

MULTI-PURPOSE LITERACY:
RESPONDING TO THE COMPLEX INTERESTS FOUND IN PROGRAM CONTEXTS

A Comprehensive Paper

By

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S E C T I O N I

INTRODUCTION

In too many literacy programs, planners have only a limited sense of the instructional approaches and techniques which are available to them. This narrowness of vision too often results in a haphazard process of selecting instructional strategies based on hunches and convenience. In the process, the interests of many participants and others involved in the program are overlooked. This neglecting of interests can lead to such problems as withdrawal of support by sponsoring agencies, irrelevant instructional materials, discouraged learners, frustrated instructors, and general program failure.

A review of reports from world literacy programs reveals that there is a wide range of possible purposes which those involved in projects can bring with them. An assessment of those various purposes reveals potential strengths and limitations for each. A planner who would want to take advantage of the best of these available purposes--while at the same time avoiding the problems which result when the purposes of those involved are overlooked--might take a "multi-purpose approach" to planning. This multi-purpose approach would follow the following steps:

1. The identification of the various significant parties in some way involved in the program;
2. The identification of the purposes which those parties bring to the program;

3. Identification of possible instructional techniques which could appeal to those purposes;
4. Negotiating with those involved in the program in order to:
 - a. Agree on what the purposes of the program would be;
 - b. Discuss the various instructional options available;
 - c. Identify how those instructional options can respond to the agreed-upon purposes;
 - d. Select the instructional techniques to be used and agree on a strategy for implementing them.

By so doing, the program not only has a better chance of directly responding to learner needs, but also of gaining the support of the myriad of officials, facilitators, politicians, community leaders, and funding agencies which affects the program.

This paper is written for literacy practitioners who have at least a sense of the need to clarify the purposes of their efforts but who are unsure of what options are available to them or how to handle them. Tying together the complexities of purposes, instructional techniques, and people which enter into most literacy programs is no easy chore. This paper is an attempt to facilitate this planning process, particularly for those with a belief that literacy should be more than a means of merely teaching the ABC's or making more efficient workers.

S E C T I O N I I

SIX CURRENTLY-AVAILABLE PURPOSES FOR LITERACY EDUCATION

A review of reports from adult literacy programs and primary- and secondary-level formal-school reading programs reveals a wide variety of purposes for literacy instruction. These purposes are all based on conscious or unconscious sets of values and motivations which the literacy program should satisfy. These purposes can be implicit (held tacitly) or explicit (publicly declared).

This section describes six categories of purposes which are commonly proposed by literacy program planners and practitioners, learners, and academics. These purposes are as follows:

1. Basic literacy;
2. Religious literacy;
3. Functional literacy;
4. Literacy for indoctrination;
5. Meaning-based literacy;
6. Consciousness-raising literacy.

There now follows a general description of each of these sets of purposes, with arguments for and against each perspective and presentations of cases which illustrate them.

Purpose #1: Basic Literacy

General description. "Basic literacy" refers to the kind of "pure" literacy traditionally taught in most Western school systems. Emphasis

is placed on recognition of letter names, letter/sound correspondences, word-building, etc. "Basic literacy" is also known as "the basics" and "the 3 R's."¹

Arguments for and against. Basic literacy has, in recent years, been viewed by many as old-fashioned, short-sighted, and/or culturally-biased. The psycholinguists,² for example, state that basic literacy teaches skills in a meaningless vacuum. Without meaning, literacy cannot be effectively used or retained. Proponents of education for ethnic minorities³ likewise claim that basic literacy ignores the special needs of learners from environments which do not generally support literacy.

However, proponents of basic literacy claim that beginning readers cannot get at "meaning" without first breaking the alphabetic code. Teaching that code must come first,⁴ because beginning reading is not seen as "broad" (i.e., with mature reading from the start). "Empathy" between learners and teachers is not enough. Rather, hard basic skills are necessary. Less emphasis is placed on achieving "functional" (applied) purposes until a later stage when readers might begin to read texts related to other "school topics" of history, arithmetic, geography, etc.

One means of achieving such hard skills is through the use of memorization drills. Westfall⁵ argues that memorizing in the long run is of limited value in itself. There is a chance, however, that it will help the learner to think, in the process. That is, memorization helps the learner to hold onto ideas so that she can consider them, and think them over.

Examples of "basic literacy." Despite criticisms from proponents of other purposes, basic literacy makes frequent comebacks,⁶ as evidenced in the current "back-to-basics" movement talked about in American schools. Even in a project⁷ where the "consciousness-raising" and "meaning-based" purposes were aimed at, the project practitioners concluded that those "consciousness-raising" and "meaning-based" purposes were limited by their lack of concern for the larger organization of written language. That is, not only are "self-expression and cultural action" needed, but the "nuts and bolts" of literacy must also be attended to. In that project, "letter-" and "math-fluency games" were developed as a way of teaching and re-inforcing those basic skills.⁸ It was felt that emphasis on those basic skills is particularly needed in Third World settings where there is often little tradition or opportunity for using printed materials. It was proposed that "basic literacy" activities could be integrated with "consciousness-raising" and "meaning-based" sorts of learning activities if desired.

