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Noting that adult literacy involves adults who are readers and who are nonreaders, and that it is necessary to deal not only with problems of adult illiteracy, but also to encourage literate adults to read for work and pleasure, this bibliography presents annotations of 32 conference papers and journal articles published between 1989 and 1992 dealing with adult literacy. The Overview section outlines a variety of broad topics related to adult literacy. Sources in the Program section deal with various programs that facilitate the emergence and growth of adult readers. The Research section includes current studies dealing with adult literacy. The final section deals with other issues related to adult readers and the literacy movement. (RS)
ADULT LITERACY: OVERVIEW, PROGRAMS AND RESEARCH
by Jerry Johns and Karen Biggs
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Adult literacy is a multi-faceted issue facing not only the educational system, but society in general. It involves adults who are readers and who are nonreaders. It is necessary to deal not only with the problem of illiteracy in adults, but also to encourage literate adults to read for work and pleasure. A search of the ERIC database produced the following citations on adult literacy from the period 1989-1992. The Overview section deals with a variety of broad topics related to adult literacy. Sources in the Programs section deal with various programs that facilitate the emergence and growth of adult readers. The Research section includes current studies dealing with adult literacy. The final section deals with other issues related to adult readers and the literacy movement.

Two types of citations are provided in this bibliography: ERIC documents and journal articles.

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OVERVIEW


Describes a plan for achieving literacy in New York State. Proposes solutions addressing adult literacy needs, assigning priority to adult literacy programs and services, and improving literacy instruction, curriculum, and assessment.


Discusses the following trends and issues in worldwide adult literacy: 1) an increasing percentage of literate people resulting from a more effective children’s educational process; 2) fuzzy definitions of literacy and how that definition is assessed; 3) moving toward adult literacy as a goal of society; 4) an assessment of available materials; and 5) the reeducation of adult literacy professionals.


Proposes that literacy is a relative phenomena and literacy needs are specific to the individual and the social context within which the individual operates. States that instruction is based on the concept of activity with a focus on the formation of students’ shared and personal literacy goals.


Describes post-literacy as all the activities that allow persons who have recently become literate to make use of their skills and to increase their newly acquired knowledge. Stresses the importance of providing the environment and materials needed to help a newly literate adult remain literate.

Examines the current status of adult literacy programs in rural areas. Discusses the goals of rural adult literacy programs and the types of programs reported to be effective. Discusses the needs of adult illiterates in rural areas and the conditions that support or limit the widespread influence of effective programs.


Estimates that nearly 1 billion adults are totally illiterate—the majority of them women. Provides reasons for launching literacy programs, and factors that explain low attendance and lack of motivation. Lists literacy strategies that have major influence in developing countries, as well as other approaches.


Discusses adult literacy and the need for appropriate instruction to prepare workers for job-related reading.


Reports recent findings across the spectrum of the literacy movement to help plan the future of the movement in the United States. Discusses the history of the adult literacy movement and the emergent definitions of adult literacy.


Describes reactions of North Carolina employers to skills possessed by the graduates of the state's educational system. Concludes that the students were inadequately prepared for functional literacy tasks in the workplace. States that there is a need for increased literacy preparation at all levels.


Maintains that the values established literacy programs espouse must conform to the learners' own beliefs and not be rooted in the status quo if resistant adult nonreaders are to be reached.


Provides a brief summary of whole language theory and offers suggestions for its application in adult education settings. Maintains that when instructional techniques rooted in whole language theory are used with adult beginning readers, learning is more meaningful and success can be dramatic.


Helps adult education teachers and administrators select the type of adult literacy program that will best meet the needs of their students. Surveys nine different programs and discusses the assessment methods used for each program.


Describes literacy materials for illiterate or neo-literate people. Presents materials which provide practice and reinforcement of newly learned skills. Contends that these simple and interesting reading materials should improve the reader's quality of life as they encourage literacy development.

Williams, Richard P. and Strange, Terry. “Matching Program Characteristics to Adult Literacy Learners.” *Adult Literacy and Basic Education*, v27 n1 p58-63 1990.

Identifies these areas of concern for matching adult readers with literacy programs: theoretical orientation (meaning based, code based, or interactive); programming factors (reading assessment, goal formation, affective factors, negative schooling attitudes, student interests, reading interpretations); and methodologies (phonics, whole word, neurological impress, repeated reading/listening, language experience, language satiation, and sustained silent reading).

Work, Marvin G. and McLaughlin, T. F. “The Effects of a Skill Based Individualized Reading Program on Reading Achievement of Adolescents and Adults with Low Reading Ability.” *Reading Improvement*, v27 n1 p58-63 Spring 1990.
Examines the effectiveness of a skill-based individualized reading program on the reading achievement of adults and adolescents of low reading ability. Finds a significant improvement in reading skills. Notes that the outcome was replicated in two separate experiments across two different populations.

