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ABSTRACT

The paper, prepared as a background paper for a larger project on adult English as a Second Language (ESL), discusses a variety of issues and challenges in improving adult ESL services in the United States. An introductory section offers an overview of demographic and educational factors affecting the education of limited-English-proficient (LEP) individuals. Challenges facing adult ESL instruction are then enumerated, including cultural diversity, fragmentation of effort, instability of program funding and support, and the marginalized status of such programs. Factors in the development of quality adult ESL programs are explored. These include: appropriate program design; a learner-centered curriculum and instructional approach; a professional staff treated as professionals; and adequate resources, facilities, and support services. Two initiatives aimed at improving education for language minorities are described and their accomplishments outlined: the 1967 Bilingual Education Act and the federal refugee program. Finally, a series of recommendations for expanding and improving adult ESL instruction are made, predicated on establishment of a new Department of Education office for language minority adult education. Contains 32 references. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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**IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ADULT ESL PROGRAMS:
BUILDING THE NATION'S CAPACITY TO MEET
THE EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL NEEDS OF ADULTS
WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY**

by

**JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall
University of Maryland Baltimore County**

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**Background Paper Prepared for
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FOREWORD

This paper is one of several prepared by consultants to The Project on Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) of the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. These papers were commissioned to help the Project's staff develop an in-depth understanding of various issues and perspectives bearing on the present state and future directions of ESL service in the United States.

This and the other papers commissioned were prepared in 1993. The consultants who prepared them met as a group three times during that year and vigorously debated each other's work as well as other issues concerning ESL. At no time during this process did the Project's staff require that the consultants agree with each other or with the conclusions being formulated by the staff. The consultants were given complete freedom to state their own ideas.

As a result, the views expressed in this paper are those of the author alone. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Southport Institute, the Project on ESL any of the other consultants involved with the Project on ESL.

The Southport Institute is making these working papers available to help increase understanding and stimulate discussion about the problems of adult literacy and as an expression of gratitude for the contribution of the authors to the Project on ESL.

Funding for the preparation of these papers was provided by The Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and other sources.

The working papers prepared for the Project are:

Carol Clymer-Spradling:	<u>Quality, Standards and Accountability in ESL Programs</u>
JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall:	<u>Improving the Quality of Adult ESL Programs: Building the Nation's Capacity to Meet the Educational and Occupational Needs of Adults with Limited English Proficiency</u>
Inaam Mansoor:	<u>The Use of Technology in Adult ESL Programs: Current Practice - Future Promise</u>
Barbara Prete:	<u>Evolution of ESL Policy in New York City</u>
Gail Weinstein-Shr:	<u>Restoring the Intergenerational Cycle of Family Teaching: Family Literacy in Multilingual Communities</u>
Terrence G. Wiley:	<u>Access, Participation, and Transition in Adult ESL: Implications for Policy and Practice</u>

These papers are available from: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, Suite 460, 820 First Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, (202) 682-4100.

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Introduction

The population of the United States is changing dramatically, as even a cursory glance at Census data will confirm. Although historically a "nation of immigrants," because of recent refugee resettlement, immigration, amnesty for undocumented immigrants, birthrates, and other demographic factors, the United States is becoming increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse. Between

1980 and 1990, the Asian-American population more than doubled and the Hispanic-American population increased by more than 50%. According to the 1990 Census, nearly 32 million people speak a language other than English at home, an increase of almost 9 million (38%) since 1980.

The impact on our nation's schools has been profound: it is not unusual to find 20 or 30 languages spoken in one school or 60, 80, or even 100 languages in one school district (National Forum on Personnel Needs for Districts with Changing Demographics, 1990). Today, in the Los Angeles Unified School District, more than 50% of the students speak a language other than English at home, and if demographic forecasts are accurate, as many as 50 additional major

metropolitan school districts will report a similar majority "language minority" school age population by the year 2020. Language minority populations are "the new majority."

Adult education presents a similar demographic profile. In 1980, there were 6.8 million adults of limited English proficiency; by the year 2000, that number is expected to grow to 17.4 million (Willette, Haub, and Tordella, 1988, cited in Teaching Adults with Limited Skills: Progress and Challenges). During the past ten years, the percentage of language minority adults enrolled in programs funded by the Adult Education Act has tripled, representing today more than one-third of the adult student population (U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, 1993). In the nation's community colleges--which often serve as a locus for transition from nonformal, adult education to more formal academic or technical education--English as a second language (ESL) is the "fastest-growing" area of study, with eight community colleges reporting more than 70 ESL sections (Ignash, 1992). Still, the demand often far outstrips supply, with long waiting lists and waiting periods reported in many districts and a scarcity, especially of appropriate adult ESL educational programs, in many others. For example, current programs in New York City can only serve 4% of those reporting that they "do not speak English well" on the 1990 Census and a lottery system has had to be instituted, with many adults waiting for three or more years before entering an ESL class. Many other metropolitan areas report similar situations, with waiting lists of up to 40,000 in Los Angeles alone (Sherry, 1993). In particularly short supply are work-related ESL programs needed to assist immigrants (who will comprise 29% of the new entrants to the workforce in this decade), in acquiring the English and work-related skills they will need to be able to function effectively

in their new jobs. Also lacking are adequate programs to enable motivated adults to move from a basic functioning level of English to the development of the kinds of academic language and literacy skills needed to participate in further education.