Purpose #2: Religious Literacy

General description. As the name implies, "religious literacy" places a heavy emphasis on the incorporation of religious loyalties and/or knowledge and ethics into learning of basic literacy skills.

Arguments for and against. The arguments for religious literacy would come from obvious sources: the religious faithful who support the instructions. They would argue that such instructions--and the

subsequent ability to read the religious texts--help the student to attain and maintain a firm hold on his religious faith.

Criticisms of religious education might argue that religious education alone does not facilitate the technological advances needed for national development. Others might argue that over-emphasis on religion distracts people from a critical challenging of the status quo and instead promotes a magical acceptance of one's oppressed fate.⁹

Examples of religious literacy. Until the invention of the printing press, literacy in Europe was to a large degree the property of religious clerics who recorded and interpreted the Holy Scriptures. Even after the invention of the printing press, literacy was still given a heavy religious emphasis, as literacy instruction, both in European schools and in missionary work in colonized areas, aimed to a large degree at enabling students to read the Bible. Such religious purposes for literacy remain strong today, as evidenced by the religious-related histories of such literacy organizations as the Laubachs, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and others.

Likewise in non-Western cultures, literacy has often played a religious role. The history of Islam has placed heavy emphasis on the teaching of the reading of the Koran, again as a means of gaining access to divine wisdom and guidance. Wagner¹⁰ describes the range of Islamic-education practices from Indonesia to Morocco, which follow everything from age-old systems of memorizing the Koran to instructions within modern school settings. Wagner also describes similar religious education in traditional and contemporary Jewish and Buddhist cultures.

Purpose #3: Functional Literacy

General description. According to the report from UNESCO's Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP),¹¹ the "functional literacy" developed in the program's eleven countries was "to combine literacy and memory with a programme of education in basic vocational skills directly linked to the occupational needs of participants."

Arguments for and against. In support of functional literacy were those who believed that work-oriented literacy was a needed component of efforts to develop societies through economic growth. This perspective felt that the problems of underdevelopment were in many ways due to lack of technical skills within the economy. Functional literacy was a means to the acquisition of those skills.

However, as stated in the EWLP report,¹² there were those who opposed the concept of functional literacy:

Some humanist rigorists criticize this functional approach for narrowing the focus of education to what they deem a single and barely utilitarian role. Other, more radical, critics (including certain partisans of P. Freire's psycho-social method) maintain that it 'functionalizes' only certain aspects of literacy and skills training work, and that it particularly ignores illiterates' need for greater political awareness.

Examples of functional literacy. The EWLP report contains more than 100 pages of information about the program's functional literacy work in eleven countries. Common "functional" purposes in those countries include:

- Literacy with general professional and technical training of industrial workers and their families (Algeria)¹³;
- Coordinate with agrarian reform . . . and with agricultural and industrial training, and the promotion of cooperatives (Ecuador)¹⁴;
- Increasing food production . . . (through) literacy and strategic agricultural skills and information of immediate use to themselves and to the (agricultural program) (India)¹⁵;
- Social and economic development . . . (through) an integral link between literacy and improvement of technical skills (Iran)¹⁶;
- Improving productivity and standard of living (Mali)¹⁷;
- Facilitate participation . . . in the process of agricultural development . . . as landowners and cooperative members (Syria)¹⁸.

In the United States, adult literacy efforts have historically aimed at functional purposes, including military training of army recruits in the 1940's.¹⁹ More recently,²⁰ Syracuse-based Laubach Literacy has prepared literacy-instruction materials and methods used by its affiliates, the National Affiliation for Literacy Advance (NALA) and the Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), as well as by non-affiliated, government-sponsored adult basic education programs around the country.

The Laubach publications

. . . are on such topics as consumer economics, health, ecology, civics, vocational and career information, family living, driver education, and other areas of concern to adults.

Purpose #4: Literacy for Indoctrination

General description. "Literacy for indoctrination" refers to literacy whose primary purpose is to solidify the dependence of the learner on the

established social order. This purpose can be openly expressed or a tacit, hidden agenda.

Arguments for and against. Those using literacy for such purposes would claim that literacy is just one other tool for national development. An "inform" citizenry is a good citizenry, according to this view. Citizens, to be good citizens, should be given the opportunity to know their rights and the laws of the land, become aware of current events, and make intelligent choices as voters.

Critics²¹ of this view might argue that such proclamations are delusive, making it appear that the established order is open to citizen participation while really having little intention of allowing the neo-literate to have a significant voice. Such use of literacy is seen as a form of public relations for the established order.

