better health, rural development, self-employment and women's empowerment. Literacy-creating and -sustaining activities, designed to encourage the use and development of literacy practices, may involve support for literacy through use of the media, books, multiple languages, information and communication technology (ICT), and cultural and library-based activities. Here too, the categories are by no means discrete.

These goals and strategies can be combined to form part of a basic framework for policy dialogue on the learning and teaching of literacy (Table 9.1). This framework suggests some measure of correspondence between the goal of acquiring basic skills and certain literacy-led strategies, and between the goal of literacy for specific applications and strategies related to literacy-informed programmes. The framework is a conceptual aid, not a firm categorization of programmes, and is used accordingly in this chapter. Few literacy programmes fit neatly into a simplified framework. For example, family literacy programmes combine pre-school experience for children, focusing on cognitive outcomes for school readiness, with parenting and literacy skills for parents.⁷

The framework also identifies wider development goals and some economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of literacy. This is not meant to suggest that literacy per se can meet specific non-literacy objectives. Important relationships exist, but literacy itself does not achieve development without other economic and social policies (Lauglo, 2001).

Whatever the objectives and strategies, all literacy programmes require attention to (a) the literacy curriculum; (b) pedagogy; (c) the composition and organization of learning groups; (d) the recruitment, training, use and professional development of literacy educators and trainers; (e) learning technology; and (f) language. These are discussed in the following sections.

The literacy curriculum

Different objectives for literacy programmes place different demands on the literacy curriculum, whether it is interpreted as the content of a subject to be taught or as a total learning experience, direct and indirect.⁸ Direct learning experiences are realized through planned curricula. These should offer a varied menu of learning opportunities for diverse

Table 9.1: Three approaches to literacy acquisition

	Learning outcomes	Strategies	Wider policy goals
Literacy skills	Reading, writing and numeracy skills in a given language or languages.	Largely through formal schooling and national adult programmes and campaigns. Primarily literacy-led.	Mass literacy; equity in opportunity; development and human rights.
Application of literacy for specific purposes	The application of skills to meet specific needs and priorities; life skills.	Largely through non-formal adult programmes. Often literacy-informed, as part of development programmes.	A competitive workforce; political participation and citizenship; ability to respond to the demands of globalization; a range of social benefits.
Empowerment and transformation	Empowerment; critical skills; social transformation.	Freirean or participatory techniques; learner-designed. Literacy-led and -informed.	Human and social empowerment; active citizenship; critical participation; social mobilization.

participants in a well-organized and flexible way, using resources that directly respond to learners' needs and interests. Teaching and learning strategies should reflect the learning outcomes and objectives that provide the rationale for the literacy programme.⁹

A well-planned curriculum respects the demand and motivation for literacy. It takes account of the circumstances of young people and adults, including the poverty that pervades many learners' lives. All too often it needs to address disability, HIV/AIDS, conflict or other emergencies, migration and exclusion, as Chapter 7 notes. Fundamentally, the curriculum must be useful and relevant to learners' everyday lives.¹⁰ A relevant curriculum is conducive to better learning outcomes.

Whether literacy-led, -informed or -sustaining, the curriculum should reflect and build on the individual and social contexts underlying the demand for literacy. These include what the learner already knows, wants and brings to the learning experience; the learner's mother tongue and his/her other languages; his/her cultural background (including family, local culture, oral traditions and indigenous knowledge) and its relationship to the literacy being acquired; and the identity of the learner in relation to gender, class, religion and race (Ouane and Glanz, 2005). Some commentators also emphasize helping learners move out of their current context through, for example, knowledge of an official or international language. Balancing the curriculum in ways that are relevant to local context and wider opportunity is a significant curriculum development challenge.

To respond to these diverse needs and motivations, clear, appropriate and realistic goals should define the 'why' of the curriculum (Hendricks, 1996). From this should flow the 'what' – the specific learning objectives and results that provide clear statements of intent for learners, couched in terms of skills and their application or wider social engagement (Hendricks, 1996; Posner and Rudnitsky, 1982, cited in Otto, 1997).

The 'who' in these processes is also important. Specialists tend to predominate in defining functional or skills-based programmes, while a more participatory and less prescribed approach generally characterizes transformative activities. When the primary objective is literacy-informed development of a job-specific skill, the vocational subject specialist usually determines

the curriculum (Otto, 1997). A broader, team-based approach is required when a range of skills is targeted. Other literacy stakeholders who may participate in curriculum design include government officials, literacy or education experts, representatives of civil society organizations, educators (teachers, facilitators, trainers and supervisors) and learners. Another approach increasingly taken is the integration of adult education (including literacy-informed programmes) into the formal education system and the expansion of credentials for adult education. This involves a greater degree of curriculum determination by formal agencies.

The core of a literacy curriculum, often directed to the attainment of the cognitive skills of reading, writing and calculation, tends to be taught the same way in all contexts.¹¹ The centrality of this approach may be challenged if critical analysis and confidence-building are seen as primary learning outcomes, and learners participate in determining programme objectives and content (Streumer and Tuijnman, 1996). ActionAid's Reflect initiative is guided by the goal of having literacy programmes taken over fully by their host communities.¹² This requires a much more open approach to curriculum development but also a large number of very committed, well-trained educators and trainers, which is often impossible to provide where resources are limited.

Programme rationale has an impact on the choice and sequencing of subject matter and the uses to which primers, educators' manuals and other learning materials are put. Again, choices are influenced by the degree to which reading, writing and numeracy are approached as ends in themselves or as means to realize other goals. Programmes that stress empowerment may give priority to literacy and civic education, and to rights and responsibilities. Those geared to poverty reduction may focus on health education or other socio-economic life skills. The development and choice of learning materials will reflect such wider goals.

Many literacy programmes, notably in Africa, describe themselves as 'functional'. Literacy is combined with health practices, agriculture, marketing, environmental issues, and other life skills or livelihood skills. Senegal's Women's Literacy Programme (1996–2001) combined basic education with opportunities for training in income-generating activities, such as soap-making, dyeing, poultry, shop-keeping and other

A well-planned curriculum respects the demand and motivation for literacy

9. See, for instance, Bondi and Bondi (1989, cited in Otto, 1997).

10. This observation is supported at least rhetorically by nearly all the country background papers commissioned for this Report.

11. Skills-based approaches often follow the memorization and 'chalk and talk' methods used in many schools.

12. Reflect (the name is an acronym, standing for 'Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques') combines Freirean and participatory methods. Begun with pilot projects in Bangladesh, El Salvador and Uganda in 1995, it has since been adopted by over 350 organizations in more than 60 countries.

High-quality literacy primers remain key to programme success

undertakings that the learners proposed. Learners had a choice regarding the language of instruction and the class schedule (Nordtveit, 2005b).

The experience of functional programmes is mixed. Some run literacy and income-generation activities in parallel, others separately. A literacy course may be followed by income-generation activities. A common mistake seems to be to combine the two, in too short a time, with educators insufficiently qualified to deal with both. Each element needs sufficient learning time, and cross- or multi-sector collaboration should be undertaken so that a given group of learners has different educators for the two components (Oxenham et al., 2002). It also appears easier to offer livelihood-related training to those who already have basic literacy skills.

The use of literacy primers and manuals, common in many programmes, can become too rigid (Riddell, 2001).¹³ High-quality literacy primers and manuals, and their interpretation by well-trained educators, remain key to programme success, but materials that are too prescriptive and 'top-down' in approach, and insufficiently responsive to local needs and priorities, have limited value. ActionAid's Reflect Mother Manual was created to be a resource that would generate new, locally produced and locally relevant manuals. The experience of this approach in South Asia (Box 9.2) highlights the importance of flexible

application in response to local demand and capacity, as well as coherence and consistency between curriculum, pedagogy and training.

Even where programmes follow a well-designed primer-based approach, literacy teaching is often hindered by the insufficiency of texts or scarcity of learning materials. In Senegal, many literacy classes are taught orally. The few books available are poorly designed and written. The lack of good materials is most obvious in mathematics teaching, where poor results are due largely to poor materials and to educator training that fails to address how to teach various calculation methods in a clear, step-by-step way (Fagerberg-Diallo, 1999).

Indeed, the numeracy dimension of literacy curricula tends to ignore the contextual realities of learners even more than the reading and writing components do. Yet, most adults have numeracy skills, including oral counting. They possess some mathematical structures and mental arithmetic skills that are more or less adequate for daily life. This is important knowledge and should be (but rarely is) surveyed before numeracy programmes are developed (Archer and Cottingham, 1996a). Still, written numeracy is important. People are aware of the limitations of memory for storing complex numbers and managing household accounts. The teaching of numerical calculations in ways

Box 9.2 Three responses to the Reflect Mother Manual in South Asia

For many years in **Nepal**, primer-based literacy programmes have published manuals or guidebooks for literacy facilitators. Significant investment has gone into preparing the manuals, but less to developing the capacities of rural practitioners, who after a couple of weeks of training are expected to run literacy centres with little help. As a result, the programmes experience problems of drop-out and poor performance, leading to facilitators' rapid disillusionment and departure.

The Reflect Mother Manual suggests that a local team should prepare the local facilitators' manual, and recruit and train facilitators in its use. This approach was rejected in Nepal because it was feared that the result would be a manual not unlike the existing ones, with people told what to do but rarely able to do it. Instead, the focus has been on training facilitators in the ideas and methods of Reflect so that they can internalize the approach and make it their own.

In **Bangladesh**, by contrast, the Reflect Mother Manual and the manual from the Reflect pilot programme were heavily relied upon in the production of local manuals, with little variation or adaptation. Now diversification is being emphasized, indicating that the weight of a 'definitive manual' was distorting the very philosophy of the manual itself.

A third way is taken in **India**. Facilitators produce their own local manual during initial and ongoing training. Having been introduced to basic participatory tools, they adapt the tools to address critical local issues in writing their own manual. Because they have written it, they are less likely to regard it as sacred and are more able to adapt the approach to their individual contexts. The guideline they produce is loose-leaf, so it can be updated and revised, and never becomes a fixed or frozen text.

Source: Gautam (1998).

13. A primer is a textbook for learners, while a manual is a handbook for facilitators. ActionAid argues that in many circumstances using a manual has not helped facilitators teach creatively. If used, the argument goes, the manual becomes prescriptive rather than a guide to good contextual practice (Gautam, 1998).

14. Most existing research on the selective transmission and reproduction of values and beliefs highlights how class, race and gender inequalities work their way through the content and organization of the school curriculum (Apple, 1996).

that relate to the social tasks and texts that adult learners actually encounter needs more attention. This means better training of literacy educators, backed by curriculum resources that develop their expertise in numeracy (Coben et al., 2003).

Literacy curricula are not immune to instances of the 'hidden curriculum', a topic well researched in formal education but largely neglected in adult literacy.¹⁴ As in any educational activity, learning materials should be scrutinized for images, symbols and messages that might legitimize inequalities. An analysis of literacy materials developed several years ago by World Education, an international non-governmental organization (NGO), discovered that while Freirean terminology was used consistently, the primers perpetuated ideas of dependence and subordination (Kidd and Kumar, 1981, cited in Dighe, 2004). Box 9.3 looks at the 'hidden curriculum' in literacy curricula through a gender lens.

In 1998, drawing on Indian experience, UNESCO Bangkok identified six important dimensions of the literacy curriculum: awareness, functionality, flexibility, diversity, appropriateness of the learning relationship and action orientation. These dimensions bridge the skills-based, functional and transformative approaches. They emphasize contextual relevance but leave space for ambitions of upwards social and economic mobility. They recognize the critical need for consistency between *what* is taught and learned, and *how* it is taught and learned.

Pedagogy for adults

Teaching adults is not the same as teaching children. The study of adult learning, or 'andragogy', asserts that adults:

- need to know why they should learn something before they undertake to learn it;
- conceive of themselves as responsible for their lives and need to be treated by others as such;
- come to educational activity with a range of life experiences;
- are ready to learn how to cope with real-life situations effectively;
- are task- or problem-centred (unlike children in school, who are subject-oriented);
- respond to extrinsic motivation (e.g. better jobs, promotions and salary increases) but even more to intrinsic motivation (e.g. increased self-esteem, quality of life, responsibility and job satisfaction) (Knowles, 1989, cited in Dighe, 2004).

Box 9.3 Gender in the 'hidden curriculum'

Repetitive images and themes characterize the content of literacy primers. In an Indian study, literacy primers were shown to have ignored women as productive workers and focused exclusively on them as wives and mothers. They reinforced traditional definitions of women and propagated the ideal of Indian women as passive, submissive and self-sacrificing. There was no attempt to challenge or question the existing sexual division of labour and discriminatory practices against women in society (Bhasin, 1984; Patel, 1987).

In the words of a researcher on the content of an adult literacy textbook in Egypt:

'I leafed through the whole textbook looking for pictures of women and found only one, though every story was accompanied by a picture. In this picture, every woman was pregnant or accompanied by small children or both. I asked what the story was about and was told the subject was family planning. The agricultural work Egyptian women undertake, participation in the paid labour force in a variety of capacities, food preparation, household work, beer brewing, and all the other types of work with which women engage, were completely ignored' (Greenberg, 2002).

Source: Dighe (2004).

These understandings are important. They point to the significance of participatory and learner-centred adult teaching and learning methods, which find expression in a number of learning paradigms (e.g. Box 9.4)

While such approaches are desirable in principle, their success depends heavily on the skills and ability of the literacy educators and the quality of their training. A lesson from most reviews is that adults must be treated with respect and patience; another is that if the chosen learning approach is not within the reach of educators, there is increased risk that 'they will relapse even more easily into the methods they remember from their own school experience' (Lind and Johnston, 1990).

