

Adult Education and Literacy in the United States

A Syllabus and Resources for an Online Course of Self-Study

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Each year many people start work in adult education and literacy development without much background in the field. Others who have worked in the field for a while may wish to deepen their knowledge of the field. To give people a chance to learn more about the field and its history, policies, practices and issues that it deals with I have developed this syllabus for self-study. It provides guidance to 12 reports of mine which are available for free downloading online. Reading one report a week will provide a one semester, 12 week course of self-study. Except for number 1.1, these resources are located online at www.nald.ca at the Library pages for the site. To find any of these resources search the NALD Library pages using Sticht for my last name, or google my name and the title of the report.

Syllabus and Resources

Part 1: History of and Perspective on the Adult Education and Literacy System (AELS) of the United States

1.1. The Rise of the Adult Education and Literacy System in the United States: 1600-2000. [A 400 year history of activities leading to the Adult Education Act of 1966 and the emergence of the present day AELS with organizations and individuals involved in this rise. Online at www.ncsall.net/?id=576.]

1.2. Beyond 2000: Future Directions for Adult Education. [Looks at social, demographic, science, economic and technology trends with implications for the AELS; examines government and legislative trends with implications for the future of the AELS.]

1.3. The Adult Education and Literacy System (AELS) in the United States: Moving From the Margins to the Mainstream of Education. [Includes the growing value of the Adult Education and Literacy System (AELS) in the new millennium; value of AELS for improving adults' and children's health, learning and schooling; need for mainstreaming the AELS in U.S. education; strengthening the AELS.]

Part 2. Testing, Assessment, and Accountability in the AELS.

2.1. Adult Literacy in the United States: A Compendium of Quantitative Data With Interpretive Comments. [Presents a developmental theory of literacy and history of and items from standardized tests in the U.S. including military tests from World War I to 1990s and all mass literacy tests for adults from 1930s to the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) of 1993, which is similar to the NAAL of 2003. Presents data on relationships of parents education to the literacy of their children; relationships of adult literacy to occupations; and samples of pre- and post-test gains for over 30 programs, including longitudinal growth curves for some programs.]

2.2. Accountability in Adult Literacy Education: Focus on Workplace Literacy Resources for Program Design, Assessment, Testing, & Evaluation. [Provides knowledge resources for designing, delivering and evaluating workplace literacy programs; discusses testing and accountability in adult literacy programs in the Workforce Education Act of 1998 still in effect as of 2007; determining how many adults are lacking in workforce literacy: the national and international adult literacy surveys.]

Part 3. Curriculum Theory With Case Studies Illustrating Applications to Adult Education and Literacy Programs.

3.1. Functional Context Education: Making learning relevant (1997 edition). [Eight chapters including The Power of Adult Literacy Education; Some Challenges of Diversity for Adult Literacy Education. Views On Contemporary Cognitive Science; Introduction to Functional Context Education; Functional Context Education and Literacy Instruction; and four case studies in applying Functional Context Education to the design of programs that integrate (or embed, contextualize) basic skills and vocational or parenting education. (workplace literacy, family literacy).]

3.2. Functional Context Education: Making Learning Relevant in the 21st Century (2005 edition). [Functional Context Education (FCE) materials available online in several nations; the Adult Literacy and Life skills (ALL) survey, National Adult Assessment of Literacy (NAAL) survey; FCE in historical perspective, (1860-Present) including Paulo Freire and Learner Centered, Participatory Literacy Education. Methodologies used in adult literacy research for determining what is relevant to youth and adult learners; five case studies illustrating the application of FCE in parenting, vocational training, and health literacy.]

Part 4. Listening and Reading Theory and Practice With Adult Learners

4.1. Auding and Reading: A Developmental Model. [This is the first book applying modern cognitive science to oracy

(listening to and speaking language) and its transfer to literacy development with children and adults. It presents an early version of Gough's "simple model of reading" stating that Reading=Decoding+Comprehension (measured by listening). It provides an extensive review of research on language development, relationships of listening to reading, and the evaluation of four hypotheses derived from the simple model presented in the book.

4.2. Teaching Reading With Adults. [This paper discusses literacy as the mastery of graphics technology. It shows how the basic elements of the graphic medium - its relative permanence, its ability to be arrayed in space, and its use of the properties of light - work together to permit literates to generate (write) and access (read) massive collections of knowledge; to analyze and synthesize discrete information into coherent bodies of knowledge, and to perform complex procedures with accuracy and efficiency.

4.3. Seven Pioneering Adult Literacy Educators in the History of Teaching Reading With Adults in the United States. [Throughout the 20th century both Synthetic and Analytic methods of teaching reading were favored by different adult literacy educators. Favoring the Synthetic or "code" methods are Harriet A. Jacobs, J. Duncan Spaeth and Frank Laubach. Favoring the Analytic or "meaning making " methods are Cora Wilson Stewart, Paul Witty, Francis P. Robinson, and Septima Poinsette Clark. This paper discusses teaching innovations introduced by each of these pioneers in adult literacy education.]

5. Policy Papers

5.1. Toward a Multiple Life Cycles Education Policy: Investing in the Education of Adults to Improve the Educability of Children. [This paper argues for education policy that recognizes that literacy is transferred across generations from parents to their children. Therefore, we need to have a much larger investment in the education of youth and adults who are parents or who will be parents. Adult literacy education affects multiple life cycles. An extensive review is presented of research on early childhood education, relationships of parent's education to children's literacy, parenting and preschool effectiveness, and other issues.]

5.2 Reforming Adult Literacy Education: Transforming Local Programs Into National Systems In Canada, the United Kingdom & the United States. [Activities are underway in these three nations for transforming adult literacy education from a variety of disparate programs into organized systems of education for adults. Activities include: 1. Scale of Need: determining how many adults are in need of adult basic skills education. 2. Access to Provision: determining how many adults are aware of, have access to and enroll in adult literacy education provision. 3. Nature of Provision: determining the nature of the delivery system of adult literacy provision. 4. Quality of Provision: determining the need for improved quality. 5. Accountability of Provision: improving methods for determining student learning and other outcomes.]