Examples of literacy for indoctrination. As in the case of "beauty," "indoctrination" is in the eye of the beholder. That is, the viewer's perception of "indoctrinating" purposes in a literacy program depends largely on the viewer's political ideology. For example, a right-wing viewer could see political indoctrination as the purpose for the post-revolutionary literacy campaigns in the Soviet Union,²² Cuba,²³ and Nicaragua.²⁴ On the other hand, a left-leaning critic would be likely to see indoctrination as the covert purpose of the many "mass literacy campaigns" carried out in capitalist-oriented, Third World countries (e.g., Nigeria, pre-revolutionary Cuba, etc.)²⁵ since their de jure independence from colonial powers. Likewise, from the perspective of

the left, the "citizenship training" for immigrants to the United States in the 1920's,²⁶ as well as the literacy and English-language training currently being given to Latin American and Asian immigrants might be cited as merely a token attempt at reducing the inequities faced by such people, while creating an illusion of empowerment.

Depending, then, on the viewer's particular ideological position, such literacy efforts could be either oppressive means of further subjugating unschooled adults and their communities or means of liberating the learners from economic and cultural oppression.

Purpose #5: Meaning-Based Literacy

General description. "Meaning-based literacy" refers to the approach to literacy-instruction proposed by the "psycholinguists" and others.²⁷ According to this view, reading should be a process in which the best possible match is made between the reader's own personal experience and the messages presented by writers. "There must be a point of contact between what the learner is expected to know and what he/she already knows."²⁸ The point where this match of reader's experience and writer's message is made is "meaning." The achievement of such meaning is the goal of the psycholinguistic, meaning-based approach to literacy.

Arguments for and against. In support of the "meaning-based" view, Bruno Bettelheim and Karen Zelan write²⁹:

In theory, there is no lack of recognition that reading ought to be taught for meaning, but unfortunately it remains more theory--an empty declaration of intentions--since educational practice runs counter to this theory and will continue to do

so as long as reading texts are completely worthless. Not only are the stories from which the child is asked to learn to read devoid of any merit; with their empty sentences and their annoyingly boring repetitions of the same few words, they dull the child's mind instead of stimulating it. . . . the texts concentrate solely on teaching the skills of decoding, irrespective of whether this is done through sight recognition of whole words or through phonics. . . . the child is expected to learn skills without their being meaningfully applied. . . . children are (therefore) not interested in learning to read, and this has led and still leads to the erroneous opinion that children do not want to learn to read, and that they therefore must be constantly drilled in reading skills. This conviction accounts for texts that emphasize drill. . . . nobody in his right mind would want to learn to read in order to be able to reach such stupid stories.

The kind of meaning-based literacy proposed by the psycholinguists might be criticized as follows:

- "Functional literacy" and "religious literacy" proponents might accuse the psycholinguists of allowing literacy to degenerate to unimportant uses. For example, if what is "meaningful" to the reader is stories about motorcycle racing or pornography, meaning-based instructions would concede the value of these stories and incorporate them into the reading instructions. A functional literacy proponent would likely find both topics of little use to the functional needs of the society. A religious-literacy supporter would also find such 'meaning' to be, at best, distracting from and, at worst, destructive of religious purposes.
- Supporters of "basic literacy" might claim that meaning-based literacy "puts the cart before the horse," having

learners jump ahead to "meaning" without giving them a chance to first get a firm footing in the basic skills of letter-recognition, etc. How (basic literacy might ask) can a learner find meaning in symbols for which she has not yet learned the mechanics?

- A supporter of the "consciousness raising" purpose (a description of which follows) is liable to see meaning-based literacy as too "wishy-washy" politically. Meaning-based literacy would want every learner merely to do her own thing, in an individualistic way. Learners thereby do not learn to act collectively or analyze their situations critically. Instead, they dabble in a little of this, then a little of that, according to their own whims and according to the dictates of the current media-inspired fads.

Examples of meaning-based literacy. Reports from projects in the United States and elsewhere describe various attempts to implement psycholinguistic principles in actual reading programs.

Daniel Fader's³⁰ reading program for reform-school boys let the learners read and write anything they wanted, while the instructor patiently guided the learners, making suggestions, answering questions. Fader felt that, only when the learners are in this way allowed to discover meaning in printed materials for themselves, will the learners learn to actively seek the use of literacy.

Several adult-literacy programs in the United States³¹ emphasized the use of reading and writing activities of direct meaning to the learners, rather than using curricula prepared in advance by outsiders. In some Adult Basic Education programs,³²

. . . student achievement seems to be higher when maximum use is made of materials prepared by the students themselves or by the teachers working closely with them, and lower when commercially prepared materials are used. . . . In one center that reported a high level of student achievement, participants wrote group stories, songs, and poems. Sentences were first written on the blackboard and later typed, illustrated, and distributed to other centers in the program.

Sylvia Ashton-Warner's³³ reading program focussed basic-level reading instruction on the "organic" (i.e., emotionally strong) words identified by the learners themselves. Her primary school children in New Zealand used such words as "kill" and "kiss"; and their own names and those of their family members, friends and teachers. The use of such words gets at "the secret of reading, the realization that words have intense meaning."