Much of this debate relates to reading, writing and written text. As noted earlier, although numeracy is usually considered an important component of literacy, in practice the methods for teaching and learning numeracy receive much less attention.

The teaching and learning of visual literacy tends to be similarly neglected. Research into visual literacy has challenged the assumption that people can understand posters and leaflets more easily than words. People who lack exposure to two-dimensional images and are unfamiliar with their conventions can find photographs to be cluttered and their perspective confusing, or line

Success depends heavily on the skills and ability of the literacy educators and the quality of their training

Box 9.4 Learner-centred learning paradigms for literacy

■ Critical learning

Feminist learning

Feminist education theorists, building on critical learning theories, argue that the focus on class-based oppression has neglected gender, race and interlocking systems of oppression (Dighe, 2004). In this view, inadequate attention has been paid to how women learn and the barriers to their learning. It is well known that women starting or returning to education programmes often suffer from a lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem. To learn effectively, women need to know they are intelligent and capable of learning, so educators should be trained to give positive, constructive feedback to ensure that confidence is enhanced. Research is also beginning to show that women seem to do best in learning environments where forms of knowledge that come from life experiences are valued (Belenky et al., 1986). In Mahila Samakhya, an education programme for women's equality in India, women have generated their own learning materials on the basis of their experiences. Niranter, a feminist NGO in India, developed a curriculum collaboratively with village women around issues affecting their lives (Windows to the World, 1997; Dighe, 2004).

Cultural learning

This approach contends that traditional adult learning theories neglect types of learning suited to people of various races and class backgrounds, those who are unemployed, etc. Culture is regarded as central to shaping education processes. The way people think, communicate, learn and relate to others is a product of the value system of their home, community and culture. People from different cultures have different ways of thinking and learning (Dighe, 2004). Ethnographic research (Street, 2001b) can lead to curricula differing from those in traditional programmes. The 'local literacies' used every day by marginalized groups help identify specific literacy skills focused on immediate tasks. An example is ethnomathematics, which reveals indigenous methods for acquiring numeracy skills. Many illiterate people of rural Tamil Nadu in India, for instance, have sophisticated numeracy skills, including the ability to make complicated geometrical patterns (Rampal et al., 1997) (Box 6.4).

drawings and cartoons to be full of 'strange' conventions such as bubbles and arrows.¹⁵ It has been observed that people 'learn to read pictures just as they learn to read the pages in a book. This is not recognized because education in reading pictures is an informal process. It goes on automatically in societies where a variety of pictures are presented daily through a variety of media. In social environments with no pictorial tradition or very few pictorial representations ... the informal process of learning to read pictures simply does not occur' (Fuglesang, 1982, cited in Archer and Cottingham, 1996a).

While the argument for participatory, learner-centred programmes is powerful, a formal 'basic skills' approach to literacy is widespread, focusing on the teaching of specific reading, writing and numeracy skills.¹⁶ Mastery of these skills is deemed to constitute a form of literacy that can be generalized to various contexts. Quality is

defined in terms of speed and efficiency in learning basic skills. Efficiency is important because many learners can take part in only a limited number of hours of classes (Beder, 2003). This philosophy is evident in the first phase of the Joint Programme for the Promotion of Basic Education for All Malagasy Children in Madagascar.¹⁷

Approaches to literacy acquisition (particularly reading) based on efficiency have been analysed in the field of cognitive science. This research involves important features of the human memory, a field little known by literacy educators. A review of the research indicates that it has improved understanding of how the brain processes reading patterns, that increasingly faster reading tasks reinforce the retention of messages and their meaning, and that educators' unfamiliarity with such issues and techniques

15. See, for example, Murray Bradley (1994) and Fuglesang (1982), cited in Archer and Cottingham (1996a).

16. The vast literature on conventional methods of teaching reading and writing skills to children is not explored here beyond recognizing the distinction between, on the one hand, teaching reading through initial emphasis on the elements of words and their sounds as aids to word recognition, and, on the other, the use of words or larger language units to put the initial emphasis on the meaning of what is read; see Gray (1969).

17. The programme, whose sponsors include the United Nations and the Government of Madagascar (with assistance and technical coordination by UNESCO), lets out-of-school children and illiterate adults complete the traditional primary education cycle in ten months instead of five years. Adults and adolescents attend 'intensive functional literacy for development' courses. In the initial forty-eight-day course, learners become familiar with reading, writing and numeracy; a second phase (thirty-six days) focuses on basic technical and professional training. An evaluation midway through the programme showed that 76.4% of those completing the first phase could be considered literate and 35.5% reached the advanced level (UNESCO, 2004c).

contributes to the relative lack of success in many literacy programmes (Abadzi, 2003a and 2004).

Organizing learning groups

Organizing literacy programmes to enable women and men to participate in ways and at times that suit their needs and circumstances is critical to programme effectiveness. Adult learners are largely voluntary participants. The demands of work and family can affect attendance and lead to drop-out. The cyclical patterns of life in rural areas determine when investment in learning is practical. At the same time, adults usually have pragmatic, focused reasons for taking such courses, and will stop participating if they feel their goals have been met or if the programme is not addressing their needs.

Some commentators have used drop-out rates as an indicator of programme inefficiency (Abadzi, 2003a). Care needs to be taken in the measurement of these rates since irregular attendance or 'drop-in/drop-out' may be common. Whatever the circumstances, organizational strategies should promote appropriate grouping of learners, sensible organization of their time and a friendly, suitable location.

Gender considerations matter greatly. In societies where men are assumed to be the principal family decision-makers, it is often as important to gain their agreement to the participation of their wives and daughters in literacy courses as it is to appeal to the interest of the women themselves. An understanding of the cultural constraints under which both men and women operate is important. In parts of rural Morocco, a husband would lose face if his wife attended classes taught by a male instructor or where other safeguards were not provided. In most cases, husbands are not actively opposed to their wives attending classes, but they require that the classes conform to the social practices and conventions of the community. If a woman instructor is not available, classes might still be possible if they meet in a mosque or the home of a respected community leader (Bougroum, 2005).

In Uganda, the training of women as literacy educators is a basic requirement for reaching out to potential women learners, especially in the more rural and conservative areas. Current plans call for 40,000 literacy educators to be trained and at least half of these will be women. This is in response to a situation in which 70% of adult

learners are women but most existing educators are men (Okech, 2005). In contrast, in Namibia's National Literacy Programme in the 1990s, the majority of both learners and literacy educators were women (Lind, 1996). In this case, men were disinclined to participate in the classes because of the numbers of women; moreover, the course was seen as a woman's activity, with a focus on childcare, nutrition and health.

While gender analysis is essential, attention to age, prior learning experiences and other sociocultural factors is also important. The Alternative Basic Education programme in Karamoja, Uganda, serves both adults and children, though the latter are the primary target (Okech, 2005). Another Ugandan study revealed that learners' opinions about the desirability of class homogeneity were mixed (Box 9.5).

The duration of instruction needs to be flexible: long enough to achieve agreed outcomes, but short enough to reduce irregular attendance and drop-out (Lind and Johnston, 1996). In Burkina Faso, class schedules respond to the needs of female participants. Childcare is provided to enable mothers to concentrate on their courses (Napon and Sanou/Zerbo, 2005). In Eritrea, programmes are scheduled at different times of the year to reflect patterns

In Namibia's National Literacy Programme in the 1990s, the majority of both learners and literacy educators were women

Box 9.5 Opinions on the composition of learning groups in Uganda

Some learners believed classes worked best when participants were of similar age and background. 'Most of us learners are women aged between 30 and 40 years of age. We interacted freely and could ask our instructors any questions.' For others, a mix of ages was an advantage: 'The age difference brought cooperation and love among us, with the younger [ones] helping the older and vice versa.' In the latter group, however, some felt the age difference impeded learning, with younger learners saying the older ones held them back, while older learners observed: 'Some male youth are stubborn, they refuse to interact with us, saying you old people are rigid.' Younger participants felt uneasy when family matters were being discussed. Some felt the learning groups would assist only the older adults. There were learners who suggested that it would be best to have separate days or classes for different age groups, with, for example, older and slower learners in one class and younger, faster learners in another, and that there should be two facilitators. Self-confidence was another theme: 'The old are the ones who always answer. The young are always shy. Those who have been to school have a higher reasoning capacity than we who did not go to school. In family affairs such as cooking, it is women who always answer.'

Source: Carr-Hill (2001).

of climate and agricultural activity. Courses in rural areas usually run for two hours a day, five days a week for six months. In the more remote areas, where the population is scattered and often mobile, the courses are shorter. In urban areas, and for the army, courses are held daily throughout the year (Ghebrezghi, 2003).

Because contexts are so divergent, it is difficult to establish general benchmarks for the scheduling, duration and intensity of literacy programmes. Data from Bangladesh, Ghana and Senegal indicate that most adult literacy programmes last about 300 to 400 hours (Oxenham, 2004b). Another survey reported similar findings for initial literacy programmes but concluded that, for literacy to be sustainable, around 600 hours is desirable (Global Campaign for Education[GCE]/ActionAid International, 2005).¹⁸

How these hours are distributed is another matter. The programme managers who responded to the GCE/ActionAid survey were asked how long their programmes lasted. The average was over two years,¹⁹ with the initial literacy phase lasting nine to twelve months in sixteen programmes and eighteen to thirty months in twenty programmes.

Another critical factor is the regularity of classes. The GCE/ActionAid survey suggests that the most common pattern is two or three sessions a week. It concludes that classes held two or three times a week, for about two hours each, over two to three years, represents good practice in good programmes. But many programmes struggle to achieve as much, invariably because funds are short and/or programmes depend on external donors with aid tied to specific time-bound projects (GCE/Action Aid, 2005).

With regard to the location of literacy classes, a recent survey in Rwanda found that many take place in less than ideal conditions: 'Classes are held in: churches/mosques 33%; sector offices 26%; schools 13%; under a tree 13%; special shelter 6%; someone's home 4%; and others 4%. Only 32% rate the venue as appropriate, especially considering accessibility and equipment' (MINEDUC, 2005).

For first-time women learners, a non-threatening environment is crucial. In India, the Women's Development Programme in Rajasthan (Sharma and Srivastava, 1991; Patel 1991) and the Mahila Samakhya programme in the Banda district of Uttar Pradesh (Nirantar 1997) found

ten-day residential literacy camps to be an effective strategy for women's literacy. The camps allowed women to learn in an environment free from the pressures of their household responsibilities. However, for women who cannot leave home, a centre-based approach is necessary, in which case classes need to be conducted at a suitable time, and innovative teaching-learning methods and learner-centred materials used (Patel, 2001).

Although often under-resourced, libraries and community learning centres can offer easy access to all the learning materials needed to run an adult literacy programme, including printed and recorded books, magazines for all reading levels, videos and newspapers. They can supply space for learners and tutors, and are usually centrally located and accessible by public transport. Adults with low literacy levels often have bad memories of schools and a negative attitude towards formal education, but they can be invited into libraries to enjoy non-print activities, such as lectures, movies and discussion groups, to facilitate their first step back into learning. In Botswana, village reading rooms providing library services were established to support literacy graduates in rural areas where no traditional libraries operate. The library is an ideal place to offer family literacy programmes, as it provides materials and services for all age groups and reading levels. In Slovenia, public libraries enabled intergenerational lifelong learning processes that included children, youth and adults who came together and learned from each other by exchanging knowledge, experiences and viewpoints (Adams et al., 2002).

Literacy educators²⁰

Those who facilitate learning classes and groups are vital to the success of adult literacy programmes. '[T]he quality and effectiveness of any adult education programme obviously depend crucially on the "coal face" workers, namely the class instructors or facilitators: it is they who actually teach and interact with the intended beneficiaries' (John Oxenham, quoted in Rogers, 2005). But they are one of the least supported groups of educators worldwide. They receive little (if any) regular remuneration, lack job security, and receive few training opportunities and little ongoing professional support. This is a poor basis for major improvements in adult literacy. Unless the professional development of literacy educators and their trainers is taken seriously,

18. The GCE/ActionAid survey gathered data from sixty-seven programmes in thirty-five countries with 4 million learners. Literacy specialists from around the world identified the programmes as being of good quality. Fifty were NGO programmes. Twenty-six had over 300 learning groups.

19. Programmes are often divided into literacy and post-literacy phases, and it was not easy to consolidate the data. The survey asked about contact-hours in the initial phase, but not in post-literacy phases, so data about the overall length of good-quality programmes were incomplete.

20. This section is largely based on a background paper for this Report (Rogers, 2005) on the training of trainers of adult literacy educators. In line with the terms defined in this paper, those who teach literacy to adults (called variously facilitators, animators, monitors, mobilizers, tutors, etc.) are mostly referred to as 'adult literacy educators', with the term 'teacher' restricted to those who are formally trained and accredited as teachers in adult education. The term 'trainers' is used for the people who train adult literacy educators.

Box 9.6 Approaches to the training of literacy educators

The many approaches to training adult literacy educators vary according to the type of educator trained (e.g. voluntary or part-time facilitators with no formal qualifications, qualified schoolteachers who teach adults after hours, formally qualified adult educators, NGO staff with no education qualification) and the type of training (e.g. non-formal, often unaccredited, training or formal and accredited). Rodgers (2005) summarizes these approaches in two main categories.

