**New Papers
on Higher Education**

Studies and Research

Study Service
in Adult Education:
Analysis of an Experience

Faculty of Education
University of Luján/Argentina

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Other studies in the series *New Papers on Higher Education. Studies and Research*:

1. *Evaluation Procedures used to Measure the Efficiency of Higher Education Systems and Institutions.* A study conducted by: The International Association for Educational Assessment. Coordinator: W.B. Dockrell. Unesco 1990. ED-90/WS-10

CONTENTS

This study is the result of an experimental project in the participation of higher education establishments - including both teachers and students -- in community development in the areas of literacy training and adult education carried out by the Department of Education of the National University of Luján, Argentina.

This project is part of a Unesco programme of activities to stimulate innovation, foster democratization of education and encourage higher education to contribute to the development and enhancement of the rest of the education system.

Since 1976, Unesco has been involved in examining different aspects of university service programmes: aims, concepts, administrative structure, relation between work and study, etc. In 1983 this examination concluded with the publication[1] of 21 case-studies on the experience gained by a representative number of countries, based on information received by the Secretariat from Member States between 1978 and 1982. Thanks to these monographs and to the analytical reports drawn up in previous years, an introduction was drafted in which certain aspects of the university service are examined in greater detail, and central tendencies and some of the shortcomings and problems encountered are identified.

Above all, it was the information obtained on this latter aspect which persuaded us to carry out an experimental university social service project, the primary aim of which was to evaluate the programme to be implemented (in this case literacy training

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1.   'Study service: a tool of innovation in higher education' in the series Papers on Higher Education No. 6, Unesco, Paris, 1984 (ED-83/WS/101).

and adult education), using instruments and procedures designed specifically for this purpose. The aim was that the monitoring of the project and its final results would produce basic material from which to analyse the possibility of developing methods for evaluating university social service programmes.

In fact, most of the replies to the Unesco survey on university service showed that those responsible were generally in favour. However, they also showed that no real procedures or instruments existed for a rigorous evaluation of activities or programmes. In general, the favourable assessments ascribed an educational and training value to university service. Programmes were seen as making students and teachers more aware of their social obligations to the community and the nation, giving them a clearer perception of collective problems and requirements. It was also emphasized that university service would make preparation for future employment easier and would contribute to more efficient professional training. The answers to the Unesco survey frequently underline the different educational, social and cultural benefits derived by communities.

From our point of view, another important problem which arose in carrying out university service programmes was that there was virtually no information available on the systematic, properly articulated effort required to integrate programme activities with the university curriculum. University service was admittedly presented in relation to the education process but, as it was not an integral part of it, there was a risk of its becoming a parallel activity.

For all these reasons it was proposed to the University of Luján that the project should monitor the following aspects of university social service: (i) the impact on the community and on the students and teachers themselves; (ii) the effectiveness of the activities carried out and evaluation of the results obtained in the fields of literacy training and adult education; (iii) integration of university service activities in the university programme and curriculum.

The specialists in the University Education Department drew up a rigorous, well articulated project based on these aspects.

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The results of their work are analysed in this study and undoubtedly constitute a significant step forward in the necessary evaluation of university social service programmes and in the preparation of possible evaluation methods. But this text goes even further, and makes interesting contributions to conceptual and theoretical reflection on university service and its impact as a tool of innovation and democratization.

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes a university social service (USS) experiment in literacy training and adult education carried out during the 1986 academic year (March-December) at the National University of Luján in the Province of Buenos Aires.

The bases of the project were worked out in December 1985 in conjunction with the Institute of Educational Sciences in the Faculty of Arts of Buenos Aires University. Further development was left to each establishment, given the need for flexible adaptation to the working conditions of each university unit and to the social environment concerned.

This report relates the USS experience at the National University of Luján, and reflects only the initial stages of what will necessarily be an ongoing project. For a better understanding of the study it should be borne in mind that experiments in people's education have been carried out by Argentine universities since 1966. The best structured and integrated experiment, carried out by the University Extension Department of Buenos Aires University, began in 1957 and was discontinued in 1966 when the dicatorship took control of the university. Except for the period 1973/1974, during which attempts were made to link the university with people's education, the period of military dictatorship kept the university away from such activities. It is for this reason that in this study reference is made to 'starting over again': it was possible to resume these activities, rethink them and propose new types of teaching work.

A fund of knowledge has thus been collected by a team of teachers and students who, for the first time in many years, have benefited from instituti.nal and socio-political conditions conducive to this type of experiment.

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROJECT

Argentine universities in 1986

The aim of this project was to respond to the priorities stated in the context of the process of democratizing education in Argentina, both in the internal democratization of higher education and in its participation in the investigation of the glaring problems affecting socially underprivileged sectors, and in the elaboration of possible soluticns to these problems.