RESEARCH

Askov, Eunice N. and Forlizzi, Lori A. “Assessing the Educational Needs and Interests of Students Enrolled in a Reading Program at a Center for Older Adults.” 1989. 25 p. [ED 316 832]

Assesses the educational interests and needs of a group of older, low-literate adults in order to develop computer-assisted literacy programs specifically designed for older adults. Notes that the adults exhibited a wide variety of skill levels, wanted to develop higher-order reading skills, expressed an interest in recreational reading materials and stressed the importance of having a tutor to provide support during the learning process.


Reports the effects of a literacy program which addresses the needs of adult students enrolled in remedial reading classes at a community college. Describes the program that consists of a workshop series which uses children’s literature to promote reading development. Finds that at the completion of the workshop, students felt able to take books home to share with other family members and to participate in other recreational reading programs in the community.


Reports the objectives of a research project which gives an account of the adult literacy movement in New Zealand between the years of 1974 and 1988. Describes programs, materials, and reactions of students who were a part of the program.


Reports recent cognitive and historical research as well as the perspective of workers which challenge the popular myths of literacy and work. Explores the belief that workers do not possess the necessary literacy skills for current and future jobs.


Considers a class of 15 adult literacy students provided with reading instruction and training in self-evaluation skills; a control group of 15 did not receive such training. Reveals adults in both groups to be overestimators of their reading performance. Claims that more experiments overestimated their performance after training. Reports that no differences were found in reading improvement.

McNinch, George W. and Steelmon, Peggy. “Perceived Reading Status of Teacher Education Students.” Reading Improvement, v27 n3 p203-206 Fall 1990.

Investigates the reading behaviors and perceived reading status of 42 teacher education majors. Finds that teacher education students, whether labeling themselves as “frequent” or “occasional” readers, view themselves as readers in a literate society who will serve as role models to promote literacy in prospective students.


Reviews the current research on workplace literacy programs. Reveals that only a few programs reporting rigorous evaluation and assessments are often limited to questionnaires or surveys. Proposes a more comprehensive assessment model for learners within a given literacy program.


Reviews research that presents the criteria by which adult literacy program effectiveness can be assessed.


Describes the differences between the adult literacy research questions pursued by academicians and practitioners. Argues that research concerns expressed by these two groups are based on different assumptions regarding the nature, distribution, uses, and potential of literacy.

OTHER LITERACY ISSUES

Annotates a list of 390 literacy materials for adults reading at a reading level of eighth grade and below. Finds that many of the instructional titles are in workbook format, and can be used with adult basic education and English as a Second Language learners.


Contains three articles: "Issues in Adult Literacy Education," by JoAnn Crandall and Susan Imel; "Emergent Literacy: An Early Reading and Writing Concept," by Carl B. Smith; and "Adult Literacy Programs in Rural Areas," by Susan Ferrall.

Ewing, June B. "President's Commentary: From At-Risk First Graders to Illiterate Adults: Breaking the Cycle." *Journal of Clinical Reading: Research and Programs,* v3 n3 p1-2 1990-91.

Discusses the adult illiteracy problem in the United States. Describes the Reading Recovery Program and a similar reading program at Georgia Southwestern College, both of which place teacher education students with first graders to serve as reading pals.


Responds to adult literacy, basic skills, and workplace literacy programs from the viewpoint of media reporters. Includes six reports by reporters viewing the adult literacy movement as a reaction to the needs of society and the political system which governs it.


Finds that registered nurses at 44 sites devoted an average of 1 hour and 51 minutes per day to professional reading. Educational level, position, and memberships were the best predictors of how much time was spent reading job-related material.


Examines the relationships among gender, subordination, politics, poverty and illiteracy in developing nations. Links women's illiteracy with uneven power distribution. Suggests that patriarchal ideologies shaping the sexual division of labor affect women's access to education and attainment of literacy. Recommends literacy programs be more relevant to local women's needs.


Reports on the first New York Literacy Vision Screening which investigated whether illiterate adults enrolled in illiteracy programs might have undetected visual problems that were interfering with their quest for literacy. Reports that a startling 66 percent of adults have vision problems.

Available from ERIC/RCS:

*Adult Literacy: Contexts and Challenges,* by Anabel Powell Newman and Caroline Beverstock. (G12; $10.50)

*Adult Literacies: Intersections with Elementary and Secondary Education,* by Caroline Beverstock and Anabel P. Newman (G21; $20.00)

Digests and FAST Bibs

D45 - The Issue: Adult Literacy Assessment
D54 - Multiplicities of Literacies in the 1990s
F69 - Workplace Literacy: An Update
F70 - Adult Literacy: Instructional Strategies

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