The nation has supported a number of initiatives to build the capacity of local school districts to meet the needs of language minority students enrolled in primary or secondary education (most notably through the passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1967), but there has been limited attention to similar capacity building needed for students in adult education, with one notable, and short-lived exception: the efforts undertaken by the Departments of State, Education, and Health and Human Services to meet the needs of the influx of adult refugees and "entrants" from Southeast Asia and Cuba and Haiti during the late 1970s and early 1980s. As a result, while an infrastructure exists to support a variety of educational initiatives for language minority children--i.e, innovation in educational programs, curriculum and materials development; specialized teacher training and staff development programs; a sophisticated system of information dissemination and technical assistance centers; and support for research agendas--capacity building for education for language minority adults has been limited to a few national studies of programs and practices (a study of exemplary ESL literacy programs and practices, a survey of Adult Basic Education and ESL teacher training, and support for a National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education for language minority adults), a small number of staff development projects, and some pilot transitional ESL program initiatives, funded by the Adult Education Act and the recent National Literacy Act. The passage of the National Literacy Act and the creation of the National Institute for Literacy and State Literacy Resource Centers under

that Act offer potential support for adult ESL at the literacy level, but the Act has been slow to take effect (two years passed before a Director of the National Institute was named) and the effects on Adult ESL are likely to be diluted in any event because ESL represents only a small part of adult literacy education and adult ESL is much broader than literacy education.

In the absence of national leadership and a will to adequately serve all language minority adults in need of ESL and related education, the field of adult ESL education is largely fragmented, financially unstable, and marginalized. While there are a number of programs providing quality services under difficult circumstances, without increased support for adult ESL and greater attention to enhancing local, state, and national capacity to provide more quality adult ESL programs to this population, the potential economic, social, and political contributions of this growing population are likely to remain unrealized.

The Challenges Facing Adult ESL

Adult ESL may be the "fastest growing and most multi-dimensional sector of the adult education program in the United States" (Teaching Adults with Limited English Skills: Progress and Challenges, 1991:7), but it is little understood. Adult ESL combines the insights of two areas of education--English as a second language and adult education--into a special field which is neither adult education, nor ESL, but a combination of the two. While it has been termed "a special field in adult education, with its own body of research, theories, methods, and techniques," (Free Library of Philadelphia, 1988), it might also better be understood as a special field of English as a second language education, with its own body of research, theories, methods, and techniques focused on helping adults of limited English proficiency enrolled in

nonformal or nontraditional educational programs to acquire the oral and written English language skills they need to function as students, workers, or community members. T h e

Challenge of Diversity

Adult ESL is not necessarily literacy instruction; nor is it compensatory or remedial in nature. It may be integrated with a vocational or employment training program; it may be linked to a high school equivalency program or provide access to higher education; or it may be directed to a host of other adult roles or responsibilities, ranging from passing a citizenship exam to helping children with their homework. While one adult ESL program may help an adult with no prior schooling to acquire basic English language and literacy skills, another program may help a skilled or educated worker to transfer those skills to a new context or to enhance them for greater job mobility.

Students in adult ESL classes differ dramatically in their linguistic, cultural, educational, and employment backgrounds, and in the knowledge, skills and information they bring to the adult ESL classroom. They also differ in their exposure to and experience with various aspects of American education and employment. They may be recently-arrived refugees, immigrants who have been here for several years, or long-term residents whose families have lived in the United States for generations. They may come from a culture with a limited literacy tradition (a preliterate culture), have been exposed to minimal literacy through a few years of education, or be quite literate and educated in their first and other languages, but still need to add English (and sometimes, a new writing system or alphabet) to their repertoire. They may possess skills which will transfer readily to available jobs or they may have skills which could be highly

marketable if adapted to their new environment. They also differ in their command of oral English: they may be able to speak a few words of English, to converse socially but not function well as students or workers using English, or be quite fluent speakers, but lack the reading, writing, and study skills they need to proceed with their education. When attempting to profile the "adult ESL student" at the City University of New York, it is not surprising that the College's Language Forum and ESL Council identified at least six categories of ESL learners (Cochran, 1992).

Attempts to meet the linguistic, educational, and employment needs of this diverse language minority adult population have led to the development of a variety of adult ESL classes and programs. If these programs are well-conceived, individuals do not study English as an end in itself, but rather, as a means of acquiring access to or greater participation in education, employment, or American society. These include literacy level courses, taught in either the home language (often with oral English) or in English; a continuum of beginning, intermediate, and advanced ESL courses, which lead broadly from an emphasis on oral English used in situations in the community at the beginning levels, to increasing emphasis on written English and the kinds of oral English and academic skills needed for academic education; a range of courses linking or integrating ESL with employment or vocational training (prevocational/pre-employment ESL, vocational/workplace ESL, bilingual vocational training/VESL); and a number of specialized courses for citizenship, family literacy, and the like. A major challenge facing communities is to develop the range of services needed for such a diverse population.

Another challenge is to provide the support services which enable adults to participate

in the program and apply the results of their instruction. Adult ESL classes, while important, are only one part of an effective adult ESL program, which may also involve instruction in the home language, other academic instruction, or employment training. An effective program may also require child care and transportation, if adults are to be able to participate and services such as job development, employment counseling, or academic counseling, if the ESL instruction is to be truly functional. In adult ESL "one size does not fit all", that is, if they are to truly serve their diverse students (Wrigley, 1993).

The Challenge of Fragmentation

The diversity of adult ESL learners and program goals has fostered the growth of a vast array of program providers drawn from public and private, for profit and non-profit, and secular and religious sources. These include adult education agencies, libraries, community colleges, technical institutes, community-based organizations, churches, businesses, unions, and a host of other public and private organizations. In theory, this range of program providers could be beneficial, fostering a variety of program goals, pedagogical approaches, and other services which together comprise coherent sequences of adult ESL courses to enable learners within the community to achieve their different goals, but in practice such articulated sequences rarely emerge. Limited communication and cooperation among potential program providers and the need to compete for the same, limited funds, too often results in duplication of efforts and diluted services, with several programs competing for the same students, while other learners go unserved or are forced to enroll in inappropriate educational programs.