A basic dimension of this democratizing process is to find the right link between the functions of teaching, research and service. One of the central tasks in this respect is to develop a profile of the university graduate with the following characteristics:

awareness of the need to put professional knowledge and training at the service of social and community problems;

ability to link professional training to the responses required by the social, political and economic situation which the country is going through;

ability to approach practical work problems in a scientific manner, i.e. the ability to analyse scientifically everyday working situations and to devise new action strategies;

a high level of academic training, and the ability to apply an interdisciplinary approach to one's professional field.

These aspects justify the priority given to the planning, implementation and evaluation of university social service programmes, devised as strategies for training future professionals by involving them in community activities. Given the scarcity of scientific information about experiments which

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try to link theoretical training with work experience and the social function of each profession, the introduction and evaluation of alternative USS schemes which take into account student training aspects as well as the impact on the community are a possible way of generating the knowledge necessary to change university teaching methods.

This requirement is particularly important in countries like Argentina where, although in the past there have been experiments in community projects in which students and teachers from different disciplines have taken part, universities have been the victims of successive acts of authoritarian interference which have destroyed a collective memory now desperately needing to be recovered for both the present and the future. This experimental university social service project in the field of adult education and literacy training is part of the task, both for the University of Buenos Aires and for the University of Luján, of reconstructing and recuperating innovatory initiatives which characterized the decades of the 1960s and the 1970s, and which were thwarted by government action in 1966, 1974 and 1980. These initiatives, taken by the University Extension Department of the University of Buenos Aires, were concerned with the training of adult education professionals at the National University of Luján.

Institution in which the project was carried out

The National University of Luján is a modern university founded in 1972 in the city of Luján in the Province of Buenos Aires.

The 1980 National Census for Luján records 61,520 inhabitants. The city is situated at the junction of two development areas in the the Province of Buenos Aires, on the boundary between the metropolitan area – the largest urban and industrial concentration in the country – and the beginning of the Wet Pampas, the richest cattle-breeding territory in the country.

The university was created in response to a project aimed at linking academic activity with regional development. Here one of the main aims was to meet the needs of the surrounding community. Linkage with the requirements of the area meant interaction

between the National University of Luján and companies, institutions and community bodies which would benefit the community through the transfer of technology and services from the university.

The National University of Luján carried on its activities up to 1980, when it was closed down by the military government under Law 22.167. In 1984, with the advent of the democratic government, the National Congress decreed its reopening.

In 1986 the university had 3,800 students and offered nine degree courses in nutritional sciences, agriculture, administration, social development, history, geography, education science, computer science and population studies.

Since its creation the university has offered a degree in education along the lines of what are described as 'applied social science studies'. Initially, and until the university was closed down, the course comprised two levels. On completion of the first level, which lasted about three years, a Technical University Certificate was awarded, with one of two options: adult education or educational technology. The second level, which lasted a further two years, led to a degree in lifelong education, with adult education as one of its options. The entire course was directed towards training for employment in non-formal education. When it reopened, the university prepared a plan for a degree in education 'relevant to the reality of the country, which will enable graduates to fit into the labour market' (Rectorial Resolution No. 099/84).

The aim of the new curriculum, which came into operation in March 1985, is to train students for both the formal and the non-formal systems; in accordance with the recommended approach for university education, it stresses general professional training. However, it was considered desirable to maintain some flexibility of choice, so that the last six degree subjects are options, one of which is adult education.

The Department of Education, the organ of the National University of Luján responsible for the agreement with Unesco,

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has an Adult Education Division which co-ordinated the implementation of the USS project. When the project began there were 250 students in the first three years of the degree course in education science introduced in 1985.

Students and teachers from the Department of Education took part in the USS project. As the university is departmental in structure - which makes interdepartmental activities easier to arrange - it may be envisaged that, on the conclusion of the initial stage of experimentation and consolidation, it will be possible to extend the work and carry out interdisciplinary projects involving teachers, researchers and students from other departments and degree courses.

Project subprogrammes

The USS project devised a literacy and post-literacy training programme for a district on the outskirts of Luján, in which the teaching function would be carried out by students in the second year of the education science course. The project included two interdependent subprogrammes: the education and community organization service and the student training service, included in the university structure.

The community education programme was drawn up bearing in mind both the characteristics of the population (low socio-economic and educational level, lack of neighbourhood organization, scattered dwellings, failure of the literacy centres previously set up) and the characteristics of the literacy trainers (young students in their second year of study, most of whom had neither teaching experience nor theoretical or practical training in adult education).

Inclusion in the university structure concentrated on a student training programme run by teachers in the Adult Education Division, who organized a group workshop to reflect on the task in hand, accompanied by field work and intervals for personal consultations.

