LOCAL PARTICIPATION AS A BASIS FOR SUSTAINABLE LITERACY AMONG THE CULTURAL COMMUNITIES

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1. LITERACY IN THE COMMUNITY

What is meant by "literacy" in any community is neither simple nor easily defined. Cultures differ from one another in their uses and purposes for literacy. Literacy is a complex concept that does not fit within a dictionary definition. In fact, the term "literacy" entered our dictionaries as recently as 1924 (Barton 1994)[1]. Its meaning is constantly being extended and reshaped to fit the needs and requirements of a rapidly changing society. Fordham, Holland and Millican (1995) describe literacy as a variable concept, not capable of precise definition. In fact today, people tend to talk about many literacies rather than one literacy (Bhola 1994). There is talk of cultural literacy, workplace literacy, environmental literacy, computer literacy, economic literacy, and many others. The multiple literacies view contributes to the notion that we can think of literacy in two different ways:

(a) in terms of its role in social development.

(b) in terms of certain measurable skills.

In practice, these two perspectives on the literacy process are not separable. In this paper, I will examine approaches to the structure of the literacy curriculum and the applicability of particular approaches in developing a literacy curriculum for adults in rural Philippine communities, particularly those where the majority population are from Indigenous Peoples.

In discussions of the meaning of literacy, particularly in relation to the developing world/two-thirds world, descriptions developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are commonly used.

1.1 Basic Literacy

UNESCO, in the 1950's, saw literacy as measurable and quotable in statistical terms. UNESCO (1988) suggests someone is basically literate who "can, with understanding, both read and write a short statement on his everyday life".

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[1] *Literate*, with the sense of "educated" appears in the Oxford English Dictionary of 1432 and *illiterate* appears in Samuel Johnson's dictionary of 1755.

However, this is widely seen to be a limited state. Venezky (1990) describes basic literacy as a minimal level, not one sufficiently high for a person to function successfully in a social setting.

1.2. Functional Literacy

Barton (1994) treats the notion of basic literacy as the process of initial learning of reading and writing required by adults who have never been to school. Functional literacy is the term used for the level of reading and writing that adults[2] are thought to need in their society. UNESCO (1988) has a further definition, a resolution of the General Conference 1978, which implies a "progression" from the basic or minimum literacy level described above. A functionally literate person is one

> who can engage in all the activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development.

This definition, although undoubtedly raising many questions, recognizes that cultures differ and may even change in the degree and type of literacy that is expected.

In relation to the above definition, functional literacy can be seen as an outcome rather than an approach. In practical terms, functional literacy has often meant the teaching of a specific set of skills which are assumed to have general application across the speakers of one language, or even the citizens of one nation. I wish to challenge this notion and suggest that, in order for literacy to fulfil a functional role within a community, the earliest planning stages must reflect the desires and needs of community members.

In one sense, all literacy is functional (Bhola 1994) as it comes to fulfil a "function" in the lives of the participants. However, the phrase "functional literacy" has acquired a special meaning, related particularly towards literacy programs for adults which relate the content of the program to the daily life of the participant.

In June 1998, the Bureau of Non-Formal Education of the Philippines Department of Education, Culture and Sports developed the following definition of functional literacy.

> Functional literacy is a range of skills and competencies – cognitive, affective and behavioural – which enables individuals to:
>
> * live and work as human persons
> * develop their potential
> * make critical and informed decisions
> * function effectively in society within the context of their environment and that of the wider community (local, regional, national, global)
>
> in order to improve the quality of their life and that of society.

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[2] Different cultures have different expectations of community members and their interaction. The legal age of majority within a nation is often of minor significance in assessing the point at which adult functioning is required. Instead, individual, family and cultural circumstances indicate the age at which a community member is expected to relate socially and economically as an adult.

(See Appendix One for the major indicators related to this definition.)

It will be in the context of this Philippine definition of functional literacy that I will examine the application of these principles to the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines.