Unfortunately, perhaps because of its historical link to adult basic education, the majority

of adult ESL programs are beginning level (representing 63% of all adult ESL enrollment according an interim report of the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs) emphasizing conversational skills and basic literacy. More recently, because of open enrollment policies at community colleges, another major emphasis has developed: academically oriented ESL courses, emphasizing reading skills, study skills, and the academic language needed for college work. What is often missing are the broad range of programs in the middle, facilitating the transition between these two levels or helping adults to apply more than basic language learning to contexts other than college preparation.

For example, in some communities, voluntary literacy organizations, community-based organizations, libraries, adult education departments, and community colleges all provide beginning level ESL and literacy, while learners with intermediate language proficiency in need of more academically or vocationally-oriented training, including those who have completed these beginning level programs, find fewer programs available to them. Each program is also likely to expend some of its limited funds on outreach, intake, placement, and other program-related services, leaving fewer resources available to fund full-time professional teachers or staff or to provide sufficient support for program or curriculum development efforts.

There are some local efforts at cooperation and coalition building, including cooperative outreach efforts through "hotline" services, making it easier for adult ESL learners to find appropriate programs and reducing the need for similar efforts by each program provider, but these efforts are limited and of limited usefulness when an appropriate range of programs is not available for adults to enroll in. In some communities (Arlington, Virginia and El Paso, Texas,

for example), a major program provider collaborates with a number of others in the community, consolidating some services within a central location while still providing a range of program options. These collaborations offer a means of reducing the fragmentation of services and increasing the economic efficiency of adult ESL programs, if geographic, scheduling, and other logistical constraints are able to be overcome.

The diversity of programs and program providers can be bewildering for an adult ESL learner attempting to find an appropriate class and for both learners and program administrators attempting to create an appropriate sequence of classes. Even within a program, it is not always clear when a learner is ready to progress from one level to another, and the problem is compounded when learners move from one program or service provider to another. National attempts to create common rubrics, such as the Student Performance Levels identified by refugee adult ESL service providers in the Mainstream English Language Training (MELT), have met with some success (many program providers have a good idea of the proficiency of a 200 or 500 level student), but differences in program philosophy, approach, goals and objectives and difficulties in developing precise measures have rendered some of these attempts of limited use. The Adult ESL Standards Project in California hopes to solve some of those difficulties through an extended state-wide review process and the identification of assessment instruments and scores which correlate with each of the ESL levels.

Three pilot transitional ESL programs are also being tested by consortia in Boston, El Paso, and Arlington (VA). The goal of these programs is to develop individualized learning plans for students and common informational databases to enable students to move from one

level or one service provider to another and to ensure that there is a transition from ESL programs to vocational education, college transfer, or college credit programs, rather than the "black hole" which too often awaits adult ESL students, especially after they exit from beginning level programs.

The Challenge of Instability

In theory, competition leads to improved programs and services, but with adult ESL, funding is so limited and funding cycles so short (from one to three years), that a great deal of time and effort is expended in seeking and maintaining funding, searching for potential funding sources, writing grant proposals, or fulfilling the reporting requirements of current funding, that little time and few resources are available for curriculum, staff, or other program development. Moreover, funding is often abruptly reduced or terminated, requiring programs to search frantically for funds to enable adults to continue in the program. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this is the funding which was made available to provide adult ESL for up to 3 million undocumented aliens granted amnesty. That funding ended in 1993, yet all of these individuals are now eligible for additional adult ESL, academic, and vocational instruction and 95% have indicated that they plan someday to do so, though funding has not been provided for them to do so!

Adult ESL programs frequently operate on "shoestring budgets," piecing together funds from several sources, such as Adult Education, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), the Job Opportunities Skills Program (JOBS), Family English Literacy, Even Start, and a number of other public and private, local, state, and federal sources. One small program in Cambridge,

Massachusetts, reportedly combines funds from 15 sources, each one with different eligibility and reporting requirements and on a different reporting schedule (Office of Vocational and Adult Education, A Summary Report: National Forums on the Adult Education Delivery System, 1991).

Although the number of language minority adults seeking ESL and advanced education or vocational training is rising, there has been little notice of that in funding specifications. Under most funding, providers are not prevented from serving adult ESL students, nor are they particularly encouraged to do so. None of the funding sources allocates a specific amount or proportion of their funds to serve language minority adults. Some actually make it difficult to serve ESL students through inappropriate entry requirements (e.g., an 8th grade level of education) or unrealistic program outcomes (immediate placement in jobs), for example with JTPA. Nor is there much effort to determine what percentage of funds actually accrues to adult ESL learners. Thus, while adult ESL learners represent more than one-third of those enrolled in programs funded by the Adult Education Act, it is impossible to determine whether one-third of the funds are actually allocated to these programs or services for these students. The suspicion of many in adult ESL education is that they are not. Adult ESL classes are often disproportionately large, permitting much smaller, more specialized programs for other adults to be offered.