Education and community organization subprogrammes

As the population in the neighbourhood chosen for the project was scattered and there was no neighbourhood organization, a model was put forward for establishing contact with families which would gradually expand to include the sharing of responsibilities among neighbours with a view, in the long term, to establishing neighbourhood organizations.

The service was 'peripatetic'; the university students recruited their students by a house-to-house campaign, and agreed upon the study timetable with the interested adults. With this system they were able to cater for both family units (adults and children) and small groups of neighbours who met in a house to study together. The recruitment drive to invite adults to join the education programme began at the end of June 1986, and the scheme was in operation by mid-July. Each student attended at least one family group twice weekly until mid-December (the end of the academic year in Argentina). The programme started up again in the week beginning 16 March 1987.

After several months of work, groups with specific educational interests and needs were identified. Meetings were also arranged with women, to study the health problems of pregnant women and to help prepare family kitchen gardens. In the search for an immediate practical activity on which to base a feeling of interdependence among the population, a group of men got together to prepare building blocks for a self-housing project, with assistance from a mutual aid organization and shared tools provided by USS. Twenty families were continuously at work, which meant that around 100 people were involved either directly or indirectly. Twenty adults and about ten children regularly took part in educational activities.

Student training subprogramme

In order to incorporate the work of the students in their regular study activities, it was proposed that the service should be an alternative to compulsory practical courses. A student training workshop was set up as a place for permanent reflection, with an interdisciplinary outlook and linked to regular, systematic

professional training. The aim of the workshop was to provide practical skills (literacy training methods, how to use the workbook) and to develop a critical and constructive view of the teacher's role. The students' previous and current experience provided matter for reflection, the aim being to develop a suitable teaching model which might influence teaching practice.

Given the characteristics of the group, work was concentrated progressively on building up a 'counterdefinition' of reality to offset the traditional views held by the students, due to their social and cultural origins, regarding the phenomenon of urban poverty. The experience showed that the main difficulty for the students as people's educators was not so much the lack of technical and methodological training – which can be acquired in a relatively short period – as the patterns of perception, evaluation and behaviour imposed on them by the dominant culture.

II. UNIVERSITY SOCIAL SERVICE

The experiment is based on three concepts which should be clarified: university social service, people's education and student training.

For the development of the project, by USS is meant the performance of productive work by students as an integral part of their university course, directed at the study and solution of the problems of the socially and economically disadvantaged sectors of the population. Productive work is defined as an activity which produces goods or services which are useful to society, independently of the economic value which may be attributed to them in a given context.

The diversity of experiences and conceptual approaches is shown in the bibliography in which the link between productive work and education is analysed (Unesco, 1980, Brusilovsky, 1980). The guiding principle is to complement study with work, so as to find the right connection between theory and practice in the learning process, to make professional practice contribute to the acquisition of scientific methods and skills adapted to real situations. This option was preferred to other guidelines customarily adopted for experiements in the work-study relationship (Petty, Vera, Tobin, 1976).

Learning and work are independent, parallel activities. Our view is that work develops social responsibility, but that there is no systematic link with academic activities.

Learning is subordinate to work, and is organized according to the specific requirements of the job.

Work is incorporated when it performs a role in learning, and activity is stimulated only if it facilitates a learning

process which is considered relevant from the point of view of a pre-existing curriculum.

When work is incorporated in regular academic activity, projects must be organized so that researchers, teachers and students play a responsible role in solving the priority problems of society, whether by applying existing knowledge or by generating new knowledge to give direction to social behaviour. In this way, research itself is included in the service, thus extending its scope, and the risk of acting without critical reflection is avoided.

The training objectives of higher education programmes should cover two aspects: education for a given profession and general education for work (Brusilovsky, 1980). Education for the profession requires 'pre-service' scientific and technical training for a specific profession. General education for work should prepare the student for entry into the world of work as well as providing the necessary skills, understanding and commitment to deal with social priorities. On the one hand, it should facilitate understanding of the social, economic and political conditions of the world of work, so that students start their working life in a thinking and responsible way. On the other hand, it should enable students to make contact with different aspects of the reality of their country and thus develop an attitude of social commitment, particularly in relation to groups of which they have usually no direct experience, due to their own social origins.

A USS project should be organized in such a way as to integrate all these aspects of training in order to help students identify, investigate, understand and solve the major problems of their society.

If USS is regarded as part of what is taught at university, pedagogical planning ought to address the need to offer students emotional support in recognizing and surmounting the anxiety and confusion caused by confrontation with new situations, over and above the theoretical and technical-methodological training required to put their skills into practice.

