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PROJECT LITERACY ADULT AFRICAN LANGUAGE LITERACY COURSE

The African language literacy course used by ProJect Literacy is called ADULT BREAKTHROUGH. It is an adaptation for adults of the Molteno PIOJeCC'S Breakthrough for children. The learning process of the original course has been

accelerated to meet the adult need to achieve results as quickly as possible and is supplemented by a section of life skills needed by adults in an urban environment.

Many

people have asked:

Why African language literacy before English or Afrikaans?

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Children can easily be put into an inversion language programme where they are taught to be literate in a language not their own. Their own language is not entrenched in their lives and being young they can learn an additional language with ease.

Adults are different. First of all their language is already entrenched in their lives. It is their personal, intimate means of communicating with loved ones, friends and family. They express their hopes and aspirations - political and personal - through this medium. They need to be able to communicate in a written form in their own tongue.

Most psychologists agree that people's mental health is affected by two major factors

- their self image

- their ability to control their environment.

Illiterate people are continually bombarded with negative feedback about themselves. They are always being told how stupid and backward they are and that they will never be any different.

Consequently they have a very poor self-image.

In addition, being illiterate in an industrialised society gives illiterates very little control over their environment. They therefore feel stupid, afraid, anxious and resentful. They often develop anti-social withdrawal modes of behaviour where they refuse to ask questions. e.g. asking for help or explanations, to volunteer information, etc. They become sullen, depressed and concealing, often compliant because they just cannot cope. Win;

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whole attitude affects their life situation at home and at work. What they need is a quick injection of self-confidence and a skill which gives them a chance to control a part of their environment as soon as possible.

Mother tongue literacy is the easiest and quickest way of meeting the above two urgent requirements. To become literate in a second or third language which you cannot speak properly takes many years and is often a difficult and negative experience itself. Mother tongue literacy gives immediate joy and easy success to the learners. Their self image is enhanced quickly. Confidence is increased by their ability to control a hitherto unknown area of their lives.

Illiterate also need to understand many abstract concepts in their mother tongue which are often not understandable in a second or third language. Linguistic concepts like sentence construction, grouping of ideas, generalising, categorising of similar things are

all note easily explained in another tongue.

Certain skills like:

- the use of alphabetical order in storing and retrieving information

- the alphabetising of first, second, third and fourth letter words

- the use of code books, telephone directories and dictionaries, are also much more easily grasped through the medium of the another tongue.

Finally if illiterate people get a good grounding in their mother tongue, and their first experience of literacy is of a high quality, they will acquire language skills which greatly facilitate their learning a second or third language.

#### GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ADULT BREAKTHROUGH

##### Language/Literacy Tuition

Breakthrough is a another tongue literacy programme which leads learners from total illiteracy to a high degree of literacy where they can read fluently and write with ease. From the start learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. The teacher is merely a facilitator amongst a team of equals. The course is learner centred and therefore stimulating and interesting to the learners who are, in addition, able to learn through active involvement in the learning process. It follows a language experience approach where reading, writing, speaking, spelling and punctuation are taught simultaneously as an integrated language experience. Learners are able to progress as quickly as possible as the class is taught in ability groups who are kept busy all the time. Groups take turns in coming to the teaching corner where intensive tuition is given, enabling teachers to accurately monitor each learner's progress. At the same time the ability grouping allows flexibility in the classroom and learners are able to learn,

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at their own pace, slow and fast learners alike.

#### Life Skills Tuition

In addition to this language/literacy tuition, learners are taught certain life skills which they need in their work and home environment and which help them to cope with living in an industrial urban area. These are taught parallel to the above course and are slotted in when the degree of literacy acquisition enables the learners to cope with them. By the end of the course learners will be able to write names, addresses, write letters, dates, ID numbers, telephone numbers, take basic messages, read payslips, TV programmes, know the importance of alphabetical order and will be able to use postal code books, telephone directories and another tongue/English/Afrikaans dictionaries. They will be well equipped to go on to second or third language acquisition (e.g. English and Afrikaans) as well as numeracy and/or basic arithmetic.

