

## CHAPTER 4

# The Education of Adults

1. The term "adult education" as used here, includes all forms of education outside the school system for persons who have left school, or have not been to school, who are seeking to improve their fund of knowledge and skills in order to better their lives. It ranges from institutional courses designed to impart specific information or to promote learning of conventional subjects, through to educational activities intended to bring about an improvement in general education, impart cultural values or specific technical skills, but not directed to meet formal course requirements. It includes the educational aspects of all activities which promote social and economic development - indeed everything resulting in value change for the individual and for the community.

2. Whilst adult education programmes must relate closely to the local social and cultural environment, and indeed reinforce what is valuable in the local cultural inheritance, the purpose of adult education should not be to perpetuate cultural differences amongst groups and communities. Indeed it should consciously seek to forge growing bonds of unity and understanding among them. Adult education programmes in rural areas should be so framed and administered that this fundamental purpose of unification and integration is kept well in focus.

3. The overriding need in rural communities is for social and economic development. Adult education can help to satisfy this need and activities should seek to facilitate this. Greater emphasis will consequently have to be placed than has often been the case upon the investment function of education without totally neglecting its consumption function. The rural economy and rural populations have specific needs. A shift of resources and emphasis in adult educational programmes may be required in order to satisfy these needs to the degree to which a solution through education is practicable.

## THE CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL NEEDS OF ADULTS IN RURAL AREAS

4. The cultural aspect of adult education in rural areas should not be merely to preserve and hand on the traditional culture of the rural areas. It should also seek to impart direction to traditional culture in order to obviate any tendency towards stagnation and to make the traditional culture responsive to change, so that the traditional culture and the pressures of modern cultural and technological development become as far as possible reconciled and work together constructively. The best of traditional culture can be usefully preserved and can enrich modern society. In particular, it can serve to cushion the social impact of modernisation which may, as has been repeatedly shown in many continents, have adverse social side-effects. At the same time, the modernisation process must be recognised as irrevocable, even the remotest rural community now coming within the orbit of modern mass media and other influences for change.

5. The overriding responsibility for providing for the educational needs of adults in rural communities clearly lies with governments. Non-governmental agencies can play a useful complementary part in this process. Universities, for example, through their extra-mural departments and extension arms have a long tradition of active participation in adult education particularly in its cultural and intellectual aspects. They can continue to make a valid contribution to the educational needs of adults in rural communities, within an overall strategy which has the approval and support of governments. The fundamental objective of such strategy should be to promote in rural people a confidence and pride in their cultural values and an awareness and plans of their nation. In this connection, the mass media of communication can assist in increasing popular appreciation and understanding of national culture and identity and of the objectives of national planning, an aspect which has often been neglected in the past.

6. A special facet of adult educational activities which seeks to promote and develop traditional cultures relates to the development of craft industries. With the rapid growth of tourism in many countries, the commercial outlets for local craft industries are inevitably developing rapidly and valuable opportunities for employment are being created. Care must be taken lest the impact of tourism should needlessly debase local craft traditions. Some of the earnings from tourism might be devoted to the provision

of facilities whereby the indigenous skills which support local crafts could be passed on and developed. Local craftsmen could be advised and assisted so that their products are as marketable as possible in terms of design and quality of finished workmanship. At the same time, any attempt to import foreign made imitations in order to satisfy tourist demand should be strongly resisted.

7. The purely intellectual needs of rural communities merit special attention. These needs include the expansion of the personal interests and intellectual horizons of rural people as well as the attainment of recognised academic standards for admission to regular courses for professional and technical training. Rural areas have generally been less well served by formal education in all its forms. Thus it can be expected that there will be in the rural areas numbers of people who dropped out of school at an early stage who could benefit by further academic courses organised through adult education programmes. Similarly, rural areas, in contrast with urban areas, are less well served by the various mass media of communications and are thus deprived to some degree of the continuing educational stimulus which these can bring.