One of the main problems which must be considered in relation to scientific and technical training is what is meant by a student's 'common sense' (A. Gramsci), 'everyday thinking' (A. Heller) and 'common knowledge'. This is particularly important in cases where the professional activity involves working with people rather than things (e.g. education, sociology, health care professions, etc.). Here, the way in which communication is established and problems of professional practice are resolved is usually conditioned not only by what has been learned in theory at university but also by the 'view' one holds of the population with which one is working, which gives rise to contradictions in practice. This happens because scientific and everyday thought differ in content, structure and methods, and when scientific knowledge penetrates everyday thought, it is assimilated by and becomes a part of the structure of everyday knowledge (A. Heller, 1977:322).

USS may be seen as a central strategy in confronting this problem. Experience shows that standard teaching practice in universities fails to solve this problem: lack of persistence in the theoretical framework or incoherence in its application to professional practice is a common criticism of the university, which has always stressed, at least as ideals, the transmission of scientific and technical knowledge and the training of people to produce such knowledge. It is to the credit of the critical approach to education that it seeks to interpret the principles underlying scientific theories. But this approach from the cognitive level does not always lead to a radical modification of students' views about the world, or to the adoption of a new outlook. It is to be hoped that knowledge acquired from the standpoint of social reality will change students' attitudes and that they will learn to perceive and analyse from a new angle. However, experience shows that this approach is not sufficient. If the theories studied do not help them to leave behind the frames of reference used previously to construct reality, they will probably never interiorize them; or they will maintain contradictory world views – the 'common sense' and the scientific views; or their everyday thought will end up assimilating this knowledge without fundamentally changing the essence of their daily professional approach (A. Heller, 1977).

This situation is usually reflected in the contradiction between the discourse concerning the aims of a task or the theories to interpret reality and guide one's conduct, and the discourse revealing the frames of reference used to interpret specific situatio.·· and to justify established rules and practices which i.egate the proposed objective.

The general failure to overcome this contradiction is the result of the teaching methods predominantly used at university:

Scientific knowledge is transmitted and 'consumed' as a finished product, regarded as self-evident irrespective of the historical-social context which gave rise to it; when knowledge is set in a specific context, students are not taught how to produce knowledge in and for a specific situation.

Students' everyday knowledge is not analysed with reference to the theories and methods of scientific knowledge; as a result, everyday knowledge persists, influencing and creating contradictions in professional practice, which is the product of both types of knowledge: one, applied deliberately and explicitly; the other, acting from the base which makes it effective, i.e. the failure to recognize that it exists, thus giving to an arbitrary representation of reality the appearance of being 'natural'.

'Practical work' at university generally consists of activities which, although they may include observation of situations, are usually based on abstract profiles having no connection with reality, so that they become merely an exercise in simulation.

The university thus finds itself in a dilemma between the generally acknowledged aim of developing professional people who are both critical and creative, and the reality of more generalized teaching practice.

From this point of view, one of the main aims of a university social service should be to find a solution to this contradiction and to overcome the lack of continuity between everyday and scientific knowledge.

Target population

It is our opinion that university service should give priority to the most underprivileged sectors. This definition is in response to a political aim: the decision that universities should contribute to the process of overcoming economic, social, political and cultural inequalities. In countries where a large proportion of the population is excluded from any effective participation in the production and consumption of consumer goods, education, recreational facilities and information, USS should be committed to action and research on strategies aimed at improving the physical and non-physical quality of life of those sectors of the population. With this in view, it should respond to the needs of populations and foster their organizational ability to participate in solving their own problems.

To organize a service which aims to respond to the needs of the population, a distinction must be drawn between the concepts of objective and subjective need (Sirvent, Brusilovsky, 1983). By objective need is understood the existence of situations of inequality and deprivation in relation to a desirable, and possible, model of social and political life. Subjective need refers to the way in which this deprivation is felt and recognized by the affected population. Subjective recognition of a need may or may not coincide with the objective situation; frequently the populations with the greatest needs are least aware of the causes of the existing inequalities and ways of overcoming them. This conceptual distinction is important, not only from the theoretical point of view but also because of its possible consequences for action. If USS action were based only on the subjective needs expressed by the population, it would run the risk of dealing only with existing situations of inequality. Though perceived needs should be used as a starting-point, the population should be made to recognize the difficulties and obstacles to their participation in the consumption and production of social goods of all kinds. Population needs are not only basic physical needs such as health care, housing and food, but also non-physical needs such as the need to participate, to create and to reflect, which are less obvious but may condition the possibility of satisfying their physical needs.

As regards the best approach to this problem, USS should foster or reinforce the organizational ability of the community in order to make possible genuine participation in the taking of decisions which affect its daily life, particularly in solving collective objective needs.

In short, the guiding concept is that a USS project is defined by the purpose it fulfils for the students, for the university institution and for the target population.