Training of adult literacy facilitators

The existence of considerable variety among programmes to train adult literacy facilitators would seem to reflect (a) the ideologies of different programme providers; (b) attempts by most providers to adapt courses to the perceived needs of trainees; and (c) the voluntary nature of the courses, and the need to attract and retain trainees. Most courses are short, intensive, one-shot activities lasting one or two weeks, more or less full time.

Accreditation is generally absent. Brazil's Solidarity in Literacy programme does provide certificates, but the facilitators may be employed for only six months at most and may not be able to obtain the certification to become formal teachers. In another programme in

Brazil, however, students who complete training courses offered by Unitrabalho, an inter-university network, are certified as specialist teachers in adult and youth education. Few programmes use any form of assessment, although in Botswana and some other countries in Africa, literacy instructors are tested to make sure they are able to teach effectively.

Training of 'adult basic education and training' teachers

Programmes in this category take two main forms: institutional-based training, and open and distance learning. A few programmes combine the two. Most offer a one-year certificate, two-year diploma or three-year degree, and are based at institutions of further or higher education. Such formal courses are strong in southern Africa and parts of Latin America, and are starting in parts of Asia for non-formal education programmes. Some also exist in francophone Africa, emphasizing social psychology. Formal assessments are held and formal qualifications awarded. Such training may recognize trainees' previous educational experience. In some cases, relationships exist between this form of training and primary-school teacher training.

Source: Rogers (2005).

progress towards more literate societies will be severely constrained.

Literacy educators are a diverse group. Many come from the communities in which their programmes are situated. They may be broadly categorized into four groups:

- Local people with no formal qualifications, engaged part-time and on a casual basis – the largest of the four groups. Many in this category have no previous experience of teaching.²¹ Some are unpaid. The group includes students working for credit in formal education programmes. People in this category may have limited formal education, though some are well educated.
- Full-time or part-time NGO staff or other development workers, such as extension staff who teach literacy incidentally. Some NGO staff have come up through social movements and have high levels of commitment (e.g. in South Africa and Latin America) while others are pressed into service. Their qualifications are usually in areas other than adult literacy.

- Full-time teachers in other sectors of education who teach literacy voluntarily or as part of their duties. They are qualified schoolteachers, but their qualifications are not in adult education.
- Full-time, formally qualified adult educators, employed within wider programmes of adult basic education and training or non-formal education.

Given this diversity, and the range of goals and objectives characterizing literacy programmes, national training strategies vary considerably. The practice of training, where it exists – formal and non-formal – is equally diverse (Box 9.6). But some important principles, having to do with professional development and motivation, underpin approaches to good quality.

Professional development²²

Relatively little research into the training of trainers of literacy educators has been conducted. Evaluation reports, where they exist, suggest that training is a major area of weakness. For training

Evaluation reports suggest that training is a major area of weakness

21. A survey of India's Total Literacy Campaigns reported that 'more than 70% of the volunteer teachers interviewed ... had no previous experience of teaching literacy' (Rogers, 2005).

22. All direct quotations in this subsection are from Rogers (2005).

Evidence suggests that even where training policies exist, implementation is flawed

to be taken seriously, policies are needed that take into account 'the average base of competence, the type and time of training required to secure the adoption of appropriate instructional habits, and the likely need for periodic review, reinforcement and moral support'. A key to success is the ability to work in support of the realization of individual programme objectives. Where general training is at odds with specific programme objectives, the quality of learning outcomes will at best remain stagnant and at worse decline. Training that is formal and rigid, for instance, is unlikely to be helpful in participatory programmes designed to promote community activities. Even when training is carried out directly by programme providers, there is often a failure to address the gap between programme goals, and the ability and capacity of literacy educators to meet them. The tendency is to take a one-size-fits-all approach. In Bangladesh, for example, 'a comparison of the curricula, methodologies and training presented by NGOs and government agencies reveals no fundamental difference between the various providers with regard to the training presented to grassroots level facilitators'.

Other evidence suggests that even where training policies exist, implementation is flawed. The training in the Ugandan Government's Functional Adult Literacy programme, for instance, was 'particularly limited': '[M]any of the educators had been trained only once for just three days and had never had any refresher training. This inadequacy in training is particularly serious in view of the very little supervisory support given. In most cases, ... the supervisors themselves received no training in adult education and literacy methodology.'

As with literacy programmes generally, the language of training is a controversial topic. Training is often conducted in a nationally approved language, frequently an international language, while the work of literacy educators is invariably in a local language. The result is the 'awkward and difficult task of asking an instructor to take training in one language and then apply it in another, with no indication of how that process might work'. Training in numeracy is also rare. Literacy educators need to be able to transcend cultural barriers to teach mathematics according to local norms, but are rarely taught how to do so. These challenges again point to the absolute necessity of ensuring that the content, methodologies and envisaged outcomes

of training are consistent with the intentions and goals of locally defined literacy needs and programmes.

The link between accreditation and teaching quality is important but ambiguous. Qualifications do not necessarily mean better teaching and learning, particularly where the trainers of literacy educators have no direct experience themselves of teaching literacy to adults.

Despite this, interesting innovations in training are being carried out (Box 9.7). Distance learning and ICT form a relatively new channel for the training and support of literacy educators. A potential benefit of this approach is that it can offer continuous professional development and support (Pennells, 2005).

Some training programmes include provision for follow-up training and ongoing support, which are widely recognized as essential: 'If there are major gaps in their initial training, as is common in the training of teachers of youths and adults, continuing development must be of a very high standard if it is to successfully help teachers improve their performance.' Follow-up can include monthly meetings of educators from a given area; refresher courses; regular or occasional workshops on specific topics; and provision of continuing-education materials.

Among sixty programmes responding to the GCE/ActionAid survey, over a third offered some follow-up or refresher training every three months, while fourteen had activities at least once a month. Many respondents emphasized that formal follow-up training was less important than informal support structures in which educators generally meet regularly (even weekly) at first and less regularly as new programmes settle down. Such forums not only allow educators to share problems with peers, but also give them a sense of belonging to a larger structure (GCE/ActionAid, 2005).

Clearly, the professional development of literacy educators, and of their trainers and supervisors, needs much more attention in national literacy policy and practice. Cultivating the long-term capacity of national research institutions in the field of literacy can facilitate the development and testing of training curricula, instructional materials and training strategies.

Incentives and motivation

Conditions of employment for adult educators are poor. Most literacy educators and trainers are not employed full time. Namibia is an example of a

country where all literacy facilitators work on contract (though the contracts are annual and part-time). Worldwide, most facilitators 'are not assured of another literacy class when the one they are teaching is completed. In part, this is the result of the agreed approach to recruit literacy facilitators locally (often by the local community) rather than centrally' (Rogers, 2005). The result is major, regular turnover of facilitators with the inevitable implications for programme quality.

An associated issue is one of the most sensitive in the literacy policy debate: remuneration for literacy educators. While many literacy campaigns have celebrated the volunteer spirit, for underfunded literacy programmes volunteerism can become an economic necessity rather than a philosophy.

The GCE/ActionAid survey, covering sixty-seven programmes worldwide, revealed that half of the literacy educators involved were paid an honorarium or stipend, 25% received the national minimum wage and about 20% were unpaid. Most programmes paid 25% to 50% of a basic primary-school teacher salary (for hours worked); almost all others paid less than 25%. Given these levels of pay, it is not at all surprising that many programmes suffer from rapid turnover (GCE/ActionAid, 2005; Rogers, 2005).

As Table 9.2 shows, there are other forms of reward or incentives that programmes offer their educators. Non-material benefits, including increased status, are important, but not necessarily primary motivations for long-term service. When asked about investment priorities, those surveyed cited 'increasing the pay of facilitators' as one of their three primary concerns, along with training and reading materials (GCE/ActionAid, 2005). Clearly, a more coherent approach to the remuneration of literacy educators is required at national level, one that allows for diversity but encourages payment of enough to live on.

New learning technologies

Beyond the use of technology in formal education programmes for adults, where computer skills and other components of 'digital literacy' are often defined learning objectives, distance learning and ICTs can provide significant opportunities for informal and non-formal continuing literacy learning in adult and youth basic education programmes, as examples from four high-population countries show (Box 9.8).

Distance learning and ICTs can enable interaction and practice, use learner-generated

Box 9.7 Innovations in the training of adult literacy educators

A group of non-literate women founded the **Zimbabwe** Adult Learners' Association in 1994. It has achieved such a reputation for training literacy educators that its trainees are hired for both government and NGO activities. In addition to raising the association's profile, this achievement reduced 'government hegemonic control of the literacy curriculum'.

Another innovation relates to the enhancement of literacy educators' formal education. 'In **Mozambique**, literacy instructors with Grade 7 [schooling] are allowed to upgrade to Grade 9 through a fulltime course, receive some training as literacy teachers and can be employed as fulltime teachers in the programme'.

The Reflect programme's current approach to training emphasizes the importance of both the trainers' and the participants' learning contributing to the overall learning environment, highlighting the ability of both to create knowledge. The approach covers all forms of training, from orientation and initial or pre-service training (which generally lasts twelve days) to ongoing support through Reflect forums, exchange visits and refresher training on themes such as gender analysis and facilitation skills.

Source: Rogers (2005)

Table 9.2: Ranking of incentives other than basic pay for literacy educators in 67 programmes

Main incentives	Cited first*
Additional pay for results	8
Access to credit	7
Access to further education	8
Training certificates	8
Increased status in the community	11
Show of appreciation by learners	20
Provision of food parcels	5

* Number of programmes ranking the incentive first, after regular wage employment.

Source: GCE/ActionAid (2005).

materials, stimulate awareness-raising and learner motivation, support and train literacy workers, facilitate the distribution of materials and information to resource centres, and gather feedback from centres and individual learners regarding available materials and programmes (Pennells, 2005). It is rare, however, for adult literacy programmes to be conducted solely through these media, which instead are used primarily in support of conventional programmes, as in the Cuban example described in Box 9.9.

Some writers recognize that access to technology does not guarantee that its use will be meaningful or empowering. The real challenge is

It is rare for adult literacy programmes to be conducted solely through distance learning and ICTs

Box 9.8 Major distance education projects in four E-9 countries

■ China

Audience/purpose: Adult basic education (equivalence programmes and non-formal education)

Project/institution and date: Liaoyuan television and Broadcasting University (satellite-based television programmes), 1986–97

Scale: 150,000 rurally based adults trained per year, 137,500 of whom become qualified agricultural workers (Green Certificate)

Outcomes: 2,000+ hours of training materials on practical rural vocational and technical skills

■ India

Audience/purpose: Adult basic education (equivalence programmes and non-formal education)

Project/institution and date: 1. The National Open School (NOS), 1989; 2. Open Basic Education Project, 1999

Scale: (NOS only) In 1998–99, some 130,000 enrolled from most states and Union Territories in India; 900 study centres, 8 regional centres

Outcomes:

- NOS: Learner-selected courses in academic and vocational subjects at foundation, junior and senior-secondary levels, targeting disadvantaged groups aged 14–29, the majority 18–24. Launch of study centres in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. In 1998–99, some 6.5 million books produced; 140,796 certified students at junior secondary level in 1998. Cost per learner US\$10
- Open Basic Education Project: Equivalence programme for adults

Box 9.9 Cuba's 'Yo, sí puedo' method

The 'Yo, sí puedo' (Yes, I can) approach has its roots in the literacy campaign begun in Cuba in 1961. Its basic concept is to use the broadcast media and video as an inclusive approach to literacy teaching for all. In principle, a learner can acquire a basic level of literacy skills in sixty-five sessions over two months for a maximum of two hours a day. The learner is introduced to reading and writing via numbers, which the method assumes are familiar to learners through their daily transactions with money.

A thirty-minute video per session trains student and educator simultaneously. Then an educator manual and separate student workbooks guide exploration (reflection), experimentation (practice) and generalization (consolidation and evaluation of skills). Educators guide groups of no more than twenty students, encouraging them to reflect upon and discuss the video's lessons for their lives, thus making learning highly contextualized. Bilingual/bicultural programmes are being developed, though they take longer than two months. Crucial to the method's success are the learner's relationship with the educator and consistent attendance to give a sense of identification with the sociocultural context.

'Yo, sí puedo' has been introduced in pilot projects in Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, New Zealand, Venezuela (where it was adopted nationally and 1 million people learned to read and write between July and December 2003) and, more recently, Bolivia, Mozambique and Nigeria. The average cost is US\$33 per learner. In April 2005, Ecuador's Cotacachi province declared itself free of illiteracy after having used a 'Yo, sí puedo' programme for one year. 'Yo, sí puedo' claims a roughly 90% success rate.

Sources: Cuban Libraries Solidarity Group (2004); Juventud Rebelde (2005); 'Yo, sí puedo' presentation at UNESCO in Paris on 29 March 2005.

to shift from acquisition of technical skills to addressing 'how digital technologies enable people and groups to engage in particular social practices' (Hayes, 2003). Emphasizing individual instruction and individual ownership of technology could widen rather than bridge the 'digital divide'. Given such pedagogical and resource constraints, ICTs and distance learning have more immediate potential for the professional development of literacy educators than for literacy programmes per se.

The unevenness of access to technology constrains its use in many contexts. Most potential literacy learners do not have access to electricity, let alone new technology. Thus the use of ICT and other electronic media in literacy learning has to be examined in context (Box 9.10). Still, Cuba's 'Yo, sí puedo' provides an interesting example of the use of radio, television, audiocassettes and video at the heart of a literacy programme.