Purpose #6: Consciousness-Raising Literacy

General description. The use of literacy for "consciousness-raising" purposes generally consists of the following elements³⁵:

1. The learner is enabled, through dialogue with others about issues of personal meaning to them, to think "critically." That is, the learner achieves "an understanding that one's action can influence the course of one's own life."³⁶ In achieving this

understanding, the learner moves beyond the lower states of consciousness in which human behavior is attributed to unseen or other forces beyond the learner's control.

2. With this raised consciousness, the learner analyzes her relationship with the surrounding reality and defines strategies for shaping that environment according to her needs.
3. The learner then works with others to take collective action to implement the above strategies.

The "literacy" part of this method comes in when the key, meaningful concepts identified by the learners are put into print. Then, in addition to the above kinds of discussions about the terms' various social implications, the learners break the words into syllables, learn syllable/sound correspondences, build new words, and gradually expand these "basic literacy" skills while continuing their "consciousness-raising" discussions at the same time.

Arguments for and against. A 1972 UNESCO Literacy Conference in Japan³⁷ rejected the concept of "functional literacy as not promoting active involvement of learners but instead stressing mere technical competence." The new revolutionary government in Nicaragua³⁸ claimed that

. . . education . . . must encourage people to take charge of their lives, to learn to become informed and effective decision makers, and to understand their roles as responsible citizens possessing rights and obligations. A liberating education nurtures empathy, a commitment to community, and a sense of self-worth and dignity. It involves people acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for their new responsibilities. . . . Literacy and permanent programs of adult learning are fundamental to these goals. We believe

they are essential to the building of a democratic society in which people can participate consciously and critically in national decision making.

As stated under Purpose #4 ("Literacy for Indoctrination") above, the literacy projects which claim a consciousness-raising purpose are criticized in some cases on ideological grounds. These critics claim that the Nicaraguan literacy campaign was not consciousness-raising in the way it professed to be. Rather, such a campaign was merely another form of leftist indoctrination, under the guise of discussion groups whose "key words" and expressed interests were a foregone conclusion rather than the results of the genuine^{dialogue} which Freire describes.

"Meaning-based literacy" proponents might likewise criticize "consciousness-raising" efforts by saying that "consciousness-raising" programs are unlikely to have the patience or time to tolerate key words which do not lead to the same conclusions held by the program organizers. Without such tolerance of whatever terms are meaningful to the reader, the "meaning-based" supporters would argue, the instructions run the risk of "losing" the learner as their hold on involvement in the program gradually slips away due to lack of real interest in the subject matter.

As in their critique of "meaning-based" literacy, supporters of "basic literacy" might claim that consciousness-raising literacy tries to do too much, too soon, regardless of the political validity the approach might or might not have. That is, by putting so much energy into the discussion of "issues," the program pays inadequate attention to the basic building blocks of letter- and syllable-recognition, etc. Without such an emphasis on hard, basic skills, a learner in a

consciousness-raising literacy program might successfully attain the goal of "critical consciousness" without actually learning how to read and write.

"Functional" and "religious literacy" supporters might argue against the consciousness-raising purpose (as they did against meaning-based literacy) by claiming that too much "consciousness-raising" distracts from getting down to the necessary functional or religious purposes. This resistance to consciousness-raising programs could well be fueled by the critics' realization that consciousness-raising programs could very likely result in criticism of the established "development programs" or religious institutions which are the homes of proponents of functional literacy and religious literacy.

Resistance to a consciousness-raising approach could also come from those who sympathize with the view that learners need to attain higher levels of consciousness. These people might argue that consciousness-raising efforts, despite their moral value, are likely to meet with resistance from the established order and therefore should be avoided, "at least for the time being."

Examples of consciousness-raising literacy. The literature abounds with accounts of literacy projects having a stated consciousness-raising purpose. Some of the best-known project sites have included Cuba, Nicaragua, Guinea-Bissau, and Tanzania. In these countries, national literacy programs were (as the EWLP described the Tanzanian project)³⁹ "implemented against a background of extreme ideological consciousness."

In Nicaragua,⁴⁰ specific objectives of the literacy campaign included not only the elimination of illiteracy, but the achievement of

- integration and understanding among Nicaraguans of different classes and backgrounds;
- political awareness and critical awareness of underdevelopment;
- attitudes and skills related to creativity, production, cooperation, discipline, and analytical thinking;
- a sense of national consensus and of social responsibility;
- channels of economic and political participation;
- popular awareness of "national development programs";
- recording of "oral histories and (recovery of) popular forms of culture";
- research into "health and agriculture" needs;
- recovery of young people from the trauma and violence of the revolutionary war.

Less well-known consciousness-raising projects have been implemented or proposed in the United States. In Kentucky,⁴¹ a literacy program took the view that the rural, low-income adult learners were oppressed not only by lack of basic literacy skills but also by a consciousness which led them to accept their roles as "peons" to powerful business and government interests. With this view, the literacy program attempted to integrate literacy work with consciousness-raising activities. As might be expected in a context within which consciousness-raising is a foreign concept, the program met with considerable resistance. The program staff were labelled "outside agitators," and the program was eventually stopped when finances were withdrawn and staff members censured by government authorities.