8. An integrated adult education plan aimed at satisfying these needs would require a variety of approaches - face to face teaching through study groups, correspondence activities, specially prepared radio and (in some cases) television programmes. The success of such a strategy is greatly dependent upon access to books and other learning and teaching materials. In many rural areas facilities for obtaining these through conventional channels are almost non-existent. Particular importance must, therefore, be attached to the development of rural library services including mobile libraries, postal library services and travelling book boxes. The production of educational media, and the diffusion of such media among teachers and groups of adult learners, is also of great importance. This can be in part tackled by the development of a media centre at national level providing the breadth of professional expertise required to produce and operate a full range of media systems. It must be recognised that exclusive concentration of such effort in what is likely to be an urban setting may mean that, first, what is produced may not be applicable to detached local situations in the rural areas and secondly, the problems of ensuring an adequate supply of materials for potential users are increased because of difficulties of distance, transport and distribution. There would seem therefore to be a case for the development of additional media centres at regional or local levels with a

more limited capability relating specifically to local needs and possibly even involving operational personnel in the production of simpler learning and teaching materials.

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION

9. Community education in rural areas should seek to impart the motivation and skills necessary to raise general living standards. It usually involves programmes related to better housing, improved health and hygiene, improved care of children from birth and through their early years, the understanding of the nutritional values of both traditional and newly introduced foods, the development of kitchen gardens and small animal keeping, simple accounting and book-keeping, business and management practices to ensure a working partnership in local development programmes through clubs, societies, local committees and co-operatives.

10. Adult educational activities of this nature can make a substantial contribution towards building-up attitudes favourable to rural development and establishing the necessary support knowledge which can help to promote modernisation. Education alone is, however, limited in what it can achieve in practical terms. If such adult education programmes are to produce real returns, then they must be launched in conjunction with and in support of comprehensive programmes for the development of rural communities including in particular the development of basic rural infrastructure - such as feeder roads, markets, water supplies - and other services, for example, agricultural extension and advisory services to rural industries and businesses. The function of adult education for community improvement thus becomes to enable the community to understand and co-operate with the whole range of development activities which are focussed upon it and to assist these activities in attaining their objectives.

11. There are some areas of activity in relation to community education which are of special importance and which demand particular attention. These are literacy work, technical and vocational training and education in family planning.

### (a) Literacy

12. Universal literacy is the ultimate aim of national educational policies. The necessity for literacy lies in the greater understanding which a literate community has of political and constitutional processes and in the general improvement consequent

upon literacy in the quality of a nation's human resources and ultimately therefore in its economic development. Universal literacy may ultimately be attained through the gradual spread of elementary formal schooling. Short-term expedients are possible outside the school system in order to make literate all age groups in communities without fully developed elementary education systems. The mass literacy campaign can yield acceptable results, if pursued with thoroughness and enthusiasm over a long enough period, and if backed up with comprehensive support measures, particularly the supply on a very large scale of adequate reading materials for new literates. It should, however, be recognised that an all-out drive for literacy in this way can be very costly in terms of the material and human resources required to push it through to a useful conclusion and often requires the highest political priority and support. Otherwise campaigns may lose their impetus, dwindle in their appeal to potential participants and very often fail to maintain the gains achieved in the early stages of their operation.

13. More recently the selective and intensive work-oriented approach to literacy has emerged, emphasising the particular relationship between literacy and productivity in specific tasks. Its focus is very specifically on facilitating and improving the performance of precise categories of employment. Its impact on whole communities can therefore be limited. Recognising this, and in order to meet the immediate priority of raising overall levels of living in rural areas, there is need for a broader approach to literacy work whereby literacy programmes are built into comprehensive programmes for the education and training of rural communities. Such a strategy would recognise that the new, more selective approach taken by the current Experimental World Literacy Programme of Unesco is more useful in satisfying specific short-term needs of special sectors of rural communities and that, in particular, the practical and vocational bias within the Experimental World Programme is a feature to be encouraged and one which might enable a realistic appraisal to be made of the contribution of literacy to the overall process of development. It is important, however, that a functional literacy component within any integrated rural development programme should also be viewed in relation to the needs of rural communities for social, cultural and economic education as well as for the improvement of vocational skills. A further special contribution which literacy programmes can make in furthering the development of rural communities lies in the area of motivation. It is particularly important that rural people should recognise and co-operate with the process

of change that is going on around them. Literacy might assist in stimulating this motivation.