The scarcity of funds, coupled with short funding cycles, also affects the stability of program staffing; most adult ESL programs rely on part-time teachers (an estimated 80% to 90%) who work without contracts or benefits and can be more easily let go if no new funding

is obtained. Part-time teachers frequently work at two or more jobs, often in different types of ESL or literacy programs, leaving little time to devote to curriculum or program development or to their own professional development. Even when programs provide staff development or inservice education opportunities, there is usually little or no compensation for the additional time that these activities necessitate. When additional funds are made available, program administrators usually choose to hire more part-time instructors, rather than converting several part-time positions to a full-time position with benefits, in a well-intentioned but misguided effort to stretch the funds to serve as many students as possible (Crandall, 1993).

When demand for services grows without comparable growth in funding, as is frequently the case given the increasing number of language minority adults in need of adult ESL services, programs turn increasingly to volunteers. In just seven years, from 1985 to 1992, the number of volunteers in programs funded under the Adult Education Act has almost tripled (Adult Education Delivery System Trends, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, April 1993). While these volunteers do not require compensation, they result in other costs to the program (recruitment, training, supervision), often taking valuable time of the only full-time staff person, the chief program administrator, who must also write funding proposals, keep records, and file reports.

The roller coaster nature of funding, the limited resources, and the increasing demand for services takes its toll on the full-time staff, who operate with little or no support and for whom long-term job security is often quite tenuous. Little time is left to reflect upon program offerings or to evaluate current program successes and little money is provided in current

funding to permit effective qualitative evaluation. Instead, programs engage in time-consuming counts: number of person hours of attendance, number of persons who complete the program, number of persons who are placed in jobs (without follow-up to see if they keep them), and the like.

Despite the limited and often short-term funding, resulting in an over-reliance on part-time and voluntary staff, professionalism among adult ESL teachers is often quite high, as is interest in opportunities to participate in curriculum and program development efforts, to evaluate current courses and design new course offerings, and to engage in small, collaborative research and reflection (Crandall, 1993). What is often lacking is any incentive to do so, beyond the personal satisfaction that professional development activities provide.

The Challenge of Marginalization

One source of the financial and programmatic instability of adult ESL is its marginalized status. Despite the growing numbers of adult ESL students in public schools (adult education departments) and community colleges (the two major providers of adult ESL), adult ESL occupies a marginal position in each. It combines the marginalization of adult education with the marginalization of ESL.

Adult education is a stepchild of primary and secondary education, as is made patently clear every time a public school which is no longer needed is reassigned to adult education, with little attempt to convert the children's desks or bathrooms into more appropriate adult facilities (Crandall, 1993). Adult education is also an afterthought in United States educational policy. While informal classes for adults may have always existed, the first federal attention to adult

education was the 1964 Adult Basic Education Act, whose goal was "to move toward the elimination of the inability of all adults to read and write English." The Adult Education Act, passed two years later, is less than 30 years old and financial support for adult education represents only a fraction of that provided for children. Even with the large refugee influx from Southeast Asia during the late 1970s, the attention of policy makers was initially focused on the needs of children, until it became clear that the ESL and related educational and employment needs of the adults, was worthy of attention as well. Part of the marginalization of adult ESL also stems from the unempowered status of ESL students (Auerbach, 1991), whose lack of English and literacy often prevents them from participating fully in mainstream academic, social, or economic life. Most states have clear policies governing the education of language minority students in primary and secondary schools and the majority also require certification for teaching ESL or bilingual education in primary or secondary schools, but that is not the case for either adult ESL or adult education in general. At state levels, adult ESL is usually the purview of adult education, but within local districts, the teachers who are hired to teach adult classes are often K-12 teachers who moonlight for extra income. Few states require special education or training to teach in adult education. Even those with some certification requirements may only specify a college degree or elementary or secondary school certification, despite the fact that little in the academic preparation to teach children or adolescents is appropriate for teaching adults (Kutner and others, 1991). States seeking some sort adult ESL certification or credential (vis. Virginia) end up with an adult ESL "endorsement" to a K-12 certificate, as if teaching adults is merely an adaptation of teaching children.

The situation at the community college is not much more heartening. While ESL represents the fastest growing discipline at the community college (Ignash, 1992), it is rarely accorded its own departmental status. Instead, it is often a sub-section of the English department, developmental education, or continuing education, each assignment reflecting a skewed understanding of the proper role of adult ESL. The traditional English department focus is on literature and writing, while ESL builds both oral and written language skills and does so with relationship to the many roles and responsibilities of the adult learner, including academics. Developmental education is remedial or compensatory in nature, helping students who have been failed by the school system to become college-ready; it may represent a more appropriate assignment for some language minority adults, but not for those who have substantial prior education and whose only need is to add English language skills to their repertoire, much as an educated English speaker might need to add French or Spanish in order to function effectively in a French- or Spanish-medium college. Continuing education is perhaps the most accurate characterization of adult ESL, but it suffers from being perceived as an incidental segment of the college, offering no credit for its courses and providing few full-time teaching positions and little stability on which to build long-term programs. Even when ESL is its own department, it is often viewed as having a service function, without the ability to offer courses for credit and a faculty which receives differential (i.e., lesser) treatment. For example, some part-time ESL teachers at the City University of New York are reportedly paid only a little more than half of the hourly wage accorded even the lowest part-time adjunct professors in other departments.