#### Duration

For optimum benefit and lasting effects, the literacy course should continue for 246 hours. Fast learners can manage with between 180 - 200 hours, but Project Literacy recommends a full 246 hours.

#### Efficacy of the course

Teachers and learners alike testify to the efficacy of the course. Learners feel extremely confident because of the standard of their literacy achievement. Teachers are delighted by the rapid progress of the learners and the learners themselves have remarked, during the course, how important it is to attend every lesson. As so much progress takes place each lesson, they are likely to be left behind even if they miss only one lesson. (The ability grouping in the classroom enables a learner who has been absent to catch up successfully.)

Furthermore, in spite of the fact that this Breakthrough course is an African language literacy course only) and does not encompass English, Afrikaans or computational skills, learners find that on completion of the course they are able to cope with a wide variety of written and numerical skills outside their mother tongue linguistic experience. For instance, they can read English and Afrikaans names of shops, streets and businesses as well as many other, non-mother tongue words plus numerical statements which hitherto meant nothing to them. Language transference is also possible, as information received by learners in Afrikaans or English can be noted down in mother tongue and relayed again in English or Afrikaans.

NB: It is important to realise that within all groups of illiterate learners those with severe learning disabilities and perceptual problems will be encountered. These adults whose problems should have been attended to during their childhood often prove to be ineducable or at best are very slow learners. Breakthrough 13 1

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great boon to them as the sentence maker, a remarkable learning aid, enables them to achieve a degree of literacy hitherto not possible.

#### DETAILS OF THE COURSE

The course is made up of four separate stages, Prestage 1, Stage 1, Stage 2, and Stage 3.

##### Prestage 1

In this stage learners are:

- enabled to get to know the teacher and their fellow learners
- orientated about the new environment in their lives, literacy and all it entails
- informed and motivated about the course they are taking -

##### Breakthrough

- provided with a step by step plan to WRITE accurately and legibly which is taught in a meaningful way and culminates in the learners being able to copy the first sentences which are taught at the teaching corner in Stage 1. These writing skills are learnt through the acquisition of two important basic skills, the writing of their names and the date.

## Stage 1

In this stage learners are taught the FIRST preselected COREMDRDS in the form of carefully structured sequential sentences. These sentences are elicited from conversations at the Teacher's Corner which have arisen from discussions of posters and/or life situations. The discussions which often become lively debates, are important stimulation for learners. In the process they are helped to articulate clearly what actually interests and concerns them. The concept of a sentence is explored and learners are taught punctuation immediately, i.e. the use of capital letters, full stops and commas.

As soon as learners have learnt how to read the first key sentence they are shown the correct letter formation and placement of the letters employed in the sentence and supplied with worksheets of each particular letter. In addition (for the first two key sentences only) they are provided with a copy of the key sentence which they are able to copy as reinforcement of the lesson. The second key sentence is taught in the same manner. As soon as learners know both these first two sentences thoroughly and recognise all the words in them, they are given their own individual sentence makers with these words. They then consolidate their knowledge of these words by making a variety of different sentences with them on their sentence maker and copy them into their books. Gradually the words are learnt in greater detail, i.e. syllables and separate letter sounds, and learners are able to take them down from dictation.

Learners continue to learn the remainder of the first core words

through the different key sentences. After each sentence is learnt, they are given the new words to use in their sentence makers and are provided with the relevant worksheets of the new letters for re-inforcement and writing practice. In this manner learners are able to copy their own individual sentences. Dictation is given at intervals after the introduction of two to four new words so that the learners progress is carefully monitored.

This process continues until approximately all 20 first core words are known. Learners are thus doing basic reading and writing exercises simultaneously. The first core words are chosen to introduce all small letters used in the language taught, and the majority of them have a single consonant followed by a vowel. At the end of this stage, learners know all the letters used in their , Hall alike, and can write about 100 sentences. In addition, Simple life skills have been acquired, e.g. names of personnel at work, family names, dates and telephone numbers.

