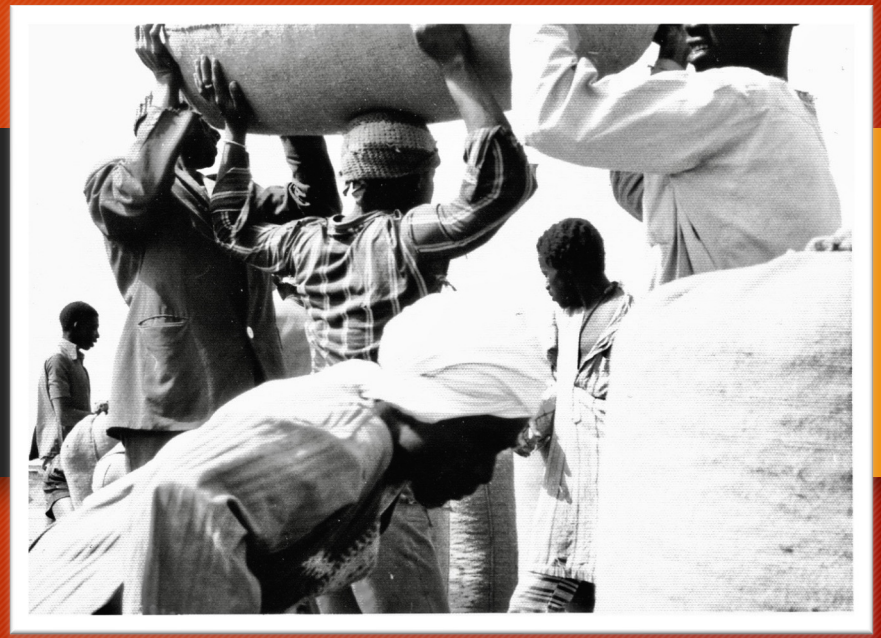
Learning from Adult Basic Skills Efforts in Developing Countries



Presented at the 2022 COABE Conference

by Paul Jurmo and David J. Rosen

April 11, 2022

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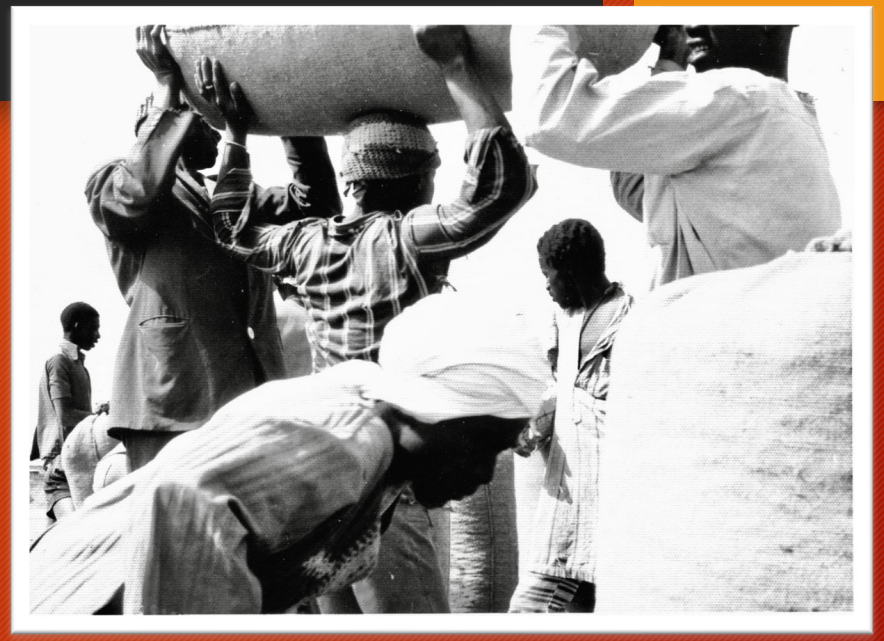

Welcome!