A strong, national leadership organization might be able to combat some of this

marginalization, but here adult ESL has not found a central role either. The natural candidates for that role are Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE). TESOL is an international association of 20,000 teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and administrators working in English as a second or foreign language, with 79 affiliates around the world. TESOL has developed program standards by which adult ESL programs can gauge their own effectiveness, providing guidance on the qualities of professional staff, appropriateness of program structure, and curriculum and assessment, but it has stopped short of either certifying or credentialing ESL teachers. It has also undertaken awareness and advocacy campaigns to increase funding for ESL and to address the issue of part-time employment in adult ESL, but these are recent initiatives which will have to be balanced with the organization's "international" status. NABE, as an American organization, has historically taken a more aggressive advocacy and policy making role, but it focuses its attention on elementary and secondary education. NABE receives strong support from the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs at the U.S. Department of Education, who make it possible for staff funded under the Bilingual Education Act to meet together in professional development and management institutes at the annual meeting of NABE, among other places. No comparable support is provided for TESOL or its members. State and local affiliates of TESOL, however, may be more instrumental in improving the status of adult ESL through participation in local and state advisory committees setting standards for program quality, staffing, and professional development and through advocacy efforts to bring increased attention to the needs of language minority adults.

Another organization which has historically taken a leadership role in educational issues of language minority adults is the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington, DC, a private, non-profit organization focusing on language and its relation to education, social, or employment issues. It was the first organization to recognize the impact that the Southeast Asian refugees would have upon American schools, workplaces, and society, which led to the establishment of the National Indochinese Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Center and a number of subsequent national clearinghouses to collect and disseminate information and provide technical assistance on language, orientation, and employment issues of refugees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, and other immigrants. Today, CAL houses the National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education for language minority adults (now called the National Adult ESL Literacy Clearinghouse), which collects and disseminates information on adult native language and ESL literacy and the Refugee Service Center, funded by the Department of State to support the transition of refugees from training programs in Southeast Asia to educational programs in the United States. But in the absence of expanded funding and specific programmatic mandates, CAL's leadership remains largely ad hoc.

Ethnic advocacy groups (ASPIRA, MALDEF, LULAC, the American Jewish Committee, the Organization of Chinese Americans) and coalitions like the National Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Forum have also played an important role in advocating for increased funding for literacy instruction for language minority adults, but in general, they have focused their attention on issues of immigrant legal status and civil rights rather than ESL and education.

Even among the 16 National Research Centers funded by the Office of Educational

Research and Improvement at the U.S. Department of Education, the educational concerns of language minority adults are spread, very thinly, through several Centers. The National Center on Adult Literacy devotes a very small portion of its funds to native language or ESL literacy, which represents only one small portion of adult ESL in any event. The National Center for Research in Vocational Education considers the language minority population as only one of many "special needs" populations, including physically disabled adults, and devotes little attention to bilingual vocational or vocational ESL concerns. The National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning has bilingual education, ESL, and the relationship between first and second language learning as its major concern, but its focus is on elementary and secondary education, with limited concern for the second language learning needs of adults.

Even in university programs which prepare teachers of English as a second language, adult ESL is rarely presented as a field, and few special Master's programs in Adult ESL exist. Traditionally, TESOL teacher preparation programs helped prepare graduate students to teach at universities, where the large numbers of foreign students required substantial numbers of trained ESL teachers. More recently, the focus has expanded to include K-12 education, since the majority of states now require ESL certification to teach in the public schools. Many even require K-12 certification to teach in an adult school, and even where this is not required, students frequently get K-12 certification for job security, even though they plan a career in teaching adults. Until states require adult ESL teacher certification or some equivalent credential or endorsement, adult ESL concerns will only be partially addressed in ESL teacher education.

To be fair, much of what is usually taught in these teacher education programs is relevant for teaching adults: theoretical courses on first and second language acquisition, language use, and cross-cultural communication; courses on methods and techniques of teaching ESL or curriculum and materials development; courses on English structure; and testing and evaluation. But students who plan to teach elementary or secondary ESL engage in several practicums and do student teaching at that level. Those who plan to teach adults may have an "internship" available for practice in teaching adults, but it is not usually a structured part of the program. Many adult ESL teachers learn much of the specifics of teaching ESL to adults after they are hired, something which will need to be recognized in any future adult ESL credentialing or certification efforts.

Developing Quality Adult ESL Programs

Despite the challenges of diversity, fragmentation, instability, and marginalization, the quality of many adult ESL programs is quite high, in large part because of the professionalism and dedication of adult ESL teachers who are often willing to participate in curriculum development, classroom research, and other staff development workshops or institutes without compensation or other incentives (Crandall, 1993). But the situation is quite precarious. These challenges take their toll, with part-time teachers leaving the adult ESL classroom for full-time jobs with benefits and full-time administrators scrambling to find qualified replacements.

But the profession does know how to create successful adult ESL programs and can do so, with sufficient funding and support. There is substantial agreement in the field on the qualities of an effective program. These include program context, program content, and

program outcome variables (Condelli, Koloski, and Webb, 1992), and have been grouped into eight program components: community outreach, needs analysis, program design, instructional methods, student assessment, staff development, support services, and program evaluation (adapted from Wrigley and Guth, 1992). By combining these, it is possible to identify four major characteristics of quality programs. An effective adult ESL program has: 1) an appropriate program design; 2) a learner-centered curriculum and instructional approach; 3) a professional staff treated as professionals; and 4) adequate resources, facilities, and support services.

Appropriate Program Design

Adults study English not to learn about the language, but to be able to do something with it, whether that "something" is to be able to read to children, get a better job, or get into college (Crandall and Grognet, 1983). An effective adult ESL program, then, has larger educational objectives than the grammar or vocabulary of English. Those objectives can only be determined collaboratively with the learners, who need to be drawn into the process from the outset. A good outreach campaign (involving community leaders, posting announcements in community centers, announcing the program on the radio in several languages) is needed from the beginning, or many who could benefit from instruction will never be reached and their needs remain unidentified.