14. The effectiveness of such literacy work within integrated rural development programmes will not be seen merely in the numbers who are enabled to read and write but in the recognisable and permanent improvements in the patterns of life and standards of living of the rural communities at whom such programmes are directed.

(b) Technical and vocational training

15. To promote and further the various processes of development in rural areas, there must be a general improvement in the level of technical skills of rural people. This is especially applicable to the vast majority of the rural population who are still, and who for many years will be, engaged in agriculture. It also applies to various other craft and service occupations already existing to some degree in some rural communities which must expand and diversify as development proceeds. Generally, adult education and training programmes which seek to raise the level of skill of rural communities should as a first step focus upon whatever existing skills there are and improve and upgrade these so that rural people can themselves make a continuing and practical contribution towards the development of their communities. At the same time attitudes of receptivity and sympathy towards change are created which are essential for the success of development programmes.

16. The attitudes and understandings of instructors and leaders are also very important to the success of such programmes. Efforts to communicate with and transfer skills to rural communities require in the trainer/communicator a special understanding of the sensitivity and psychology of rural society, especially rural society at an early stage of social and economic development. Programmes for training instructors or project leaders should therefore be concerned with more than technical matters. In particular, training programmes should seek to promote in instructors the necessary qualities of sympathy and understanding of the rural communities at whom programmes are directed. A vocational or technical training programme should include non-technical elements to ensure that the community understands and supports the programme.

### (c) Education in family planning

17. The importance of controlling the rate of population growth in countries seeking to accelerate the rate of economic and social development was emphasised. A slower rate of population growth would diminish a tendency already apparent in many countries for the benefits of development programmes to be neutralised by population increases. In special terms, the hazards to the mental and physical well-being of women resulting from over-frequent child-birth are becoming increasingly recognised. Modern approaches to family planning should therefore be promoted as widely as possible, particularly among rural communities where the mass of the population still in most cases lives and where popular understanding of the arguments for and the techniques of family planning can be expected to be least.

18. The process of spreading information and understanding among rural communities of the purposes and practices of family planning are often regarded as purely technical matters and therefore the special province of health services. To enable what is fundamentally an exercise in communication and motivation to take place effectively, it should be recognised that the adult educator must also play a part alongside health service personnel.

19. The educator can be expected to take particular account of the value systems and deep-rooted religious beliefs of the people at whom a campaign may be directed as well as various other social obstacles which may impair the effectiveness of programmes, for example political factors. The political factor illustrates the need for a vigorous expression of sympathy and support from governments for family planning so that programmes can operate in a favourable atmosphere at least at the national level.

### EDUCATIONAL MEDIA

20. The special value of various forms of learning and teaching media in adult education work in rural areas was recognised. There are two main categories, each with its own particular value. First, simple media are especially useful in face-to-face teaching situations or as supporting materials to direct communication with adult learners. In this category fall wall charts, flip-charts, flannelgraphs, posters, illustrated leaflets and simple reading materials (as follow-up to literacy programmes). The special merit of such media is that they are comparatively cheap to

produce, can draw heavily on local materials and the local situation, and may be produced by operational staff, given the necessary training and available production facilities. Recognising this, all personnel who are in educational communication with adult communities - agricultural extension workers, community development and social workers, as well as conventional adult education personnel - should receive in their training courses basic instruction in the contribution that educational media can make to their work and in the techniques for the preparation of the simpler forms of these. To enable this element of initial training to be realised in operational situations, the necessary basic facilities for the production of media would have to be provided at local levels. One possibility might be profitably explored. Selected local schools, in recognition of the need for working links between school and community might develop such a capacity and make the facilities available to everyone concerned in education activities in the widest sense.