1.3.   Literacy and Schooling

Internationally, most people acquire the skills of reading, writing and numeracy within some form of structured educational environment such as a school or within a literacy program. Street (1994) contends that formal education systems are the most powerful worlds of literacy in our societies. The power held by the formal systems tends to devalue the other forms of language use and written expression. In evaluating and developing appropriate approaches to literacy education for those adults who hitherto have not responded to the formal system, it may be that we need to redefine or renegotiate literacies, rather than adapt existing norms, and legitimize, or re-legitimate, forms of literacy that have been invalidated by formal schooling systems. In discussing the indigenous learning systems of a Northern Philippine mountain community, Alangui (1997) says,

> The things that the individual must learn in order to survive and function well as a member of the community are derived, not only from inside the school but to a significant degree, outside of it. The venue of learning is the whole community, the content of which is determined by actual life in the community. Thus, it is the whole reality of the Bagnen[3] world which provides the context within which effective learning takes place.

Within many of the cultural communities of the Philippines, the conventional education system has not met the needs of those who are now adults. An approach to adult literacy for indigenous peoples must challenge the conventional assumptions of traditional educational programs and adapt them to meet the rapidly changing needs of both Philippine society and the changing needs of their cultural community.

The Executive Summary of the Philippines Education for All 2000 report said,

> the (education) system's capability to keep pupils in school and to ensure that they will effectively absorb and retain what they've learned are areas crying for improvement. Simple literacy among citizens 15 to 24+ ... years old is on the high side. Functional literacy is on the low side. This is partially explained by the low number of pupils who have mastered Reading/Writing, Mathematics and Life Skills.

The summary continues to say that those who continue to be "at risk" in terms of access to and participation in the primary education level are those in the hard to reach areas and marginalized communities, such as the indigenous people groups.

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[3] Bagnen is a remote barangay/village of Bauko, a Kankana-ey community, in Mountain Province, Luzon, Northern Philippines.

1.4   A Framework for Study

Fordham, Holland and Millican (1995) describe the early functional literacy programs, particularly those promoted by UNESCO through the Experimental World Literacy Program (EWLP) as taking a simplistic approach. UNESCO, critiquing its own activities related to the EWLP, points to important elements that were lacking. For example, in the 1960's a functional literacy program might be added as a component of an economic development project and literacy is seen to be closely tied to employment. However, it is claimed that such early approaches failed to ask several crucial questions.

- What is the purpose of literacy?

- When should literacy be introduced?

- How should literacy be planned and taught?

- What language should be used?

This is the framework that I wish to use to study language development in indigenous communities.

2.   WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF LITERACY?

Barton (1994) emphasizes that the functions of literacy within a particular community are not always obvious. If purposes or functions are taken for granted and generalizations made across international or even national situations, then the focus of the program may not meet the needs of those for whom it is intended. Thus, it is important to respond to people's stated needs. However, it is vital to go beyond the known and current functions of literacy in the community and on to the possibilities that literacy can offer. The area of planning and identification of aims needs to be within an environment of informed choice. Literacy should be seen in terms of events and practices (Barton 1994) rather than simply a set of skills. A simple purpose statement could be that, beginning from initial, basic literacy, the learner will develop a desire to maintain reading and writing skills and that these will provide the basis for continuing education, benefiting the individual, the community in which he lives, and his nation.

2.1   The Social Meaning of Literacy

Barton (1994) reminds us that understanding literacy involves understanding how literacy use is embedded in the culture and social structure. It requires an examination and analysis of the language use of a community and how people use literacy in their daily lives. Bhola (1994) cites a hierarchy of human needs developed by Maslow, an American psychologist, as a framework for planning priorities for literacy within a community, suggesting that needs-motivations can be aligned with the hierarchy of the pyramid. Physiological, emotional, community, psychological, and spiritual needs are all aspects of the human condition. Community planning of literacy and development programs should reveal the most pressing felt needs and promote ways of fulfilling these. Bhola (1994) says, "Since these needs are already felt acutely, there is already motivation to fulfil these needs. And this is where the needs-motivations of learners connect with the idea of functional literacy. Functional literacy seeks to use the already felt needs ..., the existing store of motivations."