The program must also consider more than short-term learner goals. The design must lead somewhere (to other ESL courses, to other programs of study, to vocational training, to employment) and unless it is a beginning literacy/ESL course, it should clearly lead from

somewhere. A good program has a clearly articulated set of paths which a learner can follow, depending on individual backgrounds, interests, and needs.

A good program also "fits" with other courses offered in the community. Frequent contact with other program providers, through coalitions or other cooperative networks, can reduce unnecessary duplication of efforts and help ensure that all who are in need of services have potential programs to serve them. Decisions might be made on the basis of type of service, location, scheduling, or even the ethnicity or language of the participants. A Haitian community-based organization located in the middle of the Haitian community, might offer initial Kreyol literacy, ESL literacy, family literacy, and beginning ESL, taking advantage of the Haitian-speaking staff who understand the community's literacy and language practices well. An Hispanic organization with bilingual professionals might offer Spanish literacy and in collaboration with an employer and a community college, provide bilingual support to a workplace ESL program. An adult education program might offer a range of ESL courses leading to the GED at a number of locations throughout the community, including an ESL literacy course for those not enrolled in the Haitian or Spanish programs. It might also provide a conversational English class to Eastern European or Russian immigrants whose ability to read and write English is high, but who need a beginning oral class. The local community college might provide specialized vocational ESL/vocational training programs as well as transitional or bridge courses to facilitate transfer from adult to college education. Only by conducting adequate outreach and needs analyses and by meeting frequently to discuss program plans can the vast array of program providers in a community ensure that they are providing an

appropriate range of programs, with clear articulation for learners from one level or program to another.

A Learner-centered Curriculum and Instructional Approach

There are a number of approaches to teaching adult ESL (Crandall and Peyton, 1993), but central to good instruction for adults is learner-centeredness. Program goals must be reflective of learner goals, and the curriculum and instruction must help adults achieve these goals. While a quality adult ESL program has a set of curriculum guidelines or pre-established materials from which to work, meeting individual learner goals of such a diverse population requires flexibility. Curriculum evolves over time through collaboration between the learners and the teachers. Instruction must be linguistically, culturally, and age-appropriate; materials written for children or for native English-speaking adults will not be appropriate, unless adapted for their new audience. Methods which do not build on the prior experiences and understandings of adults will be both demeaning and ineffective. Adults are not blank slates or empty vessels in which to pour information; they have a lifetime of linguistic, educational, occupational and social experiences to contribute to their learning. Assessment must also be appropriate to learner and program goals, requiring a variety of assessment measures, some focusing on helping individual learners and teachers to gauge participant progress and identify instructional needs and others providing program administrators and funders with a means of evaluating program effectiveness and applying those results into a redesign of the program. Skill inventories, portfolios of work, and standardized assessments might all be a part of the assessment system.

A Professional Staff Treated as Professionals

A quality adult ESL program needs sufficient full-time staff to create stability and foster ongoing development of the program, curriculum, and staff. The full-time staff need to be complemented by part-time and volunteer tutors, which can accommodate changing program populations and program needs. At a minimum, the program director and lead teachers need to be highly competent, knowledgeable, and well-prepared, full-time adult ESL educators. Some of that preparation comes from participation in a graduate program in TESOL education, but much of it is also developed through experience in the learners' communities and prior teaching. In a quality adult ESL program, staff may differ in the knowledge, skills, and preparation which they bring to the program, reflecting the diversity of the learners they serve, but an ongoing program of professional development activities should enable that staff to learn from each other, build upon prior learning, and demonstrate understanding and competency in teaching ESL to language minority adults. Budgets need to include paid time for staff to participate in workshops or courses and to improve the program through curriculum development, ongoing research and reflection, and program evaluation. Also needed are opportunities to collaborate with other programs in the region or to participate in local, regional, or national conferences. Collaborations among university TESOL educators, adult ESL teachers, and community tutors are encouraged and supported financially, since these help infuse a more appropriate focus and greater understanding of community factors into the graduate TESOL program, introduce new approaches and methods of teaching adult ESL to the instructional staff, and deepen the understanding of both theory and practice in adult ESL for tutors (Crandall, 1993). Linked to the ongoing professional development is also a clear personnel ladder, with opportunities for

advancement within the program and across programs.

Adequate Resources, Facilities, and Support Services

Good programs can operate on a shoestring, be housed in substandard facilities, and have few books or materials, but not for long. And, they can function without concern for child care, scheduling, location, transportation, bilingual interpretation services, and other support services, but they will not attract many learners, and those who come will not remain for long. Successful adult ESL programs not only provide basic services which will enable adults to participate in the program, but they also address personal development needs of the learner and link the adult ESL program with other education, employment, and social service needs of the learners. A quality adult ESL program becomes a "center" for more than just learning English. Courses are scheduled at times and in locations which are convenient to public transportation (or transportation is provided) and security issues have been addressed. Child care is available on-site or measures have been taken to ensure that it is available elsewhere. Interpreters, counselors, job developers, social workers, and other support staff are available to the program. Funding is sufficiently stable to enable the program to buy materials, provide photocopying and computer facilities, and develop a resource center of curriculum, materials, and books to be used by both teachers and students. Not every program needs to provide all of these services. Some of the functions can be shared among several programs, as often occurs with the education of language minority children; for example, all schools in a district often share the services of an intake and assessment center which is staffed by bilingual interpreters, social workers, and the like. In smaller communities, programs can share the expenses of child care, interpretation, job

or other counseling.

