Conference Presentations
2009 “Capacity building in local literacy associations / Le renforcement des capacités dans les associations locales s’occupant de l’alphabétisation”, 6th Pan-African Conference on Reading for All, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
2003 “Shell books: A way to increase reading material locally”, Poster presentation. 3rd Pan-African Conference on Reading for All, Kampala, Uganda.

Publications

Selected Professional Presentations
The Impact of Representations of Leadership and Literacy on Capacity Building:
A West African Case Study

ABSTRACT

The need to develop sustainable organizations capable of working towards development objectives, including literacy, has resulted in an emphasis on capacity building in the international development community. This case study of a mother tongue literacy program in existence for over 20 years examines how capacity building is related to the representations of leadership and of literacy constructed by Ifè (Ana) people of Togo and Benin. Most of the 41 interviewees are leaders in the local associations, or in the umbrella organization which birthed them. Theories underpinning this study include the theories of représentations sociales (social representations) from French scholarship in social sciences, of leadership, and of literacy and development.

One significant finding was that much of the capacity building at the personnel and organizational levels is based on decisions made by technical advisors and/or funders. Nevertheless, Ifè leadership themes are clearly reflected in the choices made by program leaders for personnel development, such as use of the mentorship model for supervisor and coordinator training. The most pertinent representations of leadership to organizational capacity building are competence, creativity, and solidarity. However, in personnel and community capacity enhancement, qualities pertinent to the development of relationships such as patience, faithfulness, caring, and respect are crucial for capacity building effectiveness. Meanwhile, representations of literacy, such as literacy as openness and development, literacy as full participation in society, and mother tongue literacy as a means of preserving the culture, strongly influence the literacy program’s emphasis on community development. In addition, because biliterates are seen as having a responsibility to monolinguals, the program produces translated and adapted development materials among its texts and offers writers’ workshops to program teachers.

The data provided by this study discusses leadership and followership qualities valued by one African culture, so is useful to the development or refinement of leadership theories and models, particularly as regards African leadership and leadership in volunteer organizations. It also contributes to further theorizing regarding the relationship between literacy and development. It may also inform training used in cross-cultural contexts. Recommendations for literacy program leaders and other stakeholders in literacy and development efforts are included.

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