Consciousness-raising programs which operate in more-sympathetic contexts appear to have been more successful in achieving their purposes. In several programs organized within ethnic-minority communities,⁴² literacy instructions were integrated with activities "to affirm a unique cultural heritage and, out of that heritage, to build a positive community self-image." In a literacy program for rural, low-income blacks in Georgia, "the Election Law became the text, because one of the ultimate goals was that all the students should become registered voters."

A basic-mathematics program⁴³ for low-income youths with records of poor academic achievement likewise integrated "political" topics with more familiar academic exercises. For example, math activities included calculating and subsequent group discussion of armaments expenditures, unemployment figures, racial distributions in various job categories, etc. Stated objectives of the program included:

- increased political consciousness of learner;
- increased self-esteem of learner;
- increased ability to do methodical, critical thinking;
- challenge of the "fragmented" view of society, thinking, and education perpetuated by social institutions.

American educational critic Jonathan Kozol⁴⁴ has recently proposed a national literacy campaign in the United States, which would have consciousness-raising as a stated purpose. Five million volunteer facilitators would be organized to work with the segments of the United States' population who have been denied adequate educational and socio-economic opportunities. The literacy instructions would be based on the

"dangerous words" which are of greatest visceral meaning to the learners. From discussion of such terms, a greater sense of ability to change their roles in society could result.

S E C T I O N I I I
MULTI-PURPOSE LITERACY--WHY AND HOW

A Rationale

The preceding section describes six different purposes for literacy. Various projects are described which declared for themselves one of these purposes and went ahead and tried to implement it. In many cases, those efforts to achieve a particular purpose were subject to criticisms and, sometimes, active resistance from others who might have had a different idea of what purpose the literacy program should serve.

Most literacy planners are likely to find themselves in just such a situation: funding agencies expect one thing, politicians want another, idealistic young fieldworkers and learners want a third purpose, community elders have another purpose in mind entirely. While, on the surface, most planners would agree that the learners' particular needs should be given the most weight when selecting program purposes, the reality is that programs inevitably get shaped in some way by others in the program context who might have a wide variety of ideas about the purposes which should be served.⁴⁵ If the interests of all of those "interested parties" are not given adequate attention, problems of poor communication, confusion, suspicion and resistance could result.

How might a planner even begin to adequately deal with such a complex situation? It would be a wise planner who could recognize all of the various motivations of those involved in the project and do the juggling act necessary to make the best use of all those motivations.

To do so, a planner might, rather than commit the program to only one, single purpose, take a "multi-purpose" approach to planning the program and attaining the optimum amount of support possible.

A "multi-purpose" literacy effort would acknowledge the positive contributions which each available approach has to offer to the program. That is, a multi-purpose approach would borrow the best from each literacy purpose and use those positive principles as foundation stones for the building of a strong, durable program. And, as with the building of any structure, certain internal supports are needed. In the case of a multi-purpose program, these supports would take the form of moral and practical support from each of the parties present in the program context.

A "statement of purposes" for this kind of multi-purpose approach to program planning and organizing might look as follows. A multi-purpose literacy program should:

1. Not overlook the importance for learners of basic literacy skills, particularly as they can in fact facilitate the achievement of other worthwhile purposes;
2. Respect the religious beliefs of those involved in the program, and encourage the use of literacy for religious purposes if so desired by those involved;
3. Encourage the use of literacy to facilitate the learning of useful work-related, health-maintenance, and other practical ("functional") skills, which can be used in worthwhile, satisfying work;

4. Acknowledge the strong tendencies of established political-economic systems to want to use education as a means of reinforcing the established order, and publicly encourage the use of literacy to support democratic principles and practices;
5. Base learning activities to a large degree on the experience and interests of the learners themselves; however, at the same time respect the technical and social demands of the context;
6. Facilitate the learning of critical-thinking skills (as described by Freire), as deemed appropriate by those involved in the program.

A Strategy for Implementation

It is one thing to cite the need for--and principles of--a program which makes optimum use of the multitude of interests present in a literacy-program context. It is another matter to define a clear, feasible strategy by which such a multi-purpose program could be implemented. As described in the Introduction (Section I), a multi-purpose program strategy could consist of the following steps.

1. The identification of the various significant parties in some way involved in the program. Program planners would survey the program, to identify who might be involved in the program and what their official and unofficial roles are in the context. These "parties" might be organized in larger categories, perhaps according to their relative

political authority and power. In a Third World context, categories could include:

- Highest-level government officials and private-sector leaders;
- Outside funding agencies;
- Higher-level officials within the sponsoring agencies (e.g., Director of the Adult Education Department);
- "Opposition" leaders from various political parties;
- Expatriate advisors supplied by funding agencies;
- Mid- and lower-level civil servants involved in the project (including not only supervisors and field-workers, but drivers, typists, et al.);
- Volunteer (or paid) facilitators from the local communities;
- Community leaders (including parents of learners, mayors/chiefs, et al.);
- Community-level learners.