Improving the Quality of Education for Language Minority Populations: Some Lessons from the Bilingual Education Act and the Refugee Program

Given the problems facing the development of quality adult ESL programs, how can we expand the number of quality programs and help those which are in need to develop the features just discussed? Some insights for accomplishing this can be gained by analyzing two other initiatives aimed at improving education for language minority individuals: the series of initiatives which have been funded through the Bilingual Education Act and those offered through the Refugee Program. In both cases, the support afforded by these efforts helped build local, state, and national capacity; encouraged cooperation and collaboration among service providers; provided research and technical assistance which improved the quality of services; and provided support to increase the numbers served.

The Bilingual Education Act

In 1967, one year after the passage of the Adult Education Act, Congress passed the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) in recognition of the need to provide national leadership and build local school capacity to meet the linguistic, academic, and socio-cultural needs of limited English proficient children. The infrastructure developed by this Act has had a profound impact on improving the education of language minority children and suggests some directions for comparably improving the education

of language minority adults.

Key to that infrastructure was the creation of an Office of Bilingual Education and Language Minority Affairs (OBEMLA), within the Department of Education, which not only coordinates the various services provided under the Act but has also served to heighten attention to issues of education for language minority children. The Office works closely with State Directors of ESL/Bilingual Education and local program providers. Besides providing direct funding for educational programs for language minority children, OBEMLA has also at different times in its history:

Supported school district efforts at testing new approaches, methods, and materials for meeting the needs of language minority children (two-way developmental bilingual programs, content ESL programs, structured immersion);

Expanded inservice professional development opportunities for teachers, administrators, counselors, paraprofessionals, and other personnel by supporting short-term (up to three years) training programs and summer institutes;

Fostered the development of graduate (Masters and Doctoral) programs which prepare bilingual teachers, teacher educators, administrators, and researchers and established a minority scholars fellowship program to support participation of language minority community members in these programs;

Articulated and supported a program of research investigating various options and approaches to educating language minority children and convening an annual research symposium on critical issues in educating language minority students;

Created a system of 16 regional Multifunctional Resource Centers to provide technical assistance to schools and districts and a National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education to collect, analyze, and disseminate information through the Resource Centers and through publications, conference participation, and free, on-line searching of its computer database;

Created two Evaluation Assistance Centers to assist programs in identifying or developing appropriate assessment and evaluation plans;

Supported the development of local capacity to design and administer these programs through participation in "management institutes" and meetings of national professional associations;

Stimulated the development of commercially available materials through support for development of prototype materials; and

Encouraged community and parental participation in the education of children by requiring community needs analyses, the designation of a Parent Advisory Committee, and other community outreach in proposals for funding and through special parental involvement programs.

As a result of these efforts, local school districts, state departments of education, teacher education programs, and the nation as a whole have much better information and more professionally qualified personnel with which to develop sound educational programs for language minority children. While these programs are by no means perfect, Title VII has encouraged program innovation, provided technical assistance, and created systems (the NCBE database, Resource Center libraries, management institutes) by which information about program design, community involvement, staff development, curriculum, assessment, and the like can be shared at local, state, or national levels to all who are interested in the education of language minority children, not just those funded by Title VII. Support for educating language minority adults pales by comparison and the effects of that neglect are very apparent.

The Refugee Program

In 1975, when the first refugees arrived from Southeast Asia, the country was ill-prepared to cope with the influx. While initial efforts were directed to assisting children in adapting to American schools, it soon became apparent that adults would need similar assistance

if they were to acquire English and function effectively in American schools, workplaces, and communities. There were no "receiving ethnic communities" in the United States to assist in the transition, so the role of orienting new arrivals, assisting with resettlement, getting children enrolled in school, and helping adults to find education or employment was undertaken by a broad range of private voluntary agencies, churches, and community groups, as well as adult education programs, employers, and social service providers, all of whom needed information and assistance if they were to understand and effectively work with these new arrivals. Of principal concern was background information on the languages, cultures, and prior educational and employment experiences of the refugees, information which changed with the changes in refugee arrivals. Since the country had little prior experience in designing or implementing educational programs for these populations, it was also important to provide mechanisms by which programs could share information and experiences and learn from each other.

Support from the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and State made it possible to quickly develop systems by which information could be developed and shared and duplication of efforts could be discouraged. Instead of leaving it to every service provider to develop a sketchy profile of the languages, cultures, and educational backgrounds and experiences of each group of refugees, support was provided to enable more thorough analyses to be undertaken by one organization to be shared regionally and nationally. Instead of each vocational institute attempting to create a vocational ESL and training program in isolation, information and curriculum from current program efforts were shared and workshops provided

to discuss methods and approaches. Using funds from the three federal agencies, state sources, and foundations, the Refugee Program:

Established a series of national clearinghouses and technical assistance centers (the National Indochinese Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Center, the Language and Orientation Resource Center, the Refugee Materials Center) which developed, collected, analyzed, and disseminated information and materials on the languages of the refugee populations, the likely difficulties refugees would face in learning English, and the educational and cultural backgrounds of the refugees and provided technical assistance to educators, employers, and social service providers through "hotlines," workshops, publications, and on-site assistance;

Fostered the development of prototype ESL curriculum and materials, including some of the earliest materials with a functional, pre-employment, vocational, or literacy focus and encouraged the commercial publication of related materials;

Established State and Regional (in the ten federal regions) Refugee Coordinators within the Department of Health and Human Services who coordinated refugee efforts and provided technical assistance through regional and state meetings and workshops;

Expanded the professional knowledge and skills of program staff through training of trainers institutes staffed by regional experts, who were also available for follow-up technical assistance;

Encouraged collaboration among service providers who had historically worked in separate contexts (churches, schools, community-based organizations), leading to more efficient use of resources (funds, facilities, personnel) and greater articulation among program offerings;

Heightened the awareness of the adult ESL professional community to the importance of considering literacy levels when designing and sequencing adult ESL programs and supported the development of new assessment instruments for use with non-literate adults;

Stimulated the development of a curriculum framework (the Mainstream English Language Teaching project) by which key curricula could be compared and a common rubric developed across programs; and

Sponsored research into employment needs of entry-level refugee workers and language demands of a number of occupations and training programs and stimulated the development of integrated language and vocational training programs and materials.