For the student, it should provide an opportunity for learning at, and for work. To achieve this, USS should fulfil two conditions:

Give students the chance to carry out a task which will enable them to link their specific activity both with the project as a whole and with major aspects of the real situation in which they are working.

Provide an environment for critical reflection, going beyond the limitations of everyday knowledge to integrate the contents and methods of scientific knowledge into everday professional activity.

For the university, USS should provide a strategy contributing through direct action and research to the solution of a society's priority problems and to a fairer distribution of cultural capital.

For the target population, it should become a means of creating conditions aimed at improving its quality of life and capacity for self-management with a view to overcoming situations of social, economic and political inequality.

People's education

The literacy and post-literacy training campaign planned and carried out is to be seen as part of a process of people's education. People's education is defined both by the characteristics of the population concerned and by its stated aims.

By people's sectors are meant population groups which, by virtue of their position in the production chain, have no access to power and consequently only limited access to the material goods offered by society, to cultural capital and to the chance to create, consolidate and spread their own views of man and society. In order to identify these people's sectors, the specific social and historical situation of each of them must be analysed, bearing in mind both their position in the productive system and cultural and ideological considerations.

Our view is that the central aim of people's education projects should be twofold: to develop critical awareness and self-organization by the people. The first implies a critical acquisition of knowledge linked to cognitive systems – art, science, technical knowledge, philosophy – and reflection on everyday living conditions. Acquisition of scientific and technical knowledge, rejected by some approaches to people's education on the grounds that this type of knowledge is not generated by popular groups, is considered in this study to be the critical knowledge necessary for a lucid analysis of specific situations, since knowledge of the mechanisms involved enables one to decide on ways and means of controlling them (Bourdieu).

The aim of a systematic review of the whole field of daily life is not only to discover the significance of evaluation, perception and behaviour patterns which – by 'constructing' the reality experienced as the only necessary and possible reality – fulfil the role of preserving the situation of subordination; it is also to allow experimentation and the construction of alternative patterns meaning, values and usages. This implies three convergent and complementary tasks:

To dismantle the dominant value and cognitive components of discourses and practices linked to different aspects of life which, lacking sound foundations and any recognition of the structural causes which determine people's living conditions, show the low self-esteem of the people and groups concerned, and simply perpetuate inequality and resignation to a situation believed by them to be the only one possible for the majority of the population.

To support the development of value and cognitive components which express an understanding of social reality and of alternatives to prevailing behaviour patterns which might constitute a basis for overthrowing existing mechanisms of domination.

To help create situations in which people will experience new values, expressed in new and different behaviour patterns.

This means that one must be alert to identifying the needs which can be used to mobilize the population in order to stimulate new behaviour patterns which will form an alternative individual and collective life-style.

Form this standpoint, learning to read and write constitutes a necessary step in acquiring a basic instrument for the systematic learning of further knowledge, and a way of 'learning to interpret reality'. Literacy and post-literacy training are not seen as training in a neutral technique but rather as a process in which, in addition to specific skills, one also learns how to approach thought and action. The Declaration of the International Literacy Symposium held at Persepolis in 1975 considers that literacy is not only the process of learning the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but that it contributes to the liberation and full development of the individual. 'Viewed in this way, literacy creates the conditions for acquisition of a critical conscience concerning the contradictions of the society in which man lives and concerning its aims; similarly it stimulates initiative and participation in the creation of projects capable of influencing the world, of transforming it and defining the aims of true human development' (quoted in M.I. Infante, 1983:69).

In the context of this view of people's education, the teacher-pupil bond is seen as a horizontal relationship in which the differentiation of roles established does not imply disqualification of the adult's knowledge and abilities. However, it is observed that, in practice, an asymmetrical relationship is 'natural' for the majority of the teachers and in the expectations of pupils. In teacher training 'slogans'

encapsulating ethical instructions concerning equality and respect for adults are frequently used. We assume that persuasion is a mistaken method, since asymmetry, particularly in people's adult education, reflects the objective social situation and the stereotypes used by the teacher, which are not linked to the teaching relationship but rather to the relationship between the identity of their pupils — 'the poor' — and that of their own group — the 'middle class'. If the adult pupil is classified as poor, it is unlikely that a horizontal relationship can emerge, as the relationship enters the network of normal connotations in Argentina where poverty is associated with the word 'villero' i.e. 'base' poverty (R. Guber, 1986).

People's education which will meet the proposed aims requires literacy workers to be trained to identify their own representations and practices, and to review and transform them in a critical spirit. We believe that this can be achieved if the literacy workers — in this case, the education science students — are involved in a teaching experience aimed at going beyond generally accepted structures and contents which conflict with the stated aims of people's education, and the theoretical concepts which serve as a basis for critical analysis of the phenomenon of urban poverty.