2. The identification of the purposes which those parties bring to the program. Once those categories of involved parties have been identified, their respective positions vis-a-vis the proposed literacy program might be assessed. Through discussions with representatives from each of the above categories, planners could identify the various stated and unstated purposes which those parties would likely hold for the program. Given such information, the planner might then assess how the respective parties might help or hinder the proposed literacy program.

The information from these first two steps might at this point be arranged according to the following sample format:

PARTIES INVOLVED	OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL ROLES	STATED AND UNSTATED PURPOSES FOR PROGRAM	POTENTIAL HELP OR HINDRANCE TO PROJECT
<p>Category 1: Highest-level government officials and private sector leaders.</p>	<p>-- Directors of powerful government and business agencies, thus with high influence on human and material resources.</p> <p>-- Influential in political parties, which have strong influence vis-a-vis community support.</p>	<p>-- Stated: Universal literacy by the year 2000; increased productivity and improved standard of living.</p> <p>-- Unstated: Literacy should not lead to political agitation of current illiterates; increased productivity and improved standard of living would further secure popular support for status quo; a literacy program would at least create the appearance that the government is trying to help the poor masses.</p>	<p>-- Help: Could give major material and personnel to program if they felt that it would secure their positions.</p> <p>-- Hinder: Could effectively destroy the program if it's felt that the power of themselves or their "cronies" was threatened by a successful literacy program.</p>

3. The identification of possible instructional techniques which could appeal to those purposes. Once the above assessment of purposes has been applied to all of the interest groups involved in the program, the planner would be equipped with a list of purposes with which she would have to deal in the program. In the area of materials-development, a planner could choose from a wide range of possible materials and techniques to find the most suitable means of fulfilling the identified purposes. Many techniques could be adapted to serve a variety of purposes, if the planner has a clear sense of the purpose to be served and has energy and imagination.

In order to identify available materials and techniques, the planner would need to investigate what techniques have been reported in the literacy/reading literature, what has been tried already locally, what suggestions local educators could make, etc. Once armed with this list of possible techniques and materials, the planner could rate each of those materials with respect to the purposes previously identified. Such a "rating chart" for potential materials and techniques could take the form as shown on the following page.

4. Negotiating with those involved in the program, in order to:

Agree on what the purposes of the program would be. Planner meets again with the various interested parties, to discuss what they have identified as purposes for the program as well as what other options they might choose from. From these discussions, an agreement would be reached about the purposes each party would aim for in the program.

"RATING CHART" FOR POTENTIAL MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Description of Material on Technique	Source	Level	How Appropriate to Functional Literacy	How Appropriate to Consciousness-Raising	How Appropriate to Meaning-Based	How Appropriate to Basic Literacy
1. Letter fluency games	Center for International Education	Beginner, Intermediate	1. Reinforces basic skills needed for FL. 2. Learners could try to spell terms related to functional concepts. 3. Entertainment value can promote learner interest. 4. Novelty is effective public relations technique.	1. Reinforces basic skills needed for CR literacy. 2. Learners could base CR discussions around words which they compose. 3. Entertainment value can promote learner interest. 4. Novelty is effective public relations technique.	1. Reinforces basic skills useful to meaning-based literacy. 2. Entertainment value can promote learner interest. 3. Novelty is effective public relations technique.	1. Reinforces basic skills of letter-identification, syllable- and word-building, etc. 2. Entertainment value can promote learner interest. 3. Novelty is effective public relations technique.
RATING: <u>4</u>			RATING: <u>4</u>	RATING: <u>4</u>	RATING: <u>4</u>	RATING: <u>5</u>
2. Math fluency games	Center for International Education	Beginner, Intermediate	1. Reinforces basic skills needed for functional literacy. 2. Learners can relate numerical problems in games to functional problems they might encounter. 3. Entertainment value can promote learner interest. 4. Novelty= public relations.	1. Reinforces basic skills needed for functional literacy. 2. Learners could base CR discussions around numeracy problems and concepts which emerge from the games. 3. Entertainment value. 4. Novelty= public relations.	1. Reinforces basic math skills useful to MB literacy. 2. Learners could relate games' math concepts to situations of particular significance to themselves. 3. Entertainment value. 4. Novelty= public relations.	1. Reinforces basic math skills of number-identification, etc. 2. Entertainment value. 3. Novelty= public relations.
RATING: <u>4</u>			RATING: <u>4</u>	RATING: <u>4</u>	RATING: <u>4</u>	RATING: <u>5</u>

Note: "Rating" scale = "1" (not suitable) → "5" (highly recommended)

Discuss the various instructional options available and identify how those instructional options can respond to the agreed-upon purposes.