The language of literacy

National policy must take account of the linguistic context of literacy-building and -sustaining activities, for which there are many different purposes and strategies, as Chapter 8 delineates in detail. Literacy policy that enables people to learn in a language that facilitates daily communication, and literacy programmes that provide initial learning in the mother tongue and

■ Mexico

Audience/purpose: Adult basic education (equivalence lower secondary education)

Project/institution and date: 1. Secundaria a distancia para adultos, since 1998; 2. Education for Society, since 1999; 3. SEPa English Programme, since 1998

Scale:

- Education for Society: National (transmitted by commercial television)
- SEPa: 22 states, 183 advisers, 9,000 users in 358 groups

Outcomes:

- Secundaria a distancia para adultos: Self-study text materials + advisers and television programmes. Two levels (beginners and advanced) in five subjects
- Education for Society: Citizenship television programmes for general public
- SEPa: 61 English-language learning television programmes at 4 levels, 60 audiocassettes and 600,000 self-study packages

■ Nigeria

Audience/purpose: Nomadic adults and youth (non-formal education)

Project/institution and date: Nomadic Education Programme, 1999

Scale: 1-year pilot in Kaduna

Outcomes: Radio-listening groups for functional literacy and numeracy, income-generating activities, agricultural extension, citizenship, vocational skills. Radio, mobile cinema, flip charts, print, audiocassettes. Regular monitoring. Outreach/support centres for contact and distribution of materials

Source: Creed and Perraton (2001).

Box 9.10 A range of media for literacy acquisition

Deciding which are the most useful and effective media depends on cost, access and control, in addition to educational values and benefits.

Telecommunications infrastructure and use are expanding rapidly. The popularity and relative affordability of text messaging, for instance, suggest that it could be used for mass distribution of messages to learners and for communication among learners and between learners and distance trainers. Nevertheless, even the lowest-priced mobile phone handsets and connection time are out of reach for most non-literate people, and it is beyond the scope of literacy programmes to provide them for participants. Many people remain excluded from mobile telephone use by barriers of cost (including import duties, taxes and other government-imposed charges), skills, electricity supply (to charge batteries) and network coverage. Moreover, the kind of literacy learning available through reading and writing text messages on a mobile phone, while potentially useful, is extremely limited.

Radio has continuing potential for use in literacy development. Locally produced interactive radio instruction, along with community radio for locally specific programme support, can allow two-way engagement among learners and

programme providers, especially where potential learners are widely scattered or are mobile (such as nomads).

Cassettes offer still more potential for genuine multimedia pedagogy to enrich functional teaching in literacy courses. In some cases, they could even serve as direct tools in the teaching of basic literacy skills. Support in the form of cassettes relies on fairly simple technology, albeit one that includes a system of making and distributing recordings. It also requires extra visits by local coordinators/supervisors to distribute cassettes, but these can also be used for other in-service support purposes.

In **South Africa**, experiments have begun in the use of computer software for teaching literacy, with backup from a teacher. Whatever the potential of such technology in countries that can afford it and provide logistical support, computer-assisted literacy teaching is not yet an affordable option for large-scale provision in the countries where the literacy rates are lowest and the need for programmes is greatest.

Although television is not accessible to much of the world's population, it does reach very large audiences in many countries. Its potential use as a channel for promoting literacy is considerable.

Sources: Pennells (2005); Lauglo (2001).

Radio has continuing potential for use in literacy development

Progress requires strong leadership, good governance, efficient organization and adequate financing

then add a second language, offer social, cognitive, psychological and pedagogical advantages.

An inclusive multilingual policy will address language group needs and available resources, and will have the following key features, applied in ways suited to local context (Robinson, 2005):

- Studies of the linguistic and sociolinguistic situation will be the basis for understanding which languages should be used in learning. The studies will include data on the attitudes of communities towards the languages they use.
- Consultations with local communities to establish links between literacy providers and local institutions will lead to input into learning and to local governance and management of programmes, especially with respect to choice of language of literacy.
- Local writing and production of material must be the basis for sustainable development of the literate environment and for the incorporation of local knowledge as learning content.
- Specific issues of linguistic structure and language use must be considered in designing the learning of second (third, etc.) languages, so that the addition of languages in oral and written form is readily available to large numbers of people. In other words, the learning of additional languages must take into account learners' existing language patterns, skills and knowledge.

Conclusion

The diversity of literacy acquisition processes, depending on context, and on learner and educator backgrounds, poses technical challenges in curricula, and in teaching and learning approaches that need much more professional attention at the national level. Adult literacy-led and literacy-informed programmes need to take better account of the principles of adult education and learners' experience, knowledge and motivations.

Meeting the challenges requires much more investment in human resources and sustainable training systems, which should include adequately paid, qualified and motivated literacy educators, trainers and supervisors. Similarly, the importance of careful monitoring, evaluation and research, and an experimental spirit based on adapting and improving teaching and learning processes along the way, cannot be understated.

Scaling up adult literacy programmes: the role of government

In Chapter 8 it was shown that in certain circumstances mass literacy campaigns, whether sustained over time or short one-off programmes, made a difference to levels of literacy. Political commitment and direction, popular enthusiasm, realistic targeting and attention to the language of instruction all played their part. Elsewhere, national programmes as part of wider development initiatives have been preferred vehicles for change.

Whatever the route chosen, the scaling up of literacy programmes has to be part of a major national endeavour, even if it finds practical expression in a diversity of programme activities. There is no chance of progress at a level consistent with the Dakar goal without government action on four policy directions set out at the beginning of this chapter. This in turn requires strong leadership, good governance, efficient organization and adequate financing of national literacy strategies.

Who leads?

Ministries of education normally have a major responsibility for literacy policy and for coordinating its implementation. In practice, though, the home for adult literacy is not always the education ministry.²³ Even when it is, capacity may be weak, influence limited and resources scarce. The locus for literacy may change within a given ministry or even move from ministry to ministry. But a commitment to increased youth and adult literacy requires a secure and suitably resourced base in government. Fortunately, evidence of good practice exists or is emerging in this regard.

Morocco merged the departments of adult literacy from the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs and non-formal education from Education to form a State Secretariat for Literacy and Non-Formal Education. It is designed to coordinate the growing number of public, private and civil society literacy providers. Its decentralized management structure includes national and local coordination committees chaired by senior political authorities (Bougroum, 2005). In **Brazil's** decentralized education system, youth and adult education is provided by twenty-six state school administrations and 5,000 municipalities, using teachers from the formal

23. Botswana, Eritrea, Namibia and Thailand are among the countries with well-established adult or non-formal education units in the education ministry overseeing adult literacy programmes. More recently, Burkina Faso has established a separate Ministry for Literacy and Non-Formal Education. On the other hand, in Madagascar and Kenya, for example, the Ministries of Population and Social Affairs, respectively, have overall responsibility for adult literacy programmes.

system. The federal government, some sub-national governments and civil society also run adult literacy programmes outside the school system, using non-professionals as educators (Masagão Ribeiro and Gomes Batista, 2005). In **Indonesia**, a literacy movement launched by the President in 2004 is designed to strengthen cooperation within government, encourage community participation and promote political awareness of the importance of literacy (Jalal and Sardjunani, 2005).²⁴

If ministries of education implement programmes, these are often initial literacy courses or literacy-led activities. Literacy-informed and more development-oriented programmes, continuing adult education and literacy-sustaining activities usually involve other government sectors, along with community projects, cultural activities, library services, vocational training and adult night schools. In part, this is because some education ministries, like some education NGOs, lack the resources and expertise to undertake programmes that do more than introduce initial, basic skills (Riddell, 2001; Govinda and Biswal, 2005b). Moreover, literacy-informed programmes often have objectives that are the responsibility of sectors other than education.

Botswana's Ministry of Education cooperates with the national library to sustain literacy through village reading rooms, which essentially are mini-libraries in rural areas. An inter-agency committee prepares reading materials for newly literate adults and children in Setswana, the national language, and in simplified English for extension programmes in literacy. This works well, although a recent evaluation of Botswana's literacy programme concluded that the reading rooms could be better integrated with the literacy courses, and recommended establishing resource centres incorporating the reading rooms and other activities (UIE, 2004).

Elsewhere, independent national agencies oversee adult literacy. In **Ireland**, a government-funded, non-profit membership organization, the National Adult Literacy Agency, leads coordination, policy and training (Bailey, 2004; see www.nala.ie). Its activities are based on learner and tutor participation, and implemented through a network of vocational education committees linked to the Irish Vocational Education Association, a body representing employers. The agency thus links literacy learners with labour market training and further education opportunities.

For most developing countries, however, it is the ministry of education that is best placed to integrate literacy into overall education sector policy, promote lifelong learning strategies, coordinate publicly financed non-formal adult programmes run by civil society organizations (CSOs), and regulate systems for the recognition, validation and accreditation of prior learning and of organized learning programmes.²⁵

At the same time, as lifelong education policies in some European Union countries illustrate, embedding adult learning and education in public policies and sharing responsibilities across a range of sectors helps in the development of more effective literacy strategies (Duke and Hinzen, 2005). Spain's recent experience illustrates this point.²⁶ Flexibility should also allow local-level implementation through local partnerships and coordination as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, state leadership.

Strategies for planning and organizing literacy

Planning and organizing major literacy campaigns, national programmes and broader-based national partnerships is complex. Good planning takes time and resources. Establishing national, regional and local management, and implementation structures is politically and technically demanding, particularly if wider government reforms relating to decentralization and subcontracting of services are being undertaken.

When a clear strategy and institutional framework is in place, trainers and coordinators have to be trained, curricula developed, textbooks and teachers' manuals written, printed and distributed, other learning materials provided, local monitoring committees established and advocacy undertaken for the mobilization of resources, partners, providers, teachers and learners. Local coordinators have to recruit and train teachers/educators, who in turn recruit learners, organize literacy groups, distribute materials and monitor programmes.

India's district-level Total Literacy Campaigns, launched in 1992, focused on initial literacy. The carefully targeted campaigns mobilized community resources, backed up by coordination mechanisms at state and local levels.²⁷ Centres managed by communities, with the help of public grants, offered post-literacy and continuing education activities. In **Ecuador**, a national literacy

24. The Ministry of Education in Indonesia has a four-pronged policy strategy to ensure that (a) all children become literate through formal and non-formal education; (b) all adults have equal access to the equivalent of primary and junior secondary education; (c) there is 'functional literacy education' for people over 15, including 'productivity enhancement' and 'child-rearing'; and (d) literacy competence is retained through the provision of reading materials and community libraries (Jalal and Sardjunani, 2005).

25. Increasingly, policies on lifelong learning and adult education and literacy must address learner demand for certification and for flexible learning entry and exit points. While progress has been slow, some developing countries, such as South Africa, have established national qualification authorities (Duke and Hinzen, 2005). In Mozambique, school and adult education examinations have been opened to the general public, so that self-study or resumption of interrupted studies can be tested and certified.

26. The 2002 Act on Qualifications and Vocational Training, sponsored by the Ministries of Education and of Labour and Social Affairs in Spain, created a system based on the lifelong learning principle, establishing a direct relationship between training and employment. Notable programmes include accreditation for adult training, and professional experience, compulsory on-the-job training and an information and counselling service.

27. By March 2003, some 98 million adults were reported to have acquired literacy, 75% through Total Literacy Campaigns and 25% by other means (Govinda and Biswal, 2005b). While these estimates may be high, the campaigns clearly had a significant impact.

**In Ecuador,
70,000 teachers
were trained
for a national
literacy
campaign**

campaign was planned and organized within eight months and conducted in four to five months in 1988/89 (Torres, 2005). Around 70,000 literacy teachers were trained, partly face-to-face (aided by videos demonstrating teaching methodology) and partly by distance training. Over 25,000 literacy circles were established in homes and workplaces. Of some 300,000 learners, 200,000 completed the courses, 85% of whom wrote the final test with satisfactory results. The campaign provided important lessons regarding mobilization, pedagogy and the engagement of young students in literacy work (Box 9.11).

After **Namibian** independence in 1990, the Ministry of Education developed policy guidelines and literacy primers and manuals, and recruited fifty district literacy organizers who were trained for three months and then posted across the country to recruit, contract and train literacy educators (called promoters). The programme was well planned and financed, although the promoters lacked adequate ongoing support (Lind, 1996). **Eritrea's** Enhanced Adult Literacy Programme (2002–2006) is charged with developing basic literacy and numeracy skills for 450,000 adults in their mother tongue. Special efforts are made to assure the participation of those disabilities, women, the internally displaced, refugees returning from the Sudan and demobilized members of the Eritrean Defence Forces. The Adult Education Division of the Ministry of Education plans, manages, monitors and evaluates the programme in partnership with

other ministries, United Nations agencies, local and international NGOs, and public and private partners. Learning is supported by educational broadcasting and small rural libraries or reading rooms. Day care is provided for children of women learners (Ghebrezghi, 2003).

These examples concern large national programmes. But many literacy activities are small and often relatively isolated, run by NGOs, religious bodies and other CSOs. While they are likely to have more intensive contact with learners, they face challenges similar to those of larger programmes: finding stable funding, training and motivating staff, obtaining appropriate materials and, above all, eliciting community support.

A still greater challenge is the scaling up of local good practice. Maintaining staff quality and training capacity, sustaining access to learning materials and managing greater distances between coordinators and learner groups present significant problems, as the experience of Reflect programmes demonstrates. In **Ghana**, keeping Reflect's approach to training and supervision was found to be unaffordable for an expanded programme. The incentives built into the pilot, such as transport and meal allowances, required strong political backing for widespread replication, and high teacher turnover was a severe constraint on large-scale programming (Riddell, 2001).