Please briefly introduce yourself in the chat:

- Your name, where you work, and what you do
- On a scale of 0 to 5, rate your familiarity with "basic skills programs in developing countries."

Your presenters

- Paul Jurmo, Ed.D.

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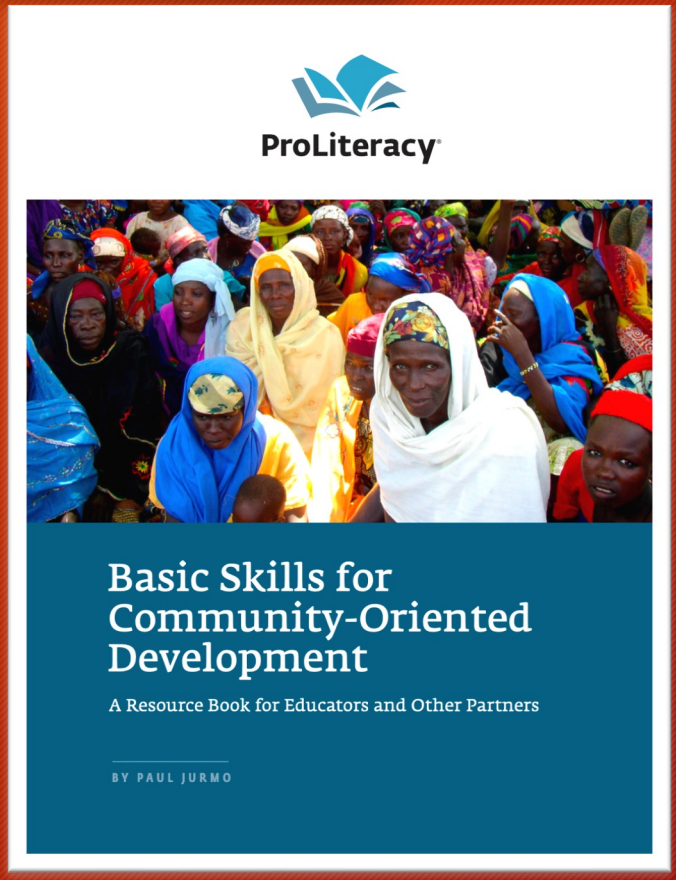
About this session

- Draws directly on "Basic Skills for Community-Oriented Development: A Resource Book for Educators and Other Partners," a free publication of ProLiteracy (2021). (See link.)
- Builds on presenters' studies and work in basic (foundational) skills efforts in developing countries and the U.S.
- *We'll try to support your active participation (via breaks for questions and comments) within the time and technology we have today).*



Our objectives
We hope you will be better able to respond to these questions:

1. What do we mean by “developing countries,” “adult basic (or foundational) skills,” “literacy,” “community-oriented education,” “out-of-school,” “children,” “youth,” and “nonformal”?
2. How has basic education been provided in developing countries since early colonial times?
3. What guidelines have been created for basic skills efforts by international development agencies in recent decades?
4. What are some examples of basic skills programs for various populations, purposes, and contexts?
5. What might U.S. adult educators learn from these guidelines and examples?
6. Where can we find more resources related to these issues?

Q1: What do we mean by . . . ?

- developing countries: aka “Third World,” “Global South,” “non-industrialized” . . .
- adult basic (or foundational) skills include . . .
  - “literacy” (reading, writing, speaking, listening),“numeracy” (applied math), “digital literacy,” and other skills (research, planning, collaboration . . .) required for communicating and solving problems in meaningful work, family, civic, and lifelong learning roles.
- community-oriented education: stresses community involvement in identifying needs and planning, implementing, and monitoring responses.
- out-of-school: individuals not enrolled in formal schools
- children: birth to 14 y.o.
- youth: 14 to 24 y.o.
- nonformal: education outside formal school settings and/or not using assessment, instructional, and other procedures typically found in formal schools.
- NGO: non-governmental organization

Q2: How has basic education been provided in developing countries since early colonial times?