The University of the Philippines Education Research program of the Center for Integrative Studies (1994) defined three areas of community life in which the implications of functional literacy may be examined.

- Livelihood-economic realm

- Socio-cultural realm

- Political-civic realm

Fordham, Holland and Millican (1995) have produced a simple web suggesting different areas of life with which literacy teaching might be integrated. In any functional literacy program, themes to be explored and related skills and knowledge may come from any of these realms.

2.2   Literacy and Social Control

Literacy also relates to the means of delivery of education and the power relationships and structures within any nation or community. There are implications in the development of curriculum materials and the choices that are made in the process of their design and use. Mukhopadhyay (1998) describes literacy as "the process of empowering the individual adult to exercise control over one's own life and environment." She cites increased awareness and conscientization as the only means of ensuring human rights.

It seems that people need to be able to define what will empower and equip them within their own environment and also within a national and global context. This implies the development of a variety of skills:

1. identifying sources of relevant knowledge

2. accessing knowledge

3. processing and evaluating (quality and relevance) knowledge

4. applying knowledge

5. discriminating knowledge and its application

Literacy will involve the adult as a decision maker not only in the planning process, but also in their relationship to knowledge. Learning experiences should promote, from the beginning, the concept of lifelong learning and the potential for adaptation and development of new skills in the changing world. Literacy presented merely as knowledge and skills within a specific framework does not enable or build the capacity of the participant to further their own learning. Critical thinking skills and problem solving approaches are essential aspects of both the planning and management processes as well as curriculum delivery strategies. "Gatekeeping" is a term applied to approaches which bind processes of learning and limit access. True learning opportunities will necessarily have a contrasting approach. "It is always of the greatest moral, educational and political importance to keep open the question: what are the consequences, and for whom, of organising learning and knowledge in *this* way as opposed to *other* ways?" (Gee & Lankshear 1997)

Partnership and collaboration are strategies toward democratization of the planning process but do not automatically ensure engagement with all learning approaches necessary to empower communities in relationship to the wider society. During the planning process, it may be possible to develop a strategy for community members to reflect on

literacy events and activities that remain complex or closed to them and, thus, adapt curriculum design for the learning process to include these.

3.   WHEN SHOULD LITERACY BE INTRODUCED?

The introduction and development of literacy within a community is a sensitive issue, particularly when many indigenous people groups maintain a strong oral tradition. Nwangwu (1999), a Nigerian adult education lecturer and non-formal education coordinator, tackles the issues of motivation and information. She reflects on the seeming presumption that exists when a literacy worker attempts to communicate the necessity of literacy to an adult who has, to that point, perhaps not even considered literacy as relevant for their lifestyle. She discusses concepts related to the "marketing" of literacy, ensuring that it is presented in a manner appropriate to the community. A holistic approach to community needs will include reading and writing skills, but they need not be the initial focus.

> .... literacy workers just have to contain their zeal as much as possible and take the necessary steps towards ensuring that they fertilise and nurture the ground on which literacy can be planted thoroughly before attempting to sow the actual seeds. The painstaking and time-consuming nature of this process is perhaps the greatest training a literacy/development worker can endure.

Literacy classes begun before the community is ready to respond may be self-defeating. Literacy demand, as much as literacy delivery, must be people driven. If the intention of a literacy program is the integration of literacy and development, the process should be integrated with, rather than begin with, literacy skills and then expect the acquisition of those skills to lead to change within the community. Fordham, Holland and Millican (1995) emphasize that literacy programs should not be implemented until learners and planners have discussed needs and any proposed project in detail and reached agreement about community needs and the ways in which these needs might be addressed. (Participatory Rural Appraisal, an approach to planning in partnership with community members, is discussed in 4.2.1.)