The extent to which different programmes and activities are coordinated and integrated within a comprehensive national policy varies considerably. Fragmentation, even competition, operates against the creation of genuine partnerships in which literacy becomes the universal concern. Thus, how to share resources, and divide roles and responsibilities among stakeholders, is a major consideration in the planning and designing of literacy policies and strategies.

A recent evaluation of literacy programmes supported by the World Bank concluded that intensive government training and supervision of NGOs was important: 'though many NGOs can carry out quality literacy programmes, others need considerable support and monitoring' (Abadzi, 2003a). Some commentators see a danger of community-based organizations becoming dependent on government funds and having to adopt practices at odds with their programme philosophy (Duke and Hinzen, 2005).

Box 9.11 Selected lessons from Ecuador's literacy campaign

- Mass literacy campaigns with the enthusiastic participation of broad sectors of the population are possible in societies with democratically elected or popular governments.
- Acceptable learning results in reading and writing can be achieved if enough emphasis is given to pedagogical issues rather than ideological ones and if quality is made at least as important as quantity.
- Young students can be turned into effective literacy facilitators and enthusiastic organizers, given enough guidance, pedagogical training and instillation of self-confidence.
- Public opinion and participation can be won by demonstration of good practices.

Source: Torres (2005).

The Ugandan Government has encouraged pluralism in the delivery of educational services. This policy has resulted in many small, autonomous initiatives with limited coverage, operating largely in isolation from each other. There is an agreed framework for cooperation between government and civil society in adult literacy, but many groups work outside it. Consequently, their work adds little to the government's overall literacy efforts. The impact of all the initiatives would be greater if they were to work together more, building a common provision structure (Okech, 2005).

Partnerships can be more or less informal. In Senegal, the outsourcing model called 'faire-faire' is managed by an agency set up to encourage adult literacy provision by NGOs and small entrepreneurs. This public-private partnership approach is spreading to other West African countries. Its initial success in Senegal was due largely to 'the government's strong commitments to the approach – and to literacy. Hence, the outsourcing approach is not a substitute for public involvement' (Nordtveit, 2004, cited in Duke and Hinzen, 2005). However, programme quality has suffered because 'some providers were more interested in obtaining funds than in providing high quality literacy courses' (Nordtveit, 2005b). In Brazil, partnerships involve local authorities, universities, large NGOs, companies and community-based organizations (Box 9.12). According to Masagão Ribeiro and Gomes Batista (2005), this has shown the need for:

- increased government resources for the poorest regions;
- technical assistance to help local authorities manage, deliver, monitor and evaluate programmes;
- greater civil society participation as a complement to state provision, to encourage independent monitoring of public policies and to help reach marginalized target groups, and because partnerships with community-based organizations are more easily mediated by local government;
- reduced emphasis on large corporate- and church-related organizations.

Community learning centres can provide constructive partnerships among sectors and between government and civil society. In Asia, such centres have been supported and documented via UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Programme of Education All (APPEAL). They

Box 9.12 Literacy partnership models in Brazil

The Literacy Movement (MOVA), under Paulo Freire, was launched in São Paulo in the early 1990s. Partnerships gave community-based organizations responsibility for recruiting learners and facilitators, and providing group meeting sites. The city council provided funds to pay facilitators and was responsible for pedagogical supervision and monitoring. In 1992, some 18,000 adult learners participated in programmes implemented by 73 community organizations. After closing because of changes in the city government, the programme was revived in 2001 and spread to other cities, with local adaptations and new partners such as trade unions and companies.

In 1996, the federal government launched the Solidarity in Literacy Programme as part of its poverty reduction policies, with institutions of higher education coordinating the work of engaging municipalities, and training and supervising facilitators; municipal authorities recruited learners and provided facilities. In 1998, Solidarity in Literacy was transformed into an NGO but it continued to receive most of its funding from the federal government. Between 1997 and 2004, partners included 2,050 municipalities, 144 companies and 209 higher education institutions. The cost per learner was US\$62, including grants to facilitators, local coordinators, snacks and textbooks for learners, and training and evaluation.

In 2003, a new Brazilian Government launched an accelerated initiative, Literate Brazil, which funds government agencies and NGOs with experience in adult literacy to enable them to expand their coverage. In 2004, the initiative expanded its partnerships with local governments. Further decentralization was planned for 2005.

Source: Masagão Ribeiro and Gomes Batista (2005).

'combine education with community development activities, preferably with strong participation of the people, young and old, including literacy classes and skills training, within a network of traditional and modern structures of Government and NGOs' (Duke and Hinzen, 2005).

Clearly, no single model for campaigns, programmes or partnerships can be replicated everywhere. The approach has to be tailored to context. Whatever the model, sustained national and local political commitment, and strong community participation are required. Investment in the quality of human resources is also essential, as is the engagement of CSOs (especially at the community level), local authorities and higher education institutions in the planning and implementation of national strategies.

Financing literacy

A major scaling up of adult literacy programmes requires additional financing. Although reliable data on levels of funding for youth and adult literacy are scarce, the available evidence

Community learning centres can provide partnerships between government and civil society

In many countries, literacy programmes secure just 1% of the national education budget

suggests that they are very low in most developing countries, both overall and in terms of priority in national and education-sector budgets.²⁸ In many countries, literacy programmes secure just 1% of the national education budget (DFID, 2000). There are exceptions,²⁹ but the examples shown in Table 9.3 are more representative of the norm.

Any attempt to calculate overall financial support for literacy is complicated. Central government funds may go to multiple ministries and responsibility for resource mobilization is devolved increasingly to lower tiers of government. Moreover, it is almost impossible to aggregate funds from NGOs, employers and donors.³⁰ It is true that more is spent on literacy than government figures suggest, but this does not alter the fact that new and additional resources are required.

What are the financing options and strategies that should be considered? How can long-term, sustainable financing strategies be developed? To answer these questions requires an assessment of some basic cost parameters for good-quality literacy programmes and attention to strategies for mobilizing resources.

Table 9.3: Examples of financial allocations to non-formal education and literacy

Botswana	The government is fully responsible for the costs of the National Literacy Programme. Aid is sought for particular activities but no effort is made to generate income from learners, communities or NGOs. The total budget of the Department for Non-Formal Education is just over 1% of the Ministry of Education's 2001–2004 estimates; 43% of this goes to the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning, and the African Association of Correspondence Education (Hanemann, 2005).
Brazil	In 1995, youth and adult education received 1.4% of public expenditure on education, broken down as follows: federal, 9.2%; state, 62.3%; municipal, 28.4%. [No subsequent data allow for such a breakdown.] In 1996, the Fund for the Development of Elementary Education and Promotion of Teaching was introduced to increase equity in the provision of primary education. This reduced state and municipal spending on adult education. Since 2001, the federal government has compensated for this in the 14 poorest states and 398 municipalities with low human development indices. In 2003, the Ministry of Education began negotiating with state and municipal governments to set up a fund covering all levels of basic education, including youth and adult literacy (Masagão and Batista, 2005).
Nepal	From 1995/96 to 2002/2003, the proportion of the total education budget allocated to non-formal education ranged from 0.50% to 1.48% (and to literacy from 0.50% to 0.75%) (Koirala and Aryal, 2005).
Nicaragua	The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport spent 1.5% of its budget (US\$22 million) on adult education in 2000 and 2.2% (US\$34.4 million) in 2002. The Literacy and Adult Basic Education Programme, funded by Spanish donors from 1997 to 2003, has been taken over by the government, which has secured its continuity with an Inter-American Development Bank loan of US\$10 million over 2004–2006 (Arrien, 2005).

Note: It is difficult to disaggregate spending on literacy from adult education more generally.

Sources: As shown in the table.

Costing literacy programmes

The constituent parts of any literacy programme are no different in most respects from those of other education activities. There are start-up costs to be met, teachers and educators to be trained and paid, learning materials to be developed and provided, and operating costs to be met³¹ (Oxenham et al., 2002; Abadzi, 2003a). If literacy is part of wider development activities, such as improving health or livelihoods, then additional costs are incurred, for example for 'specialist' non-literacy facilitators and savings and credit facilities (Oxenham et al., 2002).

None of the costs can easily be standardized.³² They vary according to levels of remuneration for trainers and educators, types of learning materials, programme duration, training costs, the existence or otherwise of back-up support and the extent to which continuing education opportunities are provided. If new technology is used, it has its own costs. Furthermore, costs vary within and among countries.

Caution should be used in comparing figures from country to country because purchasing power levels and programme types differ, but it is interesting to note the results of some such exercises. For a small sample of twenty-nine literacy programmes, the estimated average cost per learner is US\$47 in sub-Saharan Africa, US\$30 in Asia and US\$61 in Latin America (GCE/Action Aid, 2005).³³ When the cost is computed for 'successful' learners or completers, the respective averages are US\$68, US\$32 and US\$83 (Table 9.4). Costs per enrolled learner (excluding developed countries) range from US\$16 to US\$167 and per successful learner

28. A recent overview of literacy in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, prepared for this Report, found little if any reference to levels of financing for literacy (UNESCO-IIEP, 2005a).

29. The United Republic of Tanzania (1961–86) and Cape Verde (1975–99) allocated about 10% of their national education budgets to non-formal education (Abadzi, 2003a).

30. It is as difficult to collect data on financing for literacy from donors as it is from governments. The OECD-DAC databases are not conducive to disaggregating information on literacy. World Bank lending to adult education as a percentage of total education lending from 1% to 9% over 1990–2002 (Abadzi, 2003a).

31. Although adult literacy programmes do not require the construction of school buildings, resource centres, possibly combined with training facilities, may be needed.

32. One could argue, however, that the 'basics' include blackboards, chalk, books, stationery, exercise books, and eyeglasses for learners with a sight problem.

33. Of the sixty-seven programmes covered by the GCE/ActionAid survey, only twenty-nine were able to provide financial data allowing the type of calculation made in Table 9.4, and even those results are not necessarily comparable. Many programmes indicated they were working at less than optimum levels because of a lack of resources.

from US\$18 to US\$199. A World Bank review of adult education programmes calculated costs ranging from US\$6 to US\$58 per enrolled participant and US\$12 to US\$74 per successful learner (Oxenham, 2003). In Senegal's literacy and poverty alleviation programme, the cost for one adult learner is US\$50 (broadly equivalent to the cost of one year of primary schooling).

These figures are instructive at the international level but in themselves offer little assistance to those faced with determining baseline figures for a significant expansion of a national literacy programme. Are there guidelines or benchmarks that would help in this regard? A key consideration is the cost associated with literacy educators. Unless they are volunteers, this is likely to be the main cost. While many commentators applaud the spirit of volunteerism, most argue that long-term sustainability depends upon a level of remuneration that will retain and help develop literacy educators.³⁴ Literacy educators need to be paid, and their training needs to be financed.

The GCE/ActionAid study concludes that facilitators should be paid at least the equivalent of the minimum wage of a primary-school teacher for all hours worked, including time for training, preparation and follow-up. But given the pressure many governments are under to find sufficient funds to pay primary-school teachers an adequate salary, this potential benchmark raises important and difficult questions. For adult literacy to be taken as a serious component of education policy and overall development policy, financial allocations will have to be at a level that will give both non-government and government programmes enough resources to improve teaching quality. This is an issue for national policy and budget dialogue that extends beyond literacy policy alone.

'The success of adult literacy and basic education largely depends on the facilitators, and their efficiency depends on the training they are given' (Rogers, 2005). Clearly a minimum period of initial training is required. The GCE/Action Aid study recommends giving facilitators at least fourteen days of initial training and regular refresher training, as well as ongoing

opportunities for exchange with other facilitators. The costs would vary considerably by country. A recent budget in post-war Afghanistan put the cost of training on a par with that of producing all necessary teaching and learning materials. Recently, the Brazilian Government proposed that 20% to 30% of staff costs should be devoted to training. Costs of this order represent a major investment item in scaling up programmes.

Table 9.4: Literacy programme costs per learner

Region/Country	Enrolled learner US\$	Successful learner US\$	Organization or programme
Asia/Pacific			
Average (n = 4)	30	32	
Nepal	16	18	International Nepal Fellowship
Pakistan	30	30	Bunyard Literacy Community Council
Solomon Islands	40	40	Literacy Association Solomon Islands
Viet Nam	35	38	ActionAid Vietnam
Latin America/Caribbean			
Average (n = 12)	61	83	
Bolivia	20	29	Fundación IRFA
Bolivia	22	27	Fundación de Población
Bolivia	167	199	Ayuda en Acción
Brazil	38	38	Ministry of Education
Brazil	57	73	Serviço Social da Indústria (SESI)
Brazil	125	167	Projeto Escola Zé Peão
Brazil	56	58	Centro Josué de Castro: Estudos e Pesquisas
Ecuador	31	40	Centro de Alfabetización
Guatemala	19	53	Comité Nacional de Alfabetización
Peru	61	125	National Literacy Programme
Peru	90	110	Fundación Ayuda en Acción
Peru	67	72	Escuela Campesina de Educación y Salud (ESCAES)
Sub-Saharan Africa			
Average (n = 14)	47	68	
Angola	30	36	AAEA
Burkina Faso	20	...	TinTua
Gambia	60	80	Community Skills Development Project
Ghana	20	31	ActionAid
Kenya	43	80	EPID
Lesotho	118	178	University of the Witwatersrand
Malawi	63	100	Work for Rural Health
Mali	55	89	Jeunesse et Développement
Niger	39	118	VIE
Senegal	32	38	Tostan
Somalia	28	...	Africa Educational Trust
Sudan	75	115	ADRA
U.R. Tanzania	50	51	ActionAid International
Zambia	22	31	People's Action Forum
Other			
Belgium	1 423	...	Lire et Ecrire
Canada	2 646	2 646	East End Literacy
Ireland	742	742	NALA

Note: These data should be treated with caution, notably where enrolled learner costs and 'successful' learner costs are identical, but they offer indications of unit costs for a set of relatively successful programmes.