- For centuries, basic education typically:
  - was geared to "school-age" children and youth,
  - adopted school models from colonizing countries,
  - prepared learners for roles in colonial society, and/or
  - was provided by religious organizations and promoted religious beliefs.
- By 1960s and 1970s, a growing interest in non-formal education for adults and out-of-school youth oriented adult basic skills services to:
  - "functional" themes (e.g., workforce and economic development, public health …),
  - political purposes (e.g., support for current systems or transition to alternative ones), and/or
  - religious goals.

Q3.a: What guidelines have been created for basic skills efforts by international development agencies in recent decades?

- 1970s: Experimental World Literacy Program (UNESCO)
  - Shifted toward "functional literacy" model.
  - But found that:
    - collaborative/integrated programs can be difficult and
    - improved basic skills don't automatically translate into improved income, job performance, health, etc.
- More recently: UNESCO, USAID, and international NGOs have . . .
  - focused more on formal and nonformal basic education for school-age children (with relatively less for adults).
  - built on lessons learned in past adult literacy efforts and in more recent research for school-age children.
  - developed guidelines and pilot projects to support vulnerable children, youth, and families (which might be adapted for nonformal education for out-of-school youth and adults).

Q3.b.: Recent guidelines recommend . . .

- Careful planning to focus activities on the educational and other needs of learners and their families and communities.
- Use of instructional practices and resources that facilitate active learning.
- Integration of basic education with other relevant efforts (for poverty reduction, public health, democratization, human rights/social justice, etc.) to ensure that learners use what is taught and achieve other relevant goals.
- Partnerships with relevant stakeholders to maximize investments.
- Professional development for those doing this work.
- More relevant and useful evaluation to guide decisions.

Do these guidelines sound familiar or make sense to you?

Let’s pause for . . .

- Questions?
- Comments?

Q4.a: Examples of programs for diverse populations, purposes, and contexts

- Village literacy and numeracy projects in The Gambia
  - Use of traditional stories, village facilitators, multi-partner leadership.
  - Specific numeracy focusing on crop sales.
- Family Literacy Program in Liberia
- Multi-purpose national literacy reform project in Tongan schools
- Nonformal, alternative education system for vulnerable children in Zimbabwe

The projects model diverse approaches and practices adaptable for various purposes, populations, and contexts.

Q4.b: The Gambia: Basic literacy and numeracy for farming communities

- Two innovative multi-village pilot projects that integrated literacy with other goals and services.
- The first project informed the second, though they had different goals, focal points, and practices.

Q4.c:
The Gambia:1976-1980

- Led by National Literacy Advisory Committee composed of representatives of diverse agencies. Operated out of National Cultural Archives with expertise in Gambian languages, history, and culture.
- At local level, adapted traditional social structures. Classes overseen by community leaders, run by young volunteer "village facilitators" (young school-educated men), conducted in local language.
- NLAC field staff chosen from outstanding schoolteachers with deep connection to traditional communities.
- New curriculum designed to teach basic reading and writing skills through reading of stories about traditional heroes and other community topics.
- Tied in with income generating projects and services related to farming, health . . .

Q4.d:
The Gambia: Early 1980s

- Similar project run by Gambian Department of Cooperatives with U.S.-based NGO (CLUSA).
- Focused on numeracy (and some literacy) required to weigh and sell crops (a felt need of farmers.) Used student-centered instructional activities (e.g., games) and authentic materials.

Q4.e: Liberia: Family Literacy Initiative

For the last 7 years, three partners (Friends of Liberia, the WE-CARE Foundation in Liberia, and HIPPY International) have operated a Family Literacy Initiative.

Q4.f: Tonga: National literacy reform project in primary and secondary schools

- Run by Tongan Ministry of Ed. with U.S. Peace Corps.
- Begun in 2012 with a dozen PC Volunteers assigned to work with counterparts in rural schools. By 2018, had 40-50 Volunteers.