University teacher training

The student training programme was geared to this definition of people's education; it also addressed the hypotheses concerning both the conditions under which people's education might take place, and the purpose of their training as future education science teachers and graduates.

Starting from the concept of people's education, the premise was that literacy workers should have a scientific and technical training which would allow them to diagnose a situation, take action and assess the results of their performance. They should be able to identify the conditions which either favour or obstruct the assimilation of instrumental skills (reading and writing, arithemetic etc.) and the development of representations and practices which might improve life for individuals and the community. They should also be able to choose alternative

solutions to problems of instruction, reflection and group and district organization.

In our view, scientific and technical information in itself will not lead to a teaching method such as the one proposed, because consideration must be given to all the factors which affect the characteristics of the teaching role. One of the premises on which the scheme for training students as literacy workers is based is that in every educational acitivity the culture of a social group will be mobilized. In their teaching activity educators bring into play - often unconsciously - symbolic contents from their own culture. Through social intercourse they learn the frames of reference for classifying, assessing and acting which they use to perceive and analyse their world - consisting of their pupils, the teaching situation, school institutions - and this learning process is not consciously aware of its foundations or their institutional and social rationale.

This way of setting out the problem is supported by the concepts of several authors, such as Gramsci's 'common sense' and Agnes Heller's 'everyday thinking and knowledge'. 'Common sense' is the sedimentation of views about the world which reach the conscious mind in a fragmented and scattered form and which develop by interacting with the stratification of social life in a political-cultural class system.

Agnes Heller considers that everyday thinking or knowledge is the 'sum of our knowledge concerning the real world which we use effectively in daily life in the most diverse ways' (A. Heller: 317); it is pragmatic thought, the contents of which are taken as self-evident truths or facts or are put to the test in individual practice without consciously making the connection which binds them to other phenomena.

The common element shared by these concepts is the premise that a type of knowledge exists which permits members of a society to find their bearings in it and to solve problems, but which does not help them to understand the reality of the world around them, because it disregards the fact that the innermost nucleus is not 'visible'; it disregards the fact that outward

forms may reveal reality, but that they also conceal it; and that 'to apprehend the phenomenon of any given thing requires investigation and description of how this thing is manifest in the phenomenon in question and also how it is hidden at the same time' (K. Kosik: 28). It is a type of knowledge which reduces phenomena to the individual level, isolating them from reality as a whole. These thought patterns are assimilated and used by social agents in accordance with the place which they occupy in the process and chain of production. Everyday knowledge, or 'common sense', conceals reality; it puts obstacles in the way of understanding it or prevents action to influence its structural conditions.

P. Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' was also adopted. 'Habitus' are systems of lasting rules, interiorized structures of thought, perception and action which organize thought and practice; they are assimilated by the social agent in such a way that he/she is unaware of their arbitrary nature, and they are effective precisely because the matrix is unconscious, 'structured structures which behave like structuring structures' (P. Bourdieu, 1972).

The concept of social representation incorporated in this study is taken from social psychology. Social representation, the result and process of activities of mental construction of reality, is built up from items of information received by individuals – gathered throughout their life and from their relationships with other people or groups – and classified by them in a cognitive system under which they can organize the world or an aspect of it in a comprehensible way on which they can take action. It is a constructive activity and a cultural product, an expression of the socialized relationship of individuals with a given aspect of their universe; it arranges the objects and events perceived in a system which gives them individual and social significance (Kaës, 1968). It is defined as an organized universe of information, attitudes, opinions and values concerning a socially meaningful object. In his study of the representation of working-class culture, Kaës points out that representations are socially determined, basically by the economic, social and historical conditions governing the life of workers in a society.

The concepts of 'habitus' and 'representation' place us on the frontier between the psychological and the social, and they both refer to a way of thinking and interpreting the reality of daily life, which is socially based and is assimilated by individuals according to their position in society (D. Jodelet, in Moscovici, 1984).

Consequently, preparing students to carry out their roles as literacy workers requires training them in a critical spirit to recognize, analyse and modify their own representations and those of their pupils, including their representations of their respective roles.

Another assumption made in planning the training of university students is that the educator is not the only socializing agent, since pupils may also be considered as socializing their teachers, in so far as their expectations and requirements may affect the way in which educators perceive themselves and perform their role.