Source: GCE/ActionAid (2005)

34. Abdazi (2003a) notes that an Indonesian programme depended on 170,000 volunteers but that turnover was high and limited demands could be placed on their time. '[T]he effectiveness of cheaper versus more expensive programmes has not been systematically evaluated but experience shows that few have both low per participant costs and stable, well-performing teachers. Programme costs and effectiveness need to be considered with a long-term strategic perspective in order to avoid a trap of low cost and low effectiveness.'

A major cost is production of learning materials

They will have to be met by government, or through government encouragement of the private sector and others, including donors, to be major financiers of training (Box 9.13).

Another major future cost is production of learning materials. These costs vary considerably depending on programme pedagogy, the extent to which learning resources are self-generated in the learning process, the availability of existing materials and the use of ICTs. Furthermore, to assure much wider availability of texts and other learning materials, investment in the literate environment takes on considerable importance. While some of these materials may be included in individual literacy programmes, many are not. In this case, the materials then depend on the extent to which government and other stakeholders are prepared to invest in free or subsidized newspapers, local and national language editions of materials, provision of travelling libraries and the like. These costs are additional to the normal costs of individual programmes.

Further financing costs include start-up, management and overhead, and – although they are all too rare in many programmes – monitoring and evaluation. Abadzi (2003a) concludes that management costs are sizable and should not be underestimated. Moreover, they can become regular and significant if the longer-term view is taken that the benefits of short-term literacy programmes should be extended though access to continuing non-formal education. '[C]ountries that decide to engage in adult literacy should consider their long-term

commitment and should determine the extent to which they are willing to fund more effective but also [relatively] more expensive programmes' (Abadzi, 2003a).

Again, none of these costs are easy to standardize, but in an endeavour to obtain further insights into the order of magnitude of the additional costs that might have to be incurred if major progress is to be made towards the Dakar literacy goal, preliminary work was commissioned for this Report, in association with the UNESCO-LIFE project (Van Ravens and Aggio, 2005). Two sets of data were brought together. First, approximate estimates were derived for the number of people recorded as illiterate who would need to acquire basic literacy skills for the global Dakar literacy target to be achieved. Table 9.5 presents these data, which identify a global target group of over 550 million people, almost half of them in South and West Asia.

The second strand of the analysis calculates the cost per learner of completing a time-bound literacy programme, defined by the quality of its inputs, as a percentage of per capita GNP by country. Table 9.6 shows the aggregate results of this work at the regional and global levels. With several qualifications, the study arrives at an average regional cost per completer not dissimilar to the GCE/ActionAid results: US\$41 for sub-Saharan Africa (ActionAid, US\$47), US\$60 for Latin America (US\$61) and US\$30 for Asia (US\$30).

The data in Table 9.6 suggest that US\$26 billion, or some US\$2 billion per year, would have been required over the thirteen years to 2015 to enable over 550 million people to complete a literacy programme of 400 hours. Since some years have already passed, at least US\$2.5 billion a year would now be needed. Though this would not be a continuing cost, it would entail increased demand for further education and more supportive literate environments. At the regional level, the numerical and financial challenge is greatest in South and West Asia, but relative costs are highest in the Arab States.

This is a very rough estimate. Any variation in the assumptions will result in significant shifts in the final figures. For example, if a uniform unit cost of US\$20 is applied (assuming very low educator costs), the total global cost estimate is just over one-third of the total in the table. If the range of inputs and/or their quality is significantly enhanced, the costs increase accordingly. An estimate of US\$10 to US\$50 billion over ten years

Box 9.13 Funding the training of literacy educators and their trainers

A large share of funding for training often comes from donors. In the Pacific, while governments often have training budgets, international agencies such as UNESCO (PROAP and ACCU), Germany's IIZ/DVV and Japan Funds-in-Trust cover many of the costs. NGOs in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, oil, rubber and mobile phone companies in Brazil, lotteries and charitable bodies in Ireland, and businesses in South Africa support training. In some instances, local communities and trainee literacy facilitators find their own funds for training activities, while governments and NGOs use their staff as trainers.

Source: Rogers (2005).

Table 9.5: The scale of the Dakar challenge, by region and development level

	Adult illiteracy rate 2000–2004 (simple average)	Number of adult illiterates 2000–2004 (thousands)	Dakar challenge	
			Target literacy rate (average)	Number of illiterates to be reached (thousands)
Arab States (13)	30.2	54 662	92.2	38 191
Central and Eastern Europe (18)	2.2	8 180	100.0	8 180
Central Asia (8)	1.0	385	100.0	385
East Asia and the Pacific (15)	13.9	123 742	99.1	123 306
Latin America and the Caribbean (24)	12.5	37 171	99.1	36 061
South and West Asia (7)	33.7	385 974	85.6	265 021
Sub-Saharan Africa (37)	40.4	132 083	82.3	86 538
Developing countries (122)	22.0	742 196	92.7	557 681

Notes: Calculated from data in the statistical annex tables. The number of countries in each group is in brackets and differs from those in Table 2.6.
Source: Van Ravens and Aggio (2005).

Investing in the broader literacy environment is important

captures both the order of magnitude and the wide range involved.

The potential advantage of this work, akin to that of the GCE/ActionAid study, is that it offers a framework to help stimulate a policy debate at global and country level, where the assumptions can be varied and applied according to context.³⁵

Mobilizing additional resources for literacy

People in low-income countries have a very limited ability to pay for educational activities, so resource mobilization strategies are required, most notably (Oxenham et al., 2002):

- Budgetary allocations to literacy need to be increased, separately or as part of wider attention to continuing adult education, though *not* at the expense of investment in the quality of schooling. Diversification of funding across government should reap dividends in terms of overall funding levels but has implications for coordination. Investing in the broader literacy environment to stimulate the production and distribution of a wide variety of materials suitable for new readers is also important.
- To the extent possible, mechanisms should be developed to mobilize resources within the lower tiers of government and within communities, though never in ways that deny anyone the opportunity to benefit from literacy programmes because of cost.
- In many countries, governments and possibly national NGOs can form consortia or partnerships with the private sector, donor agencies and international NGOs. This might lead to public-private partnerships of the sort that exist in Senegal ('faire-faire'), the Gambia

Table 9.6: Estimated costs of achieving the literacy component of Dakar goal 4

Region	Total costs (US\$ millions)
Arab States (13)	4 017
Central Asia (8)	11
East Asia and the Pacific (15)	6 552
Latin America and the Caribbean (24)	4 948
South and West Asia (7)	7 214
Sub-Saharan Africa (37)	3 208
Developing countries total	25 951
Developing countries annual average*	1 996

* Calculated for the thirteen years to 2015.
Source: Van Ravens and Aggio (2005).

and Guinea.³⁶ An international variant would be for international donors to fill financing gaps, in line with the commitment in the Dakar Framework for Action that no countries 'seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources'. This statement is used extensively in relation to UPE, but rarely, if at all, about literacy.

The balance among these strategies in any given country and/or for any one significant programme will be context-specific. It is clear, however, that the scaling up of youth and adult literacy programmes in poor countries requires a national financing strategy that taps a variety of sources in a coordinated way. This requirement becomes all the more pressing if adult literacy programmes have to shoulder the responsibility for meeting the needs of those who, for whatever reason, have been failed by schooling (Abadzi, 2003a).

35. A dynamic presentation of the Van Ravens/Aggio study is available at www.efareport.unesco.org. It enables readers to alter the costing assumptions for individual countries on a spreadsheet and develop tailored estimates of the costs of achieving the Dakar literacy goal.

36. Public private-partnerships do have certain disadvantages, including low fixed transaction costs being offset by high variable transaction costs (contract compliance, supervision and monitoring, information costs, provider selection, etc.) and providers taking advantage of weak government leadership and management, e.g. to exclude population groups that incur higher unit costs. In addition, some critics maintain that such arrangements pose a risk of CSOs' missions becoming diluted (Nordtveit, 2005a).

Few governments have set out coherent, long-term national literacy policies

This section has highlighted the paucity of data and research on the financing of literacy. A strong evidence base on cost-effective, sustainable approaches to delivering good-quality literacy programmes and promoting literate environments is badly needed. Examples of such work exist in Bangladesh, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa. A major initiative to build capacity for monitoring and evaluation in literacy programmes should be undertaken systematically at all relevant levels of national systems (Bhola, 2005). Support for such work would be a valuable contribution of and to the United Nations Literacy Decade.

Bringing greater coherence to national literacy policies

Governments have made commitments to improve levels of adult literacy but relatively few have set out coherent, long-term national literacy policies, either because this is not deemed a priority for political or economic reasons or because coordinating programme delivery and/or creating more enabling and proactive literate environments is found to be difficult, complex and potentially costly. Accordingly, in most countries policy on literacy is less than the sum of its parts. A cohesive, comprehensive approach is required to promote literacy for literate societies, firmly embedded in national education and poverty reduction strategies. How might such a policy process be stimulated?

The Indicative Framework developed by the World Bank to promote focused policy and planning dialogue for achieving UPE through the Fast track Initiative has given rise to substantive debate worldwide (Chapter 4). Despite disagreements regarding the choice of indicators and their benchmark values, the concept of the framework is a useful policy tool. A similar approach to stimulate dialogue on literacy – and adult literacy in particular – could be worthwhile. GCE and ActionAid developed twelve baseline statements of good practice ('benchmark statements') designed to serve this purpose, summarized in Box 9.14.

This benchmarking work is very useful but necessarily incomplete. The understandings represented in statements 1 and 2 are very much in line with the thrust of this Report. So is statement 3, though its considerable implications for developing human resource capacity within

government would have to be factored into national policy, including the need to work productively with civil society.³⁷ There is a strong case for decentralization, given the superior local knowledge of literacy needs, though caution is required as the success of decentralization in many fields has been mixed.

The emphasis on evaluation of adult literacy programmes (statement 4) is wise and highlights an area that is weak in many literacy programmes where resources and knowledge are limited (Bhola, 2005).

A major plank in the framework is a unified approach to investment in human resources (statements 5, 6 and 7). The underlying premise is that, although good practice may exist in individual programmes, a national approach is needed to scale up and sustain improvements in literacy. Since meeting that need necessitates new resources and a significant increase in training capacity, this is the issue most likely to test the willingness of many governments to engage seriously in major new literacy initiatives, especially when volunteerism and the payment of honorariums keep many literacy programmes alive. In essence, it means recognition of a new cadre of education professionals.

The statements on teaching and learning (8, 9 and 10) rehearse many of the arguments in this Report and have implications for other aspects of government policy, including policy on language, rights to information and books, all areas that are politically charged as well as technically challenging.

More detailed work is needed to assess the cost benchmark (11). The proposed dedication of at least 3% of national education budgets to adult literacy programmes (statement 12) is arbitrary, the study acknowledges. The arguments in favour of allowing national need, rather than a set figure, to drive strategy and policy are much stronger.

Four major weaknesses characterize the proposed framework. First, it underplays the place of gender in literacy and the importance of gendered strategies in literacy policies.³⁸ Second, by assuming a relatively steady state of national circumstances, it underestimates the incidence of conflict and other emergencies, and, to a lesser extent, the urgent demands stemming from the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Third, it does not prioritize the benchmarks. Promoting a three-year literacy programme cycle, with its attendant costs, may be unrealistic, and setting budget targets in a vacuum may serve limited purposes. Fourth,

37. The literacy programme contributors to the GCE/ActionAid study (most of them from NGOs) made clear that the relationships between government and CSOs should not be one-way, with governments telling CSOs how to deliver programmes. With their local knowledge and experience, CSOs have much to contribute in the definition and design of literacy strategies. The programme representatives also made clear that government-led coordination could be counterproductive where relationships between government and civil society were weak or strained.

38. For example, in relation to same-sex facilitators in single-sex learner groups and gender-equitable teaching and learning materials.

Box 9.14 GCE/ActionAid 'Benchmark statements' to help define literacy policy**A: Understanding literacy**

1. Literacy: the acquisition and use of reading, writing and numeracy skills, and thereby the development of active citizenship, improved livelihoods and gender equality. The goals of literacy programmes should reflect this understanding.
2. Literacy: a continuous process that requires sustained learning and practice. Policies and programmes should encourage sustained participation and celebrate progressive achievement.

B: Governing literacy

3. Governments have lead responsibility in fulfilling the right to literacy and in providing leadership, policy frameworks and resources. They should:
 - assure cooperation among relevant ministries and links to all relevant development programmes;
 - work in systematic collaboration with experienced CSOs;
 - assure links between all these stakeholders, especially at the local level;
 - assure relevance to the issues in learners' lives by promoting decentralization of budgets and of decision-making on curriculum, methods and materials.

C: Evaluating literacy programmes

4. It is important to invest in ongoing feedback and evaluation mechanisms, data systematization and strategic research. The focus of evaluations should be on the practical application of what has been learned and the impact on active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality.

D: Facilitators, supervisors and trainers

5. Facilitators should be paid at least the equivalent of the minimum wage of a primary-school teacher for all hours worked (including time for training, preparation and follow-up).
6. Facilitators should be local people who receive substantial initial training and regular refresher training, as well as ongoing opportunities for exchanges with other facilitators. Governments should put in place a framework for professional development of the sector, including trainers/supervisors, with full access to facilitators (e.g. through distance education).