In the same meetings with the interested groups, the planner could present the types of materials and techniques which could be used to answer the groups' expressed interests. These presentations would include an explanation of the amount of time required, the resources needed, the responsibilities which each party might have to make if the materials and techniques are to be successful.

Select the instructional techniques to be used, and agree on a strategy for implementing them. The interested parties could then decide which materials they will support and make the necessary commitments of time and material and human resources. In dialogue with the various groups, the planner can devise a strategy by which the various activities and responsibilities could be carried out.

By following this multi-purpose approach to program planning, the planner could better achieve the following planning objectives:

- Identification of the range of interests which affect the program's outcome;
- Identification of instructional methods specifically geared to the fulfillment of those purposes;
- Increasing the amount and breadth of support for the program available within the program context.

S E C T I O N I V
STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF MULTI-PURPOSE LITERACY

No planner should adopt an approach to planning without a careful consideration of the potential strengths and limitations of that approach. There follows here a presentation of some such possible strong and weak points for multi-purpose literacy.

Possible Strengths.

- David Harman⁴⁶ claims that, with such a multitude of factors to consider in planning a literacy program, it is not appropriate to make a universally-applicable definition of literacy to be applied to all places, times, and levels of development. The multi-purpose approach attempts to achieve that flexibility.
- Ivan Illich⁴⁷ recommends a system by which educational resources are assembled in a community-education information center, with information on how the resources can be made use of, what purposes they would serve, etc. Learners could thus "pick and choose" which activities best suit their particular needs. Multi-purpose literacy likewise lets those involved make informed choices.
- Planners could use the potentially-complex network of purposes and techniques to camouflage their own purposes, thus avoiding criticism from potential opponents while in fact convincing those opponents that the program serves their needs as well.

Possible Limitations.

- There is a danger that this multi-purpose approach to literacy could become a mish-mash of contradictory purposes which would require a very patient and fairly sophisticated planner to untangle. It could also require a high level of background knowledge regarding the range of instructional techniques available and regarding the interests and positions of the many groups involved in a program. These requirements of sophistication and knowledge might very well be beyond the experience, training, time, and other resources of most planners.
- There remains a question of how the various activities and purposes would be carried out relative to each other. Would they be implemented simultaneously in an "integrated" effort? As separate but coordinated efforts? As a series of phased efforts aiming at different needs? These questions of program strategy remain to be answered, depending in part on how closely the various identified purposes match each other and on the "juggling" abilities of the program planners and administrators.
- The ability to "camouflage" one's purposes in a multi-purpose program, cited above, could be viewed as a negative implication, as well. Depending on one's perspective, the ability to hide motivations within a multi-purpose literacy program could be viewed as sneaky and unethical. An attempt to deal with this question of ethics follows.

S E C T I O N V

A QUESTION OF ETHICS AND PRAGMATISM

The previous sections have presented an analysis of the purposes available to literacy planners and a strategy by which those options might be implemented in a "multi-purpose" literacy program. The discussion in Section IV regarding the planner's ability, in a multi-purpose program, to camouflage his intentions, leads to the following question:

How ethical is this literacy-program strategy if its proponents do not honestly reveal all of its many possible implications to those to be involved in the program?

Another, more blunt, way of asking the same question is: Is this program opportunistic, sneaky, trying to pass itself off as one thing to one interest group and as something else to another group?

This is a difficult question (one which probably few programs ever ask themselves), and one which could in turn lead to a larger question of the ethical position of an educator in society. Roland Paulston⁴⁸ deals with this question by saying that educational planners can take one of two positions vis-a-vis the established social order. An educator can by her actions:

1. Disagree with the injustices visible in the status quo but act through a relatively slow process of compromise, to make small changes with the aim of improving the system's efficiency.
2. View the injustices as direct products of the fundamental bases of the status quo and work openly and directly to confront those bases, in order to eliminate them and replace them with an alternative system of social structures.

Given Paulston's perspective, we would argue that, while the multi-purpose approach fits neither of these categories in any neat way, the terms which he presents can clarify the ethical position of the multi-purpose approach. Using Paulston's terminology, the multi-purpose approach can be characterized as follows:

1. Because it sees education as a tool for critical consciousness as proposed by Freire, it thus resembles Paulston's position #2.
2. However, because it is not necessarily always overt and direct in its confrontation of what it judges to be injustice, the multi-purpose approach fails to qualify under Paulston's position # .
3. The multi-purpose approach, because it supports a consciousness-raising purpose for literacy, is not satisfied with the overly-conciliatory, overly-compromising position represented by Paulston's position #1. That position is too akin to the position taken by many "liberal" educators who point fingers at manifestations of social injustice but are afraid to make the personal and career sacrifices which might be necessary to attack the causes (rather than the symptoms) of the injustices.
4. The multi-purpose approach might be attacked by supporters of both^{of} Paulston's positions as overly ambitious, trying to be "all things to all people."