Barton (1994) emphasizes that it is important to take account of people's own perceptions at every stage of a literacy program – from the initial discussions of strategy to the planning of lessons through to the evaluation and assessment stages. A literacy program beginning when the community is ready to respond and participate in both the planning and execution has a greater chance of being effective. Fordham, Holland and Millican (1995) emphasize that it is the process of agreement and planning that is important. The trainer/facilitator may come with ideas and suggestions, possibly to extend the learner's knowledge and ideas of possibilities, and may have financial or organizational constraints on what can be implemented within a community. However, the overriding principle must be that the facilitator must not make "misguided assumptions" about aims appropriate to an indigenous people group. He should offer informed choice.

Barton (1994) says, "People decide to become literate, actively learn and decide to make changes in their lives." It may be that change introduced in some other aspect of community life has emphasized the need for greater literacy skills among community members. Alternatively, a community need may motivate society members to participate in the planning and execution of literacy activities among the people group. In the Philippines, both the national and regional electoral process and legal requirements that have involved

recording land rights and maintaining contracts on ancestral land have been a spur toward adults among the indigenous peoples becoming involved in literacy programs.

4. HOW SHOULD LITERACY BE PLANNED AND TAUGHT?

When functional literacy, truly related to the needs of the community, is a goal, then it is necessary that curriculum planning and program management be carefully focussed on the particular individuals or communities who desire to be literate and apply their skills and knowledge in their daily lives. Literacy can often successfully be integrated into developmental approaches which address felt needs, as was seen in the web described by Fordham, Holland and Millican (1995).

4.1. Approaches to Teaching and Curriculum Planning

Baker (1996) suggests five different educational approaches to literacy.

1. **Skills** – assumption of literacy as a technical skill, "neutral in its aims and universal across languages."

2. **Whole Language** – emphasizes purposeful, natural reading and writing for meaningful communication and individual pleasure.

3. **Construction of Meaning** – reading and writing is a process of construction and reconstruction of meaning, related closely to the personal experiences, history and social context of the learner.

4. **Socio-cultural Literacy** – links with the socialization of the learner into the meanings, values, and beliefs of the language culture.

5. **Critical Literacy** – literacy as a liberator and empowerer in order to raise the consciousness of the individual learner.

These approaches may overlap and potentially can be combined. For example, there are close links between a whole language approach and one which deals with the construction and reconstruction of meaning. An approach to literacy organized within the socio-cultural paradigm may link closely with a critical perspective. Each approach, or combination of approaches, impacts students in different ways. These approaches originate in contrasting expectations of the uses of literacy, reflecting varying political, philosophical, and psychological views of human beings.

In the report of the UNESCO International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (1994), education is seen as an element of personal and social development. Delors writes about four "pillars" upon which lifelong learning can be built. These are:

learning to know ... this also means learning to learn, so as to benefit from the opportunities education provides through life. ...

learning to do ... in order to acquire not only an occupational skill but also, more broadly, the competence to deal with many situations and work in teams.

learning to be, so as better to develop one's personality and be able to act with ever greater autonomy, judgement, and personal responsibility. In that connection, education must not

disregard any aspect of a person's potential: memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical capabilities, and communication skills.

> *learning to live together*, by developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence ... in a spirit of respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding, and peace.

Such a holistic approach to education encourages the learner to view education as a process in which he is an active participant rather than a passive subject. Those motivated in this way will integrate learning into their lives and, thus, it will become a sustained element of community life. This is the structure from which the Philippine Bureau of Non-Formal Education have developed their definition and indicators of functional literacy. De Guzman (1998) sees the "four pillars" as described above relating to various aspects of the curriculum design process for functional literacy among groups in the Philippines and it seems particularly appropriate for the indigenous peoples. She says,

> The *learning to know* pillar is covered by the competencies for the knowledge or the cognitive domain. The *learning to do* pillar is provided under the "skills" aspect of the curriculum. The *learning to be* and the *learning to live together*, as the third and fourth pillars correspond to the attitudes and values in the affective domain of learning. In practice, the values domain is integrated throughout the learning processes as the knowledge is translated into relevant practices.