7. There should be a ratio of at least one facilitator to thirty learners and at least one trainer/supervisor to fifteen learner groups (1:10 in remote areas), with a minimum of one support visit per month. Programmes should have timetables that flexibly respond to learners' daily lives but provide for regular and sustained contact (e.g. twice a week for at least two years).

E: Teaching, learning and the wider literate environment

8. In multilingual contexts it is important at all stages for learners to be given an active choice about the language in which they learn. Active efforts should be made to encourage and sustain bilingual learning.
9. A wide range of participatory methods should be used in the learning process to assure active engagement of learners and relevance to their lives. These same participatory methods and processes should be used at all levels of training of trainers and facilitators.
10. Governments should take responsibility to stimulate the market for production and distribution of a wide variety of materials suitable for new readers, for example working with publishers and newspaper producers. They should balance this with funding for local production of materials, especially by learners, facilitators and trainers.

F: Financing literacy

11. It should be assumed that a good-quality literacy programme that respects all these benchmarks will cost between US\$50 and US\$100 per learner per year for at least three years (two years of initial learning and ensuring that further learning opportunities are available for all).
12. Governments should dedicate at least 3% of their national education-sector budgets to adult literacy programmes as conceived in these benchmarks. Where governments meet this target, international donors should fill any remaining resource gaps (e.g. by including adult literacy in the Fast Track Initiative).

Note: For the full 'benchmark statements' see the source document.
Source: GCE/ActionAid (2005).

while the framework is potentially an important tool for countries with a major literacy deficit, it is less useful where the objective is to meet the needs of a relatively small but diverse target population.

Despite these weaknesses, the framework can help stimulate policy debate. It is not a solution in itself but a contribution to a dialogue that should

be situated in broader policy frameworks. Youth and adult literacy, and the promotion of literate environments are key to poverty reduction, education-sector development and other strategies devoted to human development. If this is not recognized and acted upon, those efforts will not prosper.

Literacy and government strategies

*Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)*³⁹

An analysis of fifty-six full PRSPs (thirty from sub-Saharan Africa) and eleven interim PRSPs undertaken in the first half of 2005 assessed the extent to which literacy⁴⁰ is part of development policy (UNESCO-IIEP, 2005a).

Care is needed in interpreting this analysis. Literacy policies do not invariably gain attention in PRSPs. Education sector plans may highlight actions that PRSPs leave out. On the other hand, if literacy policies are not included in PRSPs, it can be assumed that their priority is not high.

In over 80% of the PRSPs and I-PRSPs, literacy appears in the poverty diagnosis as an indicator, and illiteracy as a significant factor in the perpetuation of poverty. The Mali PRSP states that 'poverty is characterized by illiteracy'. Cambodia recognizes that illiteracy excludes people from development. In Djibouti, illiteracy is seen as helping explain rural poverty. Mozambique draws correlations between child mortality, illiteracy and gender disparities.

Some countries, (e.g. Burundi, Chad, Mauritania and the Lao People's Democratic Republic) list literacy among their overall development goals. Cambodia, envisaging a socially connected, educationally advanced and culturally vibrant society, notes that this requires 'dealing with the problems of poverty, illiteracy, and health'. Some human development strategies seek to bridge the literacy gender gap, e.g. through women's learning centres in Mali, increased scholarships for girls in Nepal and functional literacy programmes for girls and women in Zambia. Bolivia and Nicaragua link gender and literacy with better nutrition.

Most references to literacy appear in the education section. Countries giving some priority to literacy make reference both to youth (primarily in relation to UPE) and to adult literacy. There are instances of adult literacy being treated in other sections (gender, health and nutrition, and, more rarely, agricultural development and employment). In Honduras and the Lao People's Democratic Republic there is reference to literacy and good governance, civic awareness and participation, and in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Malawi to literacy and the environment.

In recognizing the needs of particular groups of people, most attention is paid to gender inequalities. Virtually all PRSPs identify lack of literacy as a factor impeding women's

empowerment. Some mention is also made of particularly vulnerable groups. Bolivia correlates urban poverty, indigenous households and levels of education. Bosnia and Herzegovina establishes a similar link with regard to its Roma population.

When PRSPs are examined for a more precise indication of strategies related to literacy, relatively little detail is found. Most attention is given to improving the quality of schooling for all children. Box 9.15 sets out some broad lines of action in three countries where literacy does receive some focused attention.

Twelve PRSPs include plans to launch literacy campaigns, all in countries with low recorded literacy rates. The Chad PRSP refers to 'the weakness of Chad's human resources', notes that 'over 80% of the population is illiterate and only a small percentage of people over 15 years of age has received an education' and states that a 'vast literacy campaign is therefore urgently needed'.

Few PRSPs analyse the costs of the plans and proposals they contain, although eighteen mention costing exercises and twelve provide figures, the most detailed of which come from Mozambique. Table 9.7 shows countries that state their intent to allocate funds to literacy in their budgets and/or to projects that depend primarily on external financing.

The PRSP picture is mixed. The lack of literacy is taken into account relatively well in the poverty diagnosis, but the case for investing in youth and adult literacy seems less well made, either for literacy in its own right or as part of a three-pronged strategy of the type advanced in this Report.

Education sector plans

In the analysis of education sector plans discussed in Chapter 3, attention was drawn to whether governments are covering the full range of EFA goals, including literacy and adult education. That evidence is revisited here very briefly to see to what extent education sector plans shed more light on literacy than do PRSPs. Details from the twenty-five countries listed in Table 9.8 show that a significant sample of them are setting explicit and often ambitious short- to medium-term literacy targets, many of which cannot be achieved by schooling alone.

The table shows statements of intent for which governments can be held to some account. Whether these targets are grounded in true assessments of the nature and extent of illiteracy and realistic appraisals of what is possible in

39. PRSPs are the strategy and implementation documents of national poverty reduction strategies. They provide a poverty diagnosis, define key strategies for growth, poverty reduction and human development, and set out approaches to institutional strengthening. Education and literacy usually receive the most attention in the human development chapter. PRSPs were initially developed as part of the HIPC initiative for debt relief.

40. Few PRSPs define literacy; even the eleven papers that do are not very specific. The main approaches are to equate literacy with a level of schooling (e.g. in Cameroon, five years of primary school) or to use definitions that explicitly mention adult literacy (Albania, Djibouti, Ethiopia, the Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka) and reading and writing skills. Madagascar and Pakistan take both approaches. A few countries, mainly those in transition, refer to literacy in information technology, and Kenya's PRSP sees IT literacy as a prerequisite for civil servants to be able to handle e-government.

relatively little time is unclear, as in some cases the Dakar goal is itself the country policy.

Despite the limitations of the evidence of PRSPs and sector plans, the main messages suggest that literacy, including youth and adult literacy, may be experiencing some resurgence of interest and concern.⁴¹ What is less clear is the extent to which there are well-developed national policies for meeting the specific literacy targets and objectives in ways that are grounded in realistic, well-conceived, long-term strategies for literacy – and the extent to which the type of policy dialogue proposed above is taking place.

Conclusion

Most governments need to be much more active in researching, defining, financing, scaling up, implementing, coordinating and monitoring literacy policy and practice in schools, youth and adult literacy programmes, and literate environments. In the field of adult literacy, what is required is a national strategy for adult literacy, adult learning and the literate environment, set within wider education and development plans. Whether this strategy is implemented through a mass campaign, national literacy programmes, better coordinated government literacy programming and investment, or strong and well-coordinated national partnerships (vertical and horizontal) with a wide array of literacy stakeholders – or a combination of these approaches – will depend on political commitment, technical capacity, financing levels and strong public support. Whatever the choice, it should not be delayed. It should be driven by the need to meet the sort of ambitious targets that many governments have begun to set.

Engaging the international community

In the poorest countries, implementing the three-pronged approach to literacy will require international assistance. Yet literacy is not high on the agenda of most international agencies, beyond strong support for UPE. A survey of bilateral donors and development banks shows that few explicitly refer to literacy in their aid policies.⁴² United Nations bodies consider literacy with non-formal and informal education, and international NGOs either stress schooling or conceive literacy to be a part of a rights-based approach to EFA for the poorest in society.⁴³

Box 9.15 Three national literacy strategies

- **Mauritania's** size and the nomadic life of many of its people limit the effectiveness of literacy campaigns. The long-term objective is to eradicate illiteracy; the short-term aim is to reduce illiteracy to 20% by strengthening the financial and logistical resource base, boosting the skills of literacy campaign staff, improving the curriculum of literacy programmes and gaining greater participation by the *mahadra* (Koranic schools) through extension, training and logistical support. Extensive involvement of CSOs in the design, execution and monitoring of literacy programmes is expected. Ten new functional literacy centres are planned, 10,000 literacy classrooms are to be equipped each year and an incentive fund for literacy promoters is to be established.
- **Malawi** intends to improve the quality and relevance of primary education, emphasizing literacy, numeracy and life skills. It also plans to increase levels of adult literacy and numeracy through improved access to more effective adult literacy classes and equitable participation of women. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community services will provide learning materials and appropriate honorariums for trainers, review adult literacy policy, undertake social mobilization campaigns, revise curricula, recruit and train additional instructors, strengthen monitoring, print and distribute manuals, and open more rural instruction centres in existing community buildings.
- **Nepal** plans to improve livelihoods by integrating literacy programmes with community-based organizations and their income-generating activities. Increasing the engagement of community-based organizations, local NGOs and other local bodies should strengthen literacy campaigns. Community learning centres will be expanded.

Source: UNESCO-IIEP (2005a).

Table 9.7: Two approaches to financing literacy programmes

Money explicitly allocated to literacy in proposed budgets	Literacy projects dependent on external finance
Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Djibouti, ¹ Ghana, Guinea, ² Honduras, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Uganda	Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Rwanda, Yemen

1. Funds available for girls' literacy.

2. Funds available for growth sector and rural development.

Source: UNESCO-IIEP (2005a).

As Table 9.9 shows, most bilateral agencies and banks refer to literacy as an instrument for attaining other ends, such as eradicating poverty (e.g. the European Commission, New Zealand, and Norway). Sweden sees literacy at the heart of basic education and any economic and social development effort, but also part of broader adult basic education needs and learning activities (Sida, 2003). Most donors endorse EFA without

41. It should be noted, however, that an analysis of sixty-nine country reports to the International Conference on Education for 2001 and 2004 does not appear to back this up. The synthesis study does conclude that between the two sessions the emphasis on goals related to appropriate life-skills programmes for all young people and adults, and to satisfying the learning needs of young people, significantly increased. But there is no specific reference to literacy per se (Mancebo, 2005).

42. The survey was conducted by the Global Monitoring Report Team from November 2004 to January 2005. Seventy organizations were contacted and replies were received from fifteen bilateral agencies (seven of which gave partial responses), three development banks, six United Nations agencies and nine international NGOs.

43. Germany, New Zealand, Sweden and the Netherlands use specific definitions of literacy. The United Kingdom, United States and World Bank define literacy as a basic set of skills. Canada, Denmark, Germany, New Zealand and the United States refer to literacy in the context of basic education. The Netherlands sees it within a framework of adult education. Sweden relates literacy skills to social development. The United Nations bodies follow UNESCO's definition of literacy.

Table 9.8: Adult literacy targets in twenty-five developing and transition countries

Bangladesh	For all ages, literacy to increase from 53% (2002) to 81% (2015); for ages 15 to 45, from 56% to 80%; for ages 15 to 24, from 66% to 90%, through a combination of equitable access to quality basic education and continuing education for all adults.	Myanmar	The adult literacy rate (92.8% in 2002) will be 99% in 2015. Intermediate targets are set for 2005 and 2010. Achieve significant improvement in the levels of functional literacy and continuing education for all by 2015.
Benin	Raise the adult literacy rate by 50% by 2015. Ensure equal access to basic and permanent education programmes for all adults.	Nepal	By the end of the Tenth Plan to achieve literacy targets of 63% (age 15+) with a female literacy rate of 55%.
Brazil	Establish literacy programmes for 10 million youth and adults within five years, and eradicate illiteracy by 2010.	Nicaragua	Reduce illiteracy rate from 18.7% in 2004 to 10% in 2015.
China	Achieve 95% literacy for adults and young adults by 2005.	Niger	Raise literacy rates for people above 15 years of age to 20% in 2002 and 40% in 2015.
Côte d'Ivoire	Increase the current literacy rate by 50% and assure equitable access to basic education for adults and seniors by 2015.	Nigeria	By 2015, the Universal Basic Education policy aims to eradicate illiteracy.
Egypt	Eliminate 50% of current adult illiteracy for those 15 years and above by 2015/16. Give priority to younger age groups, women and girls, and residents of poor rural and urban areas.	Pakistan	From a base of adult literacy of 50.5% (male 63%, female 38%; rural 39%, urban 70%), the education sector plan targets adult literacy rate of 61% by 2005, 71% by 2010 and 86% by 2015. Gender equity (86% literacy rate for both male and female) is a target for the end of the sector plan period. A 50% reduction in illiteracy is planned for 2010 with a focus on raising rural literacy rates from 38% to 83% by 2015.
Guatemala	Lower the illiteracy rate from 29% to 22% between 2004 and 2008, including through post-literacy training.	Paraguay	Raise the number of literate adults aged 15 to 24 by 6,450 through lifelong education for work programmes in 2003–2005, by 16,100 in 2006–10 and by 17,600 in 2011–15. Reduce overall numbers of illiterates over age 15 by 76,700, 96,000 and 102,000, respectively. Reduce illiteracy among rural women from 15.4% (2000/2001) to 12.5% and for rural men from 10.7% to 8.5% by 2005, and then by 8.2% and 6.4% by 2010 and 5.2% and 4.4% by 2015.
India	Achieve a sustainable threshold of 75% literacy by 2007 and a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015.	Sudan	Raise literacy rates among those age 15 and above to 60% by 2007 and to 82.5% by 2015.
Indonesia	A 50% decrease in the illiteracy rate by 2015. A decrease in illiteracy levels among people over 15 from 10.81% (15.5 million people) in 2000 to 5.41% (9.9 million) in 2015 (a fall from 6.7% to 3.3% for males and from 14.7% to 7.3% for females).	Tunisia	Decrease the overall illiteracy rate from 20% (targeted in 2004) to 16% in 2006 and to 10% in 2010. Eradicate illiteracy in the age group below 30 by 2006.
Kazakhstan	Achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.	Uzbekistan	100% functionally literate adults by 2015, especially women, and provision to all adults of equal access to basic and continuous education.
Kenya	Achieve 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2010 and universal adult literacy (especially for women) by 2015.	Venezuela	Eliminate illiteracy by 2005.
Mongolia	By 2005, 58.8% of the illiterate population will become literate.	Zimbabwe	Increase the adult literacy rate from 87% to 100% by 2015.
Morocco	Reduce the illiteracy rate to less than 20% by 2010 and eradicate illiteracy by 2015.		