Q4.g: Tonga: Goals included . . .

- Build capacities of Tongan teachers and administrators to use a "student centered" approach that . . .
  - integrated English literacy education with other subjects (e.g., health and environment);
  - used multiple modes of learning (visual and performing arts, games, collaborative activities) to encourage active learning (and move away from rote, decontextualized approach);
  - adapted inclusive education concepts and methods to maximize the success of all students;.

Q4.h: Tonga: Goals included . . .

- Create new materials (e.g., sight word books on relevant topics, teacher guidebooks, assessments) and school book collections;

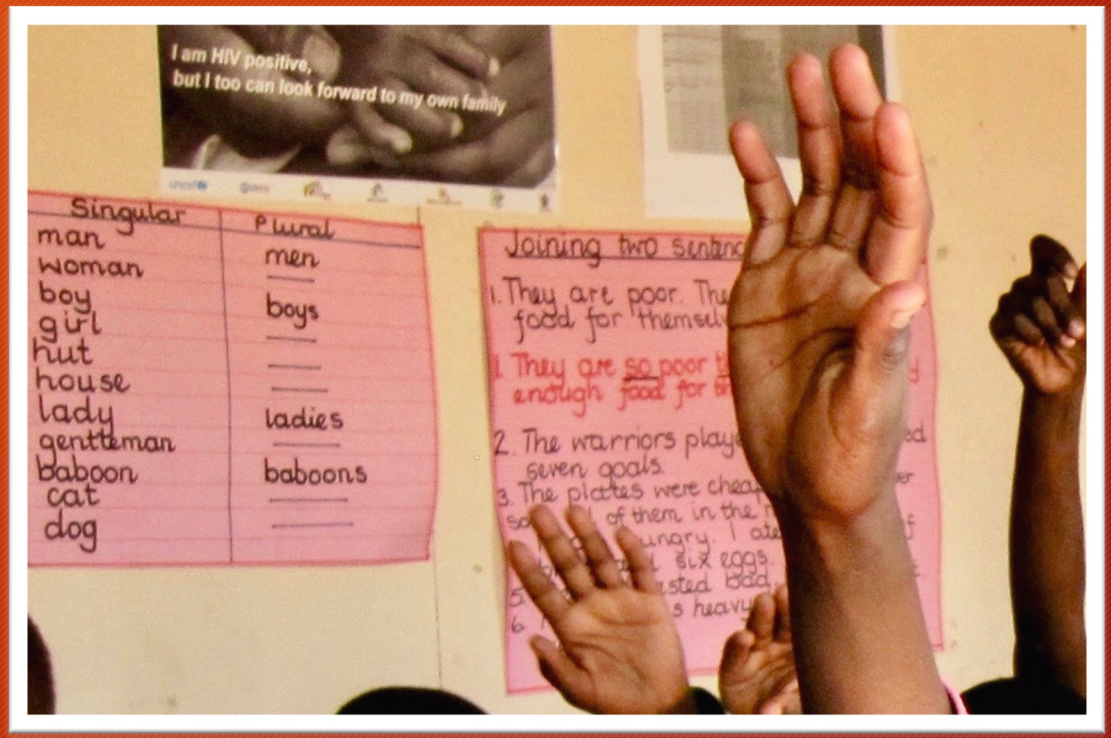
- Provide instructional supports to children via in-school and after-school activities.

Q4.i: Tonga: Goals included . . .

- Help families and communities to support their children's literacy;
- Provide literacy-development opportunities for youth and adults;
- Engage communities in other activities to support schools, health, environment (e.g.,upgrading school water catchment systems, school buildings and libraries, community sanitation and environmental protection, walking clubs, cooking clubs…)

Q4.j: Zimbabwe: alternative education for vulnerable children

- Children First program provided multiple services (e.g., child protection, health, housing, nutrition…) to orphans and vulnerable children in communities impacted by HIV/AIDS, disintegration of families and economy, civil strife . . .