Thus, a functional literacy program here in the Philippines, particularly those for the indigenous peoples, should be responsive to the learner's needs and goals, integrate the four aspects of curriculum planning described above, and help empower the learners to address issues of daily life.

4.2.   Who Should Be The Planners?

For the Palawano, a language group of the southwest Philippines, for example, the need to be active participants in the planning of approaches to literacy may be crucial. Brown (1996), a consultant on rural development issues for CARE/USA says

> Pala'wan[4] will never be the primary beneficiaries of development introduced by non-Pala'wan. True, they will benefit in small ways. They will receive some medical assistance and their children will learn Tagalog and some other skills in school. Their basic socioeconomic well-being, however, will not be substantially improved. Because non-Pala'wan .... will design the plans, hire the staff and control the resources and opportunities of projects. Pala'wan will not be considered as central to regional and village development. This circumstance will persist even in development programs in communities where Pala'wan are the majority. ... As each year passes, Pala'wan impoverishment, powerlessness and deculturation vis-à-vis non-Palawan will be accentuated.

The Education for All 2000 report emphasizes the need for community learning centers. However, these should be truly part of the community and not simply exist within the community.

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[4] Pala'wan and Palawano are alternate names.

4.2.1.   Rural Appraisal

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is an approach to community organization for the planning of development activities. Historically, PRA has grown from the awareness that there is a change necessary in the approach of development workers and community workers. It is a practical methodology, building on the theoretical framework of Paulo Freire aiming to promote active dialogue and empowerment of participants (Archer and Cottingham 1996). The issue of control is critical. Local involvement in project management allows community self-determination and the development of self-help capability. The intention of Participatory Rural Appraisal is to empower the community and limit outsider intervention, giving a greater opportunity for community ownership to lead to a sustained community development program.

Through a variety of approaches PRA attempts an inclusive, democratic process which aims to give a voice to those who are illiterate. Thus, decisions made reflect the true needs of a community and may encourage an honest and open exchange of ideas within a non-threatening environment.

Mallieu (1999) believes that utilizing relevant PRA techniques can be a strategy to assemble and appraise ideas and information, and then analyze problems to be tackled and possible solutions in the design and planning of the approach to a literacy program (or other community development initiative) in the community. Relating his experience in India, he says that it is

> ... too easy to impose external presuppositions upon worthy beneficiaries. Take the example of health care – surely a primary necessity for most developing communities. [The author] conducted rapid appraisals in several rural communities who were devoid of regular primary health care. None of the beneficiaries placed such a need at the top of their priorities, and some communities never even listed it at all! To the outsider (blessed with available health care) the perceived need was obvious. The beneficiaries just did not see needs and priorities in the same way. Who then should determine the program of action? This is not to dismiss the importance of good health, but simply to illustrate the primary necessity to avoid imposed premises and to give respect to the views of recipients.

I would view the planning and development of literacy programs for Philippine rural communities in the same way. For literacy to be truly functional within a community, local people need to take ownership of the program and the curriculum content, ensuring its relevance to the needs of the community for whom the program is intended and, indeed, that people want the opportunity to improve or develop their literacy skills. Gender issues need to be carefully considered in the use of this planning process. Fordham, Holland and Millican (1995) suggest that the cultural appropriateness of combined male/female groupings in the planning process and other questions need to be considered. The relative position of older and younger people in the learning process must also be considered, particularly in societies which are hierarchical in nature or where special privilege is due to older people.

Robinson (1999) suggests that participatory planning of this type "challenges the notion that someone somewhere (an expert, an institution) has answers to development questions." He likens the process of language and adult literacy program design to threads of a tapestry, contributing to a complex design which local people understand better than outsiders.