To plan a service in which it is assumed that students' contact with reality and work is sufficient for their social and professional development is to ignore the fact that, in the course of teaching practice, existing representations and behaviour patterns may be reinforced. This may occur because students select information from the real situation on the basis of their previous frames of reference – thus confirming them – or because of the way in which adult pupils (those attending literacy classes and their families), with their expectations and classifications, help to build up the students' image as teachers and to enshrine given behaviour patterns as desirable. Furthermore, if the frames of reference of the university student and of the adult pupil coincide (a hypothesis which was confirmed throughout our study) the models of teacher, learning process and teacher-pupil relationship are reinforced, and so also is the view taken of the possibility of social change. This interaction between both parties in the learning situation calls for thought, if a USS project is to avoid becoming a social reality which reaffirms subjective reality.

These assumptions on how the representations and practice of teachers and pupils influence each other weighed heavily on the decision to accompany USS with a learning workshop for the students/literacy workers, and on the decision to include in the workshop reflection on the representations and practice of both sides.

The problem as it is set out here was not studied systematically. Studies on university teaching are based on a highly technical pedagogical approach which stresses university planning at all levels. A recent report on higher education teachers in South America, which brings the situation in the region into relief, points out: 'It is now imperative to reflect upon the lack of specific research into the learning processes of young people and adults acceding to this level from different social and cultural sections of society as a result of the expansion of the system'; and 'it will prove difficult to develop methods suited to this level of teaching and to the particular situation of each institution unless a research programme is carried out in which both teachers and students themselves take part' (S. Vior, M.C. Davini, 1986:38).

The background to this experiment in professional training lies outside the scope of higher education. In this project, approaches taken from theories and methods on teacher training converge with those linked to the problems of daily life and people's education. These approaches study representations and practice affecting different aspects of 'living culture' which may favour or hinder the educational and cultural development of the population, in particular that of the poorer sectors.

Research into teacher training, including the approach to student training is aimed at the democratization of the education system through a critical review and reconstruction of the teacher's role. These projects are organized as experimental teaching workshops which offer both a new type of training and facilities for studying the conditions required to change teaching methods in schools. By linking research and in-service training, the aim is to transform educational methods in order to overcome the contradictions between action and significance by means of participative research into the teacher's behaviour, and

into the representations and meanings attributed by the teacher to that behaviour (R. Nevia, 19).

Our convergence of views with these workshops is in the similarity of aims and the corresponding theoretical and methodological concept. One aim of the teaching workshops, which started in the 1970s and spread in the 1980s to several Latin American countries, including Argentina, is to make the teacher an 'operational dimension' of education policy. Training activities may constitute a factor for educational change if they create 'theoretical and practical conditions which will permit the teaching sector to assume an active role in the critical analysis of its own practice and the drafting and implementation of alternative forms of action' (R. Vera Godoy, 1985).

The idea underlying this study is that schools can be transformed, and that change can be effected within the school even when no change has taken place in basic social relationships. Although transformations within the school will be possible through the confluence of changes between those social relationships and those occurring within the school itself (José J. García, 1985), until such time as school transformations take place, any 'molecular' changes which occur may help to promote a reaction in the whole system (R. Ageno, 1985).

From this point of view, the training of educators becomes specially important due to the place which they occupy or should occupy in technical and research teams, as well as to the role they play in teacher training. They are the professionals who produce, develop and apply alternative theories, methodologies and techniques which have an effect on both objective conditions in the education system (curriculum, rules, regulations) and subjective conditions (the characteristics of the teacher). It is therefore assumed that, to bring about changes within schools, teachers must overcome the contradictions between their aims and their methods, subjecting their knowledge and teaching to scrutiny (C. Batallán; M. Saleme; J.F. García, 1986).

The need to carry out research into the characteristics of professional teaching practice and those of alternative training methods is shown also in research into work carried out by

Mexican literacy workers an⁻ ... training of student teachers at university level (Barabtarlo & Thaesz, 1983). These studies are in agreement that analysis of the collective meaning of discourses and practice is an educational and research method which not only changes teachers but also contributes to progress in the conceptualization of these meanings.

This research also illustrates the validity of making practical experience, as one stage in the learning process, the focal point of training by means of reflection upon that experience, reconstructed systematically and conceptually with a view to subjecting it to increasing levels of theorization (R. Vera Godoy, 1985). The studies are a step towards overcoming critical-reproductive theories and the theories of 'teaching illusionism' (R. Hevia, 1983). Their results highlight the ideological phenomena characterizing the school as an institution, the significance attributed by it and by society to the task of teaching (G. Batallán; M. Saleme; F. García, 1986), the teaching methods which make the teacher an agent for reproducing society, and the possibilities for and limitations to change.

Our proposal is also linked to research approaches which study representations and practices linked to significant aspects of social life which may hinder or advance the achievement of the aims of people's education in the area of non-formal education. This research, which reveals the contradictory content of social representations and daily practices, provides possible blueprints for people's education projects (Sirvent, 1983; Sirvent, Brusilovsky, 1983; Sirvent, 1984).