Q4.k: Zimbabwe Children First

- Partnerships of local churches and other NGOs with U.S. NGO, World Bank, national education ministry, etc.
- In response to expressed need, created curriculum framework and supports for NGOs to provide alternative education to children lacking in family supports, school fees, etc.

Q5.a: What might U.S adult educators learn from nonformal basic skills efforts in developing countries?

Please use the chat to respond to the above question.

Presenters will try to . . .

- respond to some of your answers and
- add a few suggestions of their own.

Q5.b: What might U.S adult educators learn from related work in developing countries?

Some possible answers:

1. Basic ed for children is been widely recognized as important, but not always well supported. Access and quality remain challenging.
2. Basic ed for out-of-school youth and adults has generally been given lower priority.
3. Despite significant challenges, learners and educators in these initiatives use their strengths to succeed.
4. Fundamental principles and practices can be adapted for various learner populations, purposes, and contexts.

(cont'd.)

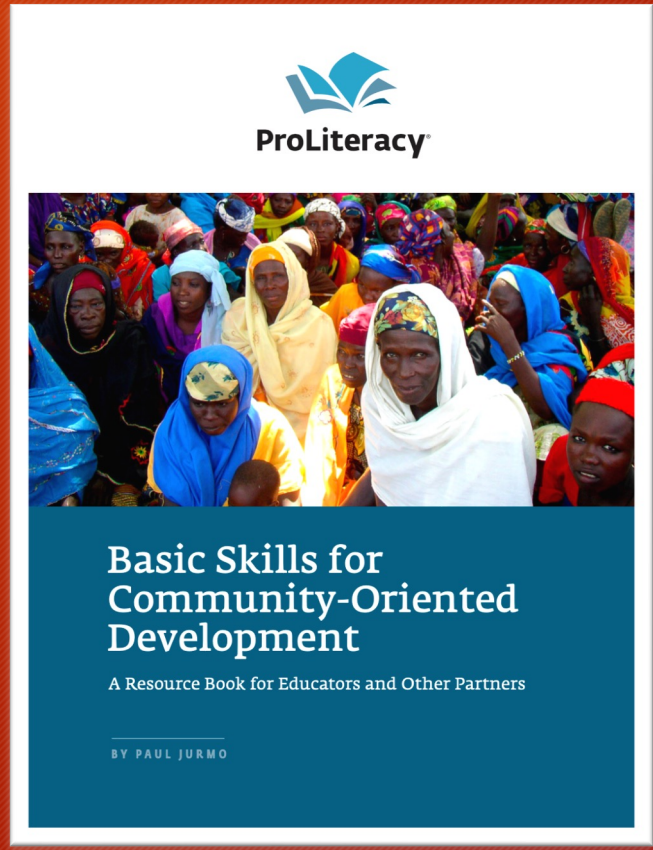
Q5.c: What U.S. adult educators might learn

5. Those doing this work outside and inside the U.S. should learn from each other because they:
   - serve similar populations (e.g., women, refugees) and needs (e.g., health, environment, workforce, democratization);
   - have similar values (e.g., for social justice) and professional interests and experiences.
6. Consider adapting “community-oriented,” “participatory,” “collaborative,” and “justice” as principles while using evidence-based practices.
7. U.S. adult educators might get involved in such work (thru Peace Corps and other agencies).

Q6: Where can we find more resources related to these issues?

- Read “Basic Skills for Community-Oriented Development: A Resource Book for Educators and Other Partners.”
  - a free resource available from ProLiteracy
  - has details of the kinds of examples, research, organizations touched on in this presentation.

  (See link.)
- Contact the presenters:
  - Paul Jurmo: pjurmo@comcast.net
  - David J. Rosen: djrosen123@gmail.com



Wrap-Up

- Thank you for your participation today.
- Please complete the workshop evaluation.
- Consider joining the Open Door Collective (https://www.opendoorcollective.org) and attending David's and Paul's other sessions at COABE.
- Keep up the good work!