Source: UNESCO-IIEP (2005a).

explicit reference to literacy, although some see it as a primary goal of good schooling (e.g. Canada, the European Commission and the United Kingdom) or as a skill at the heart of basic education (e.g. the United States). The Danish, German and Japanese agencies, and the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank discuss literacy in the context of non-formal education, even when they have a priority for UPE, and see no obvious synergy between the two. Denmark argues for integrating literacy for youth and adults into the programming of other sectors. Japan's aid agency emphasizes the importance of literacy for advancing development projects, while Sweden's is guided by education sector priorities

with emphasis on the EFA goals; one of these priorities is 'enhancing literacy for all – children, youth and adults – through formal and non-formal education, as well as informal means, such as books, newspapers, and libraries' (Sida, 2001).

The United Nations agencies understandably approach literacy in relation to their specific mandates. For UNFPA, literacy is important in increasing demand for reproductive health services and women's empowerment. For the ILO, literacy is a core work skill. UNICEF considers literacy a key outcome of a high-quality education, especially for girls. These and other approaches come together in the International

Table 9.9: Literacy in bilateral and development bank aid policies

Countries	Agencies	How literacy is addressed in aid policy
Canada	Canadian International Development Agency	Canada supports EFA globally and with developing country partners. It has three main goals: (a) universal primary completion; (b) gender equality; and (c) improved quality 'as reflected in recognized and measurable learning outcomes, especially in literacy, numeracy and life skills for learners of all ages' (CIDA, 2002).
Denmark	Danish International Development Assistance	The EFA goals are at the heart of Danish support for education. Danida sees basic education as developing essential skills for social and economic life: literacy, numeracy, social skills, life skills (e.g. related to nutrition, sexual and reproductive health, subsistence production), critical and reflective thinking skills, and community-oriented skills.
Germany	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development	Aid to basic education is informed by international commitments (e.g. Dakar goals, MDGs, United Nations Literacy Decade). Literacy is defined as a fundamental aspect of basic education. Literacy programmes for youth and adults are part of non-formal education projects (BMZ, 2004).
Japan	Japan Bank for International Cooperation	The Medium-term Strategy for Overseas Economic Cooperation specifies that support is geared towards human resource development for poverty reduction and human development. Literacy is implicit in human resource development (JBIC, 2002).
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	The Basic Education for Growth Initiative, BEGIN, is designed to help realize the EFA goals. A priority area is access to education, including non-formal. Literacy projects are promoted, with some focus on raising literacy levels of adult women and using ICT for education, e.g. in remote areas (2002).
	Japan International Cooperation Agency	A strategy paper on non-formal education identifies literacy for youth and adults as a priority for cooperation in basic education. Literacy, both basic and functional, is recognized as a key life skill regardless of sex, age, ethnic origin or socio-economic status (2004).
New Zealand	New Zealand Agency for International Development	Aid to education is intended to support partner countries in achieving the EFA goals. A further aim of NZAID is to both influence and learn from the international debates on EFA (NZAID, 2002).
Norway	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation	Norad has a role in implementing the Norwegian Strategy for Delivering Education for All by 2015, which calls education 'Job Number 1' in eliminating poverty. The strategy is based on the Dakar Framework for Action and contains explicit references to literacy training (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003).
Sweden	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	Sida's education policy builds on United Nations rights conventions and declarations, including the Dakar Framework for Action. The relevant policy goal: 'enhance the right to ... an education that empowers the poor and excluded parts of the population to participate as active and informed citizens in all aspects of development' (Sida, 2001b).
United Kingdom	Department for International Development	DFID supports EFA goals by promoting international commitment and action, implementing country programmes and supporting knowledge and research strategies. It emphasizes formal education, particularly UPE, as the building block of literacy, and recognizes the importance of adult literacy programmes. It endorses country-led education-sector plans, of which adult literacy may be a key component (DFID, 2001).
United States	United States Agency for International Development	At the heart of USAID's education strategy is support for basic education and facilitating acquisition of basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and critical thinking, including for adults and out-of-school youth. The US government backs the United Nations Literacy Decade (USAID, 2005).
European Union	European Commission	EFA goals are part of EU development policy on education. Support for literacy comes through a focus on basic education, particularly formal primary schooling. The policy emphasizes holistic sector strategies, including for vocational education and adult literacy (European Commission, 2002).
World Bank		The World Bank supports country implementation of reforms and programmes within education sector and national development plans. It sees achieving EFA as multidimensional, including adult literacy and non-formal education for all children and youth, and literacy as a foundation skill comprising numeracy, reasoning and social skills, as well as a major component of non-formal education for youth and adults (World Bank, 1999). (www1.worldbank.org/education/adultoutreach/introduction.asp).
Asian Development Bank		The education sector policy refers to the World Declaration on Education For All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) and reiterates support for achieving EFA (ADB, 2003). Literacy and non-formal education are identified as priorities. Support for literacy for youth and adults (women in particular) is seen in the context of poverty reduction. Collaboration with NGOs is proposed.
Inter-American Development Bank		Forthcoming education strategy refers to the MDGs and the challenges associated with meeting them throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Note: Descriptions are based on the documents cited and/or agency replies to a survey conducted from November 2004 to January 2005. Where no reference is cited, the date of the policy information, if available, is given in brackets at the end of the description.

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report Team.

Very few agencies have disbursement data on literacy

Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade (United Nations, 2002c), with literacy seen as a crucial element of the right to education. The small sample of international NGOs illustrates a strong on-the-ground programme approach focusing on women and on literacy for better livelihoods.

Assessing how these broad statements translate into programmes and funding allocations is problematic. It is almost impossible to extract literacy-focused or -related programme data from the OECD-DAC databases, as literacy is part of 'basic skills for youth and adults' and some donors support it within broader integrated projects. Very few agencies have disbursement data on literacy, and those that do give caveats regarding its accuracy (e.g. the Japanese agencies and that of Norway). Similar difficulties apply to the United Nations agencies. The data in Table 9.10 give some indication of the level of funding for a range of activities, including literacy, for some agencies. The data must be interpreted with caution, as each agency used different criteria.

Similar problems arise in assessing literacy projects and programmes. Table 9.11 is derived from information provided by agencies on major programmes specifically dedicated to adult literacy. The data again have to be approached with caution, but it appears there is strong emphasis on literacy for women and girls, particularly in programmes supported by United Nations agencies. The emphasis on school-age children may reflect agencies' focus on UPE. Sub-Saharan Africa has been the main project recipient and, in one-third of the projects, NGOs were primary programme providers.

From these limited data sets it is clear that literacy in the broad policy sense of literate societies is not widely embraced by donor agencies. For some, youth and adult literacy, and the promotion of literate environments are simply not priorities for aid budgets. For others, literacy is judged as a tool for specific development ends, or receives only marginal attention in policies and programmes, much as in national PRSPs and sector plans. Whatever the reason, the fact that no agency surveyed could quote with confidence a single figure to illustrate its level of funding to literacy indicates the low priority assigned to literacy in aid budgets.

There is a strong case for a new international discussion of literacy, including its place in agencies' policies and their education sector dialogues with governments, and the degree to which agencies can give support to adult literacy and to literate environments that accords much more closely with the scale and scope of the Dakar literacy challenge.

Two opportunities for such a dialogue are led by UNESCO. The United Nations Literacy Decade (2003–2012) has a set of major international goals covering the full range of objectives that appear in this Report (see Box 4.11). Its International Plan of Action (United Nations, 2002c) has a menu of strategies and key areas for action that include international support and coordination. The plan states:

UNESCO will work within the Education for All Coordination mechanism already established ... to identify literacy components in ongoing development programmes of various international and bilateral agencies and forge joint mobilization and maximum use of resources among these agencies in support of the Decade ... In consultation with United Nations agencies UNESCO will work towards creating meaningful and goal oriented partnerships ... The World Bank

Table 9.10: Average annual funding for literacy, selected agencies

	Amount (000 US\$)	Period	Notes
Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs	553	1995–2004	Disbursements for support to literacy through NGOs. Judgement based on short project descriptions.
Japan International Cooperation Agency	17,802	1996–2003	Disbursements for non-formal education; includes adult education and literacy, provision of information and education to general public (e.g. museums, libraries).
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation	5,072	1999–2003	Based on figures reported to OECD-DAC in the category 'basic skills for youth and adults'.
World Bank	11,089	1995–2003	Disbursements recorded under the category 'adult literacy and non-formal education'.
Asian Development Bank	10,000	2001–2003	Figure based on commitments.
UNICEF	2,803	1995–2003	Disbursements under the categories 'youth and adult education', 'primary education' and 'girl child initiatives'.
UNESCO	2,829 (regular budget) 5,087 (extrabudgetary resources)	2000–2005 1999–2003	Regular budget: commitments; extrabudgetary resources: disbursement-based.

Note: Taken from agency replies to a survey conducted from November 2004 to January 2005. Original data for Japan and Norway were in national currencies, converted at United Nations exchange rates for April 2005: JPY 1=US\$107; NOK 1=US\$6.08.

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report Team.

will work with UNESCO on literacy assessment and cost and financing analysis for literacy, for which OECD and UNICEF can also be key partners.

Potentially, this is important work, and UNESCO's programme on literacy practices and environments, and literacy for all is another valuable resource. If the Literacy Decade can generate political and technical visibility for literacy internationally, strengthen evidence-based research and serve as an advocate for literacy in education sector and poverty strategies, it will make a signal contribution to putting literacy back into the core of EFA.

The second opportunity is provided by the UNESCO Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) programme (2005–2015), designed to operate within the framework of the Literacy Decade. Its primary goal is to empower women and girls through literacy in thirty-four countries with a recorded literacy rate of below 50% or with more than 10 million people without basic literacy skills. This ambitious programme, relying on advocacy, capacity-building and the promotion of innovation, will need to be well coordinated within the framework of national sector policies and will almost certainly require significant levels of additional funding if the desired impact is to be achieved. It is unlikely to be successful as a standardized model but can serve as a framework for working flexibly in individual countries. There are obvious opportunities to work with the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) as well as with regional bodies and initiatives, such as the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and the African Union.

Conclusion

No one questions the goal of the literate society, but far too many people are denied the opportunity to contribute and gain from its benefits. There is sufficient evidence around the world – historical and current – to show that the goal is attainable if the right policies are put in place, and sufficient national and international political, public and professional energy and resources drive the process. The policies are not an add-on to the Millennium Development Goals but a necessary if understated part of their achievement. And they lie at the core of EFA. ■

Table 9.11: Trends in major aid-financed literacy projects and programmes

Survey	Total	Bilateral & banks	UN agencies
Description of target population¹			
Women	65	25	40
Girls	36	11	25
Youth	35	21	4
Children	33	19	14
Adults	23	11	12
School-age	17	17	0
Rural	15	14	1
Out-of-school	12	1	11
Teachers	9	7	2
Poor	8	8	0
Boys	6	6	0
Trainers	6	6	0
Indigenous	5	4	1
Minority	4	4	0
Ministry	3	3	0
Parents	2	0	2
Refugee	2	1	1
Disadvantaged	2	0	2
Regional distribution²			
Arab States	19	6	13
Central Asia	3	1	2
Central and Eastern Europe	8	0	8
East Asia and the Pacific	65	35	30
Latin America and the Caribbean	36	19	17
Sub-Saharan Africa	93	57	36
South and West Asia	43	33	10
Multiregional	27	12	15
No data	4	0	4
Type of partner/implementing organization³			
Government	92	42	50
NGO	99	84	15
Government and NGO	14	5	9
NPO	5	5	0
United Nations ⁴	59	9	50
Others and unknown	29	18	11

1. Derived from counting the frequency of words describing the characteristics of populations appearing in project descriptions for 208 projects. Some projects had more than one target group.

2. Project countries and regions are categorized by EFA region.

3. 'Government' = central and local government and government institutions; NGO = local and international civil society organizations.

4. Of 50 United Nations projects, 48 are UNESCO extrabudgetary programmes, financed by other private, bilateral or multilateral donors but executed by UNESCO. Some are implemented by government or NGOs.

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report Team.