21. The second category of educational media - the mass media - pose a different set of problems and demand different approaches both in operation and in training. One of the main features of rural life in most countries in recent years has been the rapid spread of low-cost transistor radios. Those planning adult education programmes should recognise this situation and shape their plans so as to derive the maximum benefit from this situation. More sophisticated mass communication media have already become an important factor in certain countries. Television might, it was felt, make a very valuable impact on rural communities if problems of costs, transmission and maintenance can be overcome. The operation of the modern media of mass communication is a very professional business, requiring special skills and expertise. A less than professional approach to the preparation and operation of these media can easily diminish their effectiveness. Also the costs of, for example, television are likely to be so high that care must be taken from the beginning to assess whether the programmes are effectively attaining the ends sought.

## CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

22. Programmes of adult education directed towards rural communities including the techniques and methods used must be kept under constant review so that modifications can be made in their mode of operation with the least possible delay in order to make them more effective in the attainment of their goals. Provision for the systematic scrutiny of the operation and impact of on-going programmes should thus be built in to

the operational structure of any adult education programme.

23. Evaluation is an equally necessary, although possibly more complicated, activity which seeks to discover precisely whether an adult education programme has attained its long-term goals and what the returns, both in social and economic terms, are from such a programme. The fundamental contribution which evaluation can make to the planning of adult education can be seen, for example, in relation to the argument for the inclusion of an adult education component in a comprehensive rural development programme. Scientific evaluation ought to be able to express in concrete terms to policy-makers and planners the dividend from such a strategy. Similarly, evaluation is essential to indicate to policy-makers the comparative benefits of a selective work-oriented functional literacy programme and, say, the traditional campaign approach.

24. Both continuous assessment and terminal evaluation require the special expertise of professionally trained personnel skilled in social research methodology. In addition, there is special value in involving in such activities personnel who have direct operational experience with programmes and who have detailed knowledge of the social setting in which the programme may be functioning.

#### THE ROLE OF WOMEN

25. There is an increasing and welcome trend for the full participation of rural women in programmes of adult education and training for rural development. This is expressing itself in many instances in terms of educational programmes in various areas of special interest to women, to equip them to play their special part as well as to share with men in the progress of their communities. It is important, however, to ensure the continued development of this trend by promoting the participation of women on equal terms with men in the light of their common abilities and aptitudes in all aspects of adult education work in rural areas, particularly in teaching and instruction, in the training of teachers and instructors, and extension work of various forms, in planning and administration, and in action research and evaluation. The objective of such a policy is the mobilisation of the joint capacities of men and women in the service of their communities so as to make the fullest use of the special qualities of every individual.

26. Adult education has for too long been the poor relation of the education business. It is, however, increasingly becoming recognised that in relation to the special situation of communities undergoing rapid change - and the rural areas of developing countries fall very clearly into this category - adult education programmes have a crucial role to play in creating basic understanding of and support for the process of change. A further element necessary to the success of development programmes is the identification and training of local leaders. Again adult education has a central part to play in this process. The quality of leadership has been repeatedly recognised as a major factor accounting for the success or failure of rural development programmes.

27. It must therefore be generally recognised that adult education in the context of social change and development is a support agent for economic, social and political planning, serving all specialised agencies or departments of government. The need in many countries is for the development of an instrument, whether an inter-ministerial co-ordinating committee or, possibly, statutory body, which would include representation from all relevant government departments and other agencies, which would assess how an educational or a communication component can effectively be built into all programmes concerned with the social and economic improvement and development of adult communities.