4.3. Implications for Curriculum Design and Program Management

4.3.1. Materials Development

The Philippine Constitution (Republic Act 7610) contains provision for the development of educational materials specifically designed for the children from the indigenous cultural communities, culture-specific and relevant to their needs and situations. Where practical, the language of the cultural community should be used as the medium of instruction. This provision needs to be extended to the development of adult literacy materials and, in fact, the Bureau of Non-Formal Education is addressing this issue. Rosario de Guzman says,

> Breaking away from the prescriptive centrally prepared textbook type materials used before and guided by validated non-formal education principles, materials have been developed based on the local community's identified needs to address priorities reflecting their culture and in a context that is acceptable to them. The use of local talents and other resources to develop and produce the materials are maximized to ensure the local community ownership, aside from the empowerment the process provides.

Mukhodpadhyay (1998) reminds us that print is not the only medium nor the most effective. Oral expression and written communication are powerful tools for functioning within a group. Effective participation, communication, and influencing is affected by abilities to document, express, and interpret. Materials that are produced must reflect this requirement and allow the participant to adopt a critical stance to knowledge and the opportunity to interact with the materials and other community members. This may imply the use of technologies within some societies, such as audio or video tape, computer technology or Internet and other computer applications. It is vital that appropriate sources of delivery of basic education are developed in order to build capacity for an increasingly technological society.

4.3.2 Teaching Style

Cultural learning styles need to be observed when planning the method of curriculum delivery and program management. Again, using the Palawano as an example, Brown (1996) says, "Each hamlet had a territory where its residents procured wild foods, medicines, building materials and other goods. Here, too they farmed and protected spirit habitats and children played and learned from their parents and other elders how to be successful Pala'wan."

Alangui (1997) observed the learning systems of a Northern Philippine mountain community. He observed the following:

1. learning is unstructured and achieved in an informal manner

2. learning strategies include

    observation
    demonstration
    question and answer
    hands-on experience
    trial and error
    deliberation

3. methods are democratic and participatory

4. views are subject to scrutiny and questioning

5. everyone is encouraged to present ideas, suggestions and views particularly if these can be supported by actual experience

It would seem important that the teaching style adopted for literacy classes should mirror, as far as possible, those most natural for the learner so classes can become accessible and maximum benefit may be obtained. Program planners should research the cultural learning style and group dynamics of the indigenous people which literacy classes are to reach in order that the organization structure of classes is suitable for the community. It may be more appropriate for teaching to be in small groups or organized on a one-to-one basis rather than have large classes. I have found this to be the case among Palawano groups. Some of the most effective teaching and learning has been when one Palawano teaches a member of his family. This then leads to cooperative literacy practices in the home, reading together and recognizing the process of ongoing, continuing learning.

Men and women might learn more effectively in separate classes and this will need to be incorporated in the planning of literacy classes. The age and sex of the literacy facilitator may need to be appropriate to the participants in order that local value systems related to learning are not contravened. One person need not be responsible for teaching everything. Facilitators and community members will be able to contribute in a complementary manner using the expertise each brings to the learning process. Enabling networks within the community of which literacy is a strand will lead to development meeting community goals.

In the Philippine context, research has shown that there is a correlation between the acquisition and retention of literacy skills, the sustainability of adult literacy programs, and the integration of literate and traditional knowledge within the community (Bernardo 1995). Each of these – and others – must be taken into account in order for a program to be sustained. Program planning at a community level is also a significant factor. According to Delors (1994), "Local community participation in assessing needs by means of a dialogue with the public authorities and groups concerned in society is a first and essential stage in broadening access to education and improving its quality."

4.3.3 Program Organization and Management

Robinson (1997a) says that "the capacity of individuals and communities needs to grow as the vision (for literacy) takes root." This is particularly important if program development and management is to be handled within the community rather than by outside agencies. Brown (1996) saw community participation as crucial in the planning, execution and management of approaches to literacy in the community. This means three kinds of activity:

- Training in skills: including capacity building and vision sharing skills

- Promoting access to resources: not all resources need to be available locally, but they need to be managed locally.