Only a skeleton of the former Refugee Program remains, but its legacy is found in every adult ESL program. In a few, short years, the structure and infusion of funds was able to move the adult ESL profession forward substantially, helping to develop appropriate adult ESL programs, materials, and tests for refugees from many parts of the world, with diverse backgrounds, needs, and goals and ensuring that systems were in place to facilitate the transfer of information and expertise across programs, states, and regions.

Building on the Past and Moving Adult ESL Forward: Some Recommendations

Both the bilingual education and refugee program initiatives offer some directions for expanding and improving adult ESL education in this country and illustrate what can be accomplished when there is sufficient federal attention directed to supporting state and local capacity to address educational issues. Something comparable is needed if the professionalism in the adult ESL workforce is ever to be translated into a coherent set of effective adult ESL programs. Not everything needs to be established anew, but efforts at the federal level which are housed in different Departments need coordination and expanded funding. To provide the kind of information, technical assistance, and professional development support needed, an Office of Education for Language Minority Adults should be established within the Department of Education to provide for policy development and coordination of education and training efforts for this population. The Office would be responsible for:

- a. chairing an Adult ESL Advisory Task Force within the federal government which would coordinate efforts by the various Departments (Health and Human Services, Labor, State) and within the Department of Education to serve the language minority adult population;

b. providing advice to the Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the designation of a new Center for Research for Language Minority Adults. The Office would also participate in the identification of a national research agenda to be undertaken by this Center. This Center could be established without additional funding, since funds would be transferred from other Centers researching educational issues of language minority adults when these were removed from the other Centers' mandates. The new Center would investigate program features (time, intensity, design, curriculum) and their relative effectiveness with different populations; it would document language and literacy acquisition and development; and research optimum program sequencing and alternative assessment procedures, among other educational factors.

c. publishing an annual report on "the condition of education for language minority adults in the U.S.";

d. supporting the development of model curriculum, materials, and programs within the States (adult ESL/vocational programs, adult ESL/workplace programs, adult ESL/academic preparation programs, etc.) and model sequences;

e. funding model Adult ESL Master's and Doctoral programs, with a Minority Fellowship Program provided to encourage participation by members of language minority communities;

f. funding a national study of certification and credentialing in adult ESL with a goal of identifying optimum competencies, skills, and knowledge for adult ESL professionals and devising various professional development means by which those working in the field can achieve, demonstrate, and be rewarded for them; and

g. funding pilot professional development schools (see Crandall 1993 for a fuller discussion) to bring together members of university ESL teacher education faculty, experienced and novice teachers, tutors, and others working in adult ESL sites in a collaborative professional development enterprise similar to that available to the medical and legal profession. These schools would provide support to adult ESL programs and also result in teacher education programs which better address adult ESL program realities.

If programs are to meet the increasing demand for services and to do so effectively, funding provided to adult ESL programs will need to be increased, as will funding cycles. This will permit programs to invest their time in teaching adults and allow them to focus their attention on program improvement (curriculum development, professional development, research, and evaluation), rather than on identifying the next funding source. Some of this money can come from better accounting by those who oversee funds. But even that effort will fall short of needed resources: there simply must be more money provided under the various adult education initiatives if this population is to be adequately served. Greater coordination among these various funding sources and at the local levels is also needed to decrease fragmentation and permit more efficient and effective use of available resources.

The Office could encourage greater stability and capacity-building in programs by encouraging longer funding cycles (3 years, with options to renew for 2 more). It could reduce fragmentation by encouraging funders to offer incentives (additional points in proposal review, additional funds) for program providers to coordinate program offerings and services and for sharing support services. In addition, the Office could fund model community collaborations

and see that the process is documented and disseminated to others attempting to achieve greater coordination and less duplication. Incentives could also be provided for programs to hire full-time administrators and teachers, but the best incentive for this is to increase over-all funding and the length of funding cycles. Additionally, professional development of all part-time and volunteer staff could be encouraged through a 5-10% set-aside in each proposal for paid professional development activities.

Some Concluding Thoughts

In our language minority adult population we have great potential. In times of a North American Free Trade Agreement and competition from the European Community and the Pacific Rim countries, the ability to speak another language and to understand other cultures is particularly valuable, but only with sufficient access to American education and employment and are able to function within these in English. Among those in need of adult ESL are those who were motivated enough to risk their lives to come to the United States, those who were shut out from educational services previously because of their undocumented status but who enrolled and remained in the English language and literacy programs when amnesty was granted, and those who have supported children and families in entry-level jobs but seek a better life. In the coming decades, the language minority population will represent an even greater portion of our labor force and potentially, of our adult education and ESL programs. But will there be classes and programs for them and will they be appropriate? Will they face a bewildering maze of program options or will there be appropriate educational sequences offering a clear path from entry to further education, training, or employment? Will the staff of these programs be able

to provide effective education which leads to the fulfillment of real-world goals? The potential to meet these needs is available in our adult ESL programs, but greater financial support, better information, and more technical assistance is necessary if we are to provide the quality of education these adults deserve.

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