The above integrated method - hallmark of Breakthrough - where oral work, reading, writing and spelling are taught simultaneously - meets the adults' need for rapid progress. 1

#### Stage 2

This stage is exciting for learners as it is far more creative than the previous two stages. Learners use their previously learnt first core words and new ones elicited from the conversations at the teaching corner, plus any other words of their own choice. They are therefore able to be original, each learner's sentences being different from those of their fellow learners. During this stage they not only increase their vocabulary tremendously (learning at least all the words in the sentence maker) but acquire a sound knowledge of the workings of their language, e.g. structures, syntax and morphology.

Further refinements of punctuation like direct speech are also taught. All this is possible because the Learner's sentence "Ekul enables learners to continually construct a great variety of sentences. Learners are also encouraged to read each others work and to read additional readers, magazines and articles. They are also encouraged to bring articles/pictures to class for discussion at the Teacher's Corner. Reading lessons also provide exciting stimulation. By the end of Stage 2, they no longer require the sentence makers to help them write. They have in fact "broken through to literacy". The phonic frieze is used to make sure that learners know all the sounds in their language and its pictures inspire learners to write interesting essays. Being a series of verbs, it is very useful too for giving learners practice in the many verbal extensions in the African language.

#### Stage 3

Finally in this Stage. learners concentrate on communication skills

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- talking, reading and writing. They write essays, letters, news items, descriptions of real life situations and creative stories. By this stage they are able to put down in writing anything they think about - they are in fact literate in their own language. They are encouraged to read and write at ever increasing levels of difficulty so that they are able to read all pertinent written material.

Final life skills like the importance of alphabetical order in storing and retrieving information are taught as well as how to take basic messages and fill in relevant forms, etc. Learners are now ready for second and third language acquisition as well as further training in numeracy skills.

#### ADAPTATIONS FOR ADULTS OF BREAKTHROUGH EQUIPMENT

Teacher's Sentence Maker, Learner's Sentence Maker and wordstore. The sentence makers (TSM and LSM) and the wordstore are used unaltered with the addition of capital letters and other key words frequently used by adult learners. Although the basic core vocabulary in the sentence makers could be changed to be more suitable and relevant for adults (and we are making notes of these specific words), Project Literacy's experience has been that adults are happy to use the sentence maker as is with the addition of a few

crucial words and letters. Furthermore, any limitations imposed by the preselected core vocabulary, are overcome by learners being able to make additional words from the existing morphemes and being able to add any special whole words of their choice to their LSM during Stage 2. Ideally Project Literacy would like to change a section of the core Vocabulary, but this will come with further experimentation.

#### POSTERS AND PPDNIC FRIEZE

All the posters provided for the original Breakthrough for children have been used in the classroom in our experimental classes. The three posters relating to the Town, 3 Hone in the Township and the Farm scene are acceptable to adult learners. The poster of the children studying Breakthrough has been replaced by adult learners using Breakthrough. Many additional posters are used including a variety of work and recreational scenes for men and women in town and rural settings. Learners are encouraged to bring their own pictures as well. The greater the variety of posters, the more stimulation for the learners.

The phonic frieze pictures have been selectively replaced. All pictures which were particularly childish have been replaced with pictures involving adults.

#### READERS

The original Breakthrough readers have been eschewed completely. Learners are encouraged to read each others work. Project Literacy  
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Learners are encouraged to read each others work. Project Literacy is in the process of developing its own readers based on neo-literates' own work. To date, about twenty essays ranging from "hhat kind of leader I wish to have in the Republic of South Africa" to 'lerequited Love" have been written in North Sotho. During this experinental stage, learners are encouraged to read the graded readers provided in the schools, i.e. A Re Bale in North Sotho. Although these are not really suitable subject natter, their subject matter is more adult than the original Breakthrough readers and they at least provide graded reading to enable learners to nonitor their own progress. Any newspapers, magazines, articles, health tracts, etc. are also used ln the classroom. Learners are encouraged to read anything they can lay their hands on! Readers from Learn and Teach, Operatlon Upgrade and any other relevant sources are also used.

The developnent of new posters, phonic friezes and suitable readers is an ongoing process at Proaect Literacy. All new developments are tested in the classrooms.