- Institutional development: there must be some organized collective responsibility to ensure that the vision is carried forward and extended within the community.

An approach where the skills for organization and development of the literacy program are retained only by the initiator of the program will never be sustainable, particularly if the program initiator is an outside agency. From the beginning, local people should be seen – and see themselves – as participants and co-workers in the achievement of the vision. From the outset, the philosophy of the program planner must be as an equipper of others to become independent workers, a process often termed capacity building.

> The ultimate aim ... is that the people of the language group will be fully equipped to assume responsibility for handling the development program themselves, in their own way, at their own speed. This implies training and development of resources in whatever aspects are needed to make it possible for the local community to assume ownership and responsibility. (Porter 1992)

Initiators must see themselves as facilitators for the vision of community ownership and management to be realized. Control is not in the hands of the one entering the community but belongs to the members of the indigenous cultural community itself. The initial relationship building and vision sharing is critical, because that brings a degree of cultural understanding and willingness to listen rather than bringing quick answers and solutions which may not be addressing felt needs. In order to develop a community-based program with local management, these steps are important.

As well as teacher trainers and others directly involved in the teaching process there are other management skills that would need to be developed for the program management to be community based. Perhaps local people will need training in bookkeeping to manage the financial side of the program. Perhaps public relations skills need to be encouraged in order to facilitate networking with appropriate organizations. We have found this to be important in different areas of the Philippines, to build confidence for various indigenous community members in interaction with government and national bodies. Abilities in these aspects of program implementation will sustain development. Without management training, we leave community members with the vision, the skills to teach but no continuing structure within which to maintain what has been begun.

Plans need to be instituted for disengagement. When will the originators completely hand over management of the program to local people? How should this process take place? Dialogue is important in order that those involved do not feel abandoned or unnecessarily burdened with responsibility that they do not yet feel prepared to assume. Clinton Robinson (1997b) speaks of "progressive disengagement" as the process of moving from an active role to one of facilitation, training, and consulting. Awareness of the steps involved in this process need to be part of literacy program planning.

5. WHAT LANGUAGE SHOULD BE USED?

Literacy is based upon a systematic symbolic representation of communication in order that information can be exchanged. Writing and reading are some of the basic forms of literacy, but there are also other forms of print and media literacy which require interpretation. Literacy practices are related to both cognitive and cultural functions of the individual. As a symbolic system, literacy contributes to the ability of the individual to construct the world and define reality, both for themselves and also for interaction with others. However, language is also a creative tool, helping us create new information and knowledge (Barton 1994) and think both laterally and divergently. Robinson (1999) reminds us that questions of language choice are critical in making decisions related to education and community development. Participatory planning approaches, as examined above, demand the use of the appropriate language for community discussion.

5.1 The Philippines' Ethnolinguistic Diversity

Barbara Grimes (1996) lists 168 living languages within the Republic of the Philippines. McFarland (1981) suggests that there are 120 languages spoken in the country. Thus, within the Philippines, issues related to the language of elementary, secondary, and tertiary education are frequently discussed. Within the realm of adult functional literacy, language issues are also important. For the indigenous peoples of the Philippines, one of the major identifying factors is the language used by the community.

5.2 The Language of Literacy

Language and culture are closely intertwined. Barton's (1994) metaphor of an ecological approach to literacy highlights the interrelationship of a learner and his environment. Shared language is fundamental to the functioning of a community. An ecological approach suggests the virtues and strengths of diversity in language.