On the contrary, it can be argued that, given the naivete, ignorance, selfishness, and downright bloody oppressiveness of many of those who might be involved in literacy programs, a literacy-program strategy is necessary which respects the strengths and limitations of the six possible purposes (i.e., basic literacy, religious literacy, functional literacy, literacy for indoctrination, meaning-based literacy, and consciousness-raising literacy). It is worth noting that Jonathan Kozol has apparently been unsuccessful in his effort to organize a national literacy program in the United States, possibly due to the fact that he was trying to involve parties with a wide variety of perspectives (e.g., "Laubachs," New York City Hispanic community organizers, academics, large foundations, et al.) in a program which assumed a "consciousness-raising" perspective.⁴⁹

A strategy which forces program practitioners and participants to choose between just one approach or none at all will likely produce resentment, devisiveness, frustration, and chaos among those involved, as many of them try to fit their own interests to an approach which "just won't fit." A multi-purpose approach, in contrast, would be more likely to appeal to a wider range of people.

The question of whether proponents of the multi-purpose approach are wrong if they do not explain all of the implications of their

program to everyone involved, remains a difficult one. There appears, for the supporter of a multi-purpose approach, to be two choices:

1. Be overt and explicit about all of the possible implications of the approach;
2. Tailor presentations of the approach to the particular interest group being dealt with.

Choice #1 appears to be bold, potentially exhilarating, and courageous. Given the limitations of support for the consciousness-raising purpose, choice #1 also appears to be suicidal, leading to a rejection and possible active destruction of the program by the many who are not likely to support the cause of critical consciousness. (Choice #1 is perhaps the choice of self-destructive, so-called "radicals" who choose unrealistic, doomed courses of action out of an unconscious desire to fail and to justify their own miserable, defeated positions in life. However, choice #1 might also be the choice of the courageous ones who sacrifice themselves for the good of others.)

Choice #2 appears to be more in the style of the pragmatic politician who uses (almost) any means necessary to achieve his ends, on the grounds that "the ends justify the means."

While the naif in us would prefer the refreshing boldness and clear conscience of choice #1, a more critical choice would be choice #2. A multi-purpose approach to literacy programming would be a difficult, delicate, but pragmatic process whereby support would be solicited for a unified literacy effort from all possible groups with an interest in literacy. This would be achieved by appealing to the best

motivations--as well as the self-interests--of each group while at the same time avoiding giving potentially opposing parties within the program an excuse for finding faults with the program, by unnecessarily calling attention to all of the possible results of the program. This positive but wary multi-purpose approach is perhaps a radical twist on the rule to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

NOTES:

1. Kohl (1982) presents a broader definition of "basic skills" which includes social skills.
2. Smith (1973)
3. Collins (1979)
4. Chall (1967), p. 29 and p. 34
5. Westfall (1978), p. 7
6. Copperman (1978)
7. Gunter's Math Fluency Games, pp. 6-7
8. Gunter's Math Fluency Games and Letter Fluency Games
9. Freire (1982)
10. Wagner (1982)
11. Unesco (1976)
12. Ibid., p. 120
13. Ibid., p. 117
14. Ibid., p. 27
15. Ibid., pp. 48-9
16. Ibid., pp. 55-6
17. Ibid., pp. 77-8
18. Ibid., pp. 96-7
19. Weber (1975)
20. Hunter and Harman (1979); Laubach (1977)
21. Illich (1971)
22. Harman (197?), Ch. VII
23. Ibid., Ch. VII; Morales (1981)
24. Miller and Cardenal (1981); Arnove (1981)
25. Morales (1981)

NOTES:

26. Weber (1975)
27. Goodman (1972); Smith (1975); Bettelheim and Zelan (1982); Ashton-Warner (1963); Cooper and Petrosky (1976).
28. Smith (1975)
29. Bettelheim and Zelan (1982)
30. Fader (1976)
31. Weber (1975)
32. Hunter and Harman (1979), p. 69
33. Ashton-Warner (1963)
34. Gunter's Ashton-Warner Literacy Method
35. Harman (197?), Ch. II
36. Monteith (19?)
37. Weber (1975), pp.149-50
38. Miller and Cardenal (1981), pp. 6-8
39. Unesco (1976), pp. 103-4; Nyerere (1967)
40. Miller and Cardenal (1981), pp. 6-8
41. Berman (1978)
42. Hunter and Harman (1979), pp. 80-83
43. Frankenstein (1981)
44. Kozol (1980)
45. Method (19 ?); Dauzat and Dauzat (1977)
46. Harman (19 ?), Ch. II
47. Illich (1971)
48. Paulston (1979)
49. Kozol (1980); In an April 1981 conference at the University of Vermont, Kozol met with literacy activists from all over the U.S. to make his proposal for a national literacy campaign. Speaking about the campaign in autumn 1981 at the University of Massachusetts, Kozol warned practitioners to be careful how they approach potential supporters. He cited Saul Alinsky's admonition to community organizers: "If you're hoping to gain the support of a group of Orthodox Jews, don't approach them while eating a ham sandwich."

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