Venezky (1990) comments on the issue of literacy for the non-native speaker and this is further developed by Macías (1990). They suggest three patterns of literacy for language groups, particularly those they term language minorities:

a. native language literacy
b. second language literacy, implying no literacy in the mother tongue
c. biliteracy

The 1997 Declaration on Adult Learning, as stated by participants in the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education in Hamburg, Germany, affirmed the right of adults to learn in their first language and recommended that first language adult literacy

approaches should be widely implemented. However, Fordham, Holland and Millican (1995) emphasize that language choice will ultimately depend upon people's reasons for wanting to become literate and the literacy goals that they will set themselves. The language chosen for literacy activities prescribes those who have the ability to participate in the activity. Thus, in many cultural communities, functional literacy may demand that a variety of languages are used in the learning process in order that participants have the literacy skills to share in societal activities as full partners.

For example, among many of the Philippine indigenous cultural communities, there is little written tradition in the first (spoken) language. There is a need to develop literature in the local language. However, to have access to newspapers, advertisements, government documentation and to participate in other literacy events, there may be strong reasons to emphasize literacy in the national language or the regional language of wider communication.

In almost all Philippine cultural communities, literacy activities, in order to be functional, will have to give participants the ability to transition to a language of wider communication. However, in terms of developing personal identity and sense of community and exploring communication with those who share a common language, it would be appropriate for literacy activities to use the first language of the participants.

The choice of language for literacy is a crucial one. Decisions need to be taken at a local level, taking into account both the long-term and immediate needs of the learners and the relative status of the languages in question.

6. CONCLUSION

Functional literacy within any community is a continuing process. Literacy needs change and develop through time and as change impinges upon community life. Mukhopadhyay (1998) says that "literacy as the process of empowering individuals to be able to function in one's environment changes meaning with increasing technological and societal changes."

People take upon themselves different responsibilities at different stages in their lives and, in the past, the preparations for such roles may have been given by older community members. However, in a rapidly changing world, where technology and the demands of bureaucracy impinge increasingly upon even the most rural people groups, young adults may need to learn skills and means of access to technology that their elders may not have learned. Change itself is not new to the older people in a community but in some societies, the speed of change is rapid and the processes for responding to change are themselves changing. The understanding and support of all community members is vital to ensure that a literacy approach is functional across the varied needs of the indigenous people group.

Gonzalez (2000), as Secretary of Education in the Philippines, speaks of "the creation of a favorable climate of innovation so that (those living in remote communities) may receive its just desserts. This means a new paradigm for it, opening a new field of endeavor to an extent that hitherto has not been taken."

Community organization and management of literacy approaches would base programs in the society for which they are intended, reflect the needs, aspiration and values

of community members and prove sustainable through responsibility, grounded in the community structure. This would seem to provide the firmest foundation for effective functional literacy.

APPENDIX ONE

Major Indicators of Functional Literacy (03 June 1998)
Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE), Department of Education, Culture and Sports. Manila, Philippines

Communication skills	Problem solving and critical thinking	Sustainable Use of Resources/Productivity	Development of self and a sense of community	Expanding one's world vision

• ability to clearly express one's ideas and feelings orally and nonverbally
• ability to listen
• ability to read, comprehend and respond to ideas presented
• ability to write and clearly express one's ideas and feelings
• ability to access, process and utilize available basic and multi-media information
	• numeracy skills
	• to be open to change
	• to be aware of options
	• ability to make critical and informed decisions
	• innovativeness and creativity
	• scientific thinking
	• future orientation
		• ability to earn a living
		• sustainable use of resources (including time) and appropriate technology
		• entrepreneurship
		• productivity
			• self-development
			  – self-awareness
			  – self-discipline
			  – sense of responsibility
			  – self-worth
			  – self-realization
			  – may paninindigan
			  – pagbabagong-loob
			• pakikipagkapwa
			  – pakikilahok
			  – pakikiisa/kapatiran
			• a sense of personal and national identity
			  – makatao
			  – makabayan
			  – makakalikasan
			  – makaDiyos
			• knowledge of one's history, pride in one's culture and respect for those of others
			• recognition and practice of civil and political rights
				• knowledge, acceptance, respect and appreciation of diversity
				• peace
				• nonviolent resolution of conflicts
				• global awareness, interdependence and solidarity

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