In the USS project the field of theory and teacher training methods, and the field of the sociology of daily life and education, are linked, since it is proposed to overcome the contradictions between 'common sense' and scientific and technical knowledge by training students who learn by teaching literacy and reflecting upon their teaching practice.

The aim of bridging the gap between 'common sense' and scientific knowledge in order to incorporate the latter into professional practice presupposes two complementary tasks:

changing the nature of everyday knowledge by applying the
concepts and methods of scientific knowledge, the patterns
of perception, thought and behaviour peculiar to everyday
knowledge, situating this knowledge in the historical-social
context which gave rise to it;

consciously reconstructing categories for perceiving the
world, and thought and behaviour patterns looking for points
of continuity and rupture between theory and 'common sense',
and monitoring the process of transforming scientific
knowledge into 'common sense'.

This concern with the critical, scientific training of
university students, besides revising their representation of the
world and practices based on theoretical concepts, has led to the
need to create an attitude of critical discipline in order to
'prevent the alternative ideology with which we projected
change.... from becoming a self-satisfied, inward-looking system,
resistant to renewal' (García Canclini, 1984:53).

III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADULT EDUCATION SUBPROJECT

Planning

The first stage was devoted to collecting information from which to define the target population, the characteristics of the educational project to be offered and the role to be played by the university students.

Although we already had some idea of the area for the project — a suburban neighbourhood relatively near the campus — it seemed wise to gather further information in order to study the advantages and disadvantages of this alternative.

During the first stage, direct contact with the population was deliberately avoided in order to prevent premature contact raising expectations which might later be disappointed. It was considered better to wait until the area, and specific USS plan, were known with some degree of certainty.

Information on the socio-economic characteristics of the population and neighbourhood organization was obtained through interviews with town hall and education authority officials, by consulting descriptive documents and statistics about the area, and from on-the-spot observation.

Contact with the authorities and town hall officials was also useful in the search for a local intermediary for the education project. The town hall had a list of all the institutions in the area and their activities, which proved to be an adequate source of information on the institutional organization of the neighbourhood. Search for a formal contact with the authorities was the result of a decision to conform to the general policy of the National University of Luján in its service projects: to establish relations with other state bodies as a way of fostering innovation and institutionalizing it in local government structures.

When contact was made, it was known that the town hall had operated educational, cultural and recreational schemes in several neighbourhoods through neighbourhood associations, but no information was available on their results. From reports of experiments carried out in the Greater Buenos Aires area it was learnt that schemes emanating from the government were not favourably looked upon because they were designed by another social sector and the same scheme was applied for all neighbourhoods. Consequently, it was considered wise to get more detailed background information in order to assess the possibilities of linking the project with other projects to avoid overlapping, duplication and rivalry among different institutions as well as to avoid repeating work methods which had ended in failure.

The population chosen

The information gathered in the course of these interviews and by on-the-spot observation led to the decision to concentrate on the neighbourhood originally envisaged and to carry out the project, during this first stage and until consolidation, without the participation of other institutions.

The neighbourhood chosen is about 1.5 km from the main highway into the City of Luján and about 20 minutes from the city centre. The population, like that of most peripheral neighbourhoods, is scattered; although educational, social and economic provision is inadequate, they do not suffer from serious deprivation. It is a poor neighbourhood but it does not have the characteristics of a 'misery town' because the population is stable: some people own their own land, and most occupy land granted by the town hall.

The background data gathered showed that they lacked institutional organization and that, although there was a development organization which bore the name of the neighbourhood, this body did not care for their needs but for those of a neighbouring area with a higher socio-economic level. The literacy centres which had been set up in 1985 had been closed down due to the drop-out rate.

This neighbourhood was chosen on the basis of political and methodogical criteria. The political criterion was the provision of educational services to a sector suffering from serious material and cultural deprivation. Although we agree with those who maintain that people's education schemes should be directed not only at the most seriously underprivileged, but that work should also be done with organized groups, this neighbourhood was chosen with the aim of contributing to countering situations of grave injustice by means of a scheme which, besides influencing the living conditions of a particular group, might serve both to produce theoretical and technological knowledge of use in similar situations and to heighten students' awareness so as to equip them to work with this kind of population.

The decisive methodological criterion was the search for a situation which could be reproduced; material and everyday conditions in the chosen neighbourhood are similar in many respects to those of other neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Luján and other areas which act as a magnet for migrants because they are near cities which offer work opportunities.

The projected service

The information available on the area raised questions as to the educational scheme which would be most suitable and the strategy for setting up and developing contacts with the population.

As the schooling level of most of the adults was low and, there were total illiterates and others who had relapsed into illiteracy, priority was given to organizing a literacy and post-literacy training scheme in order to set up a long-term process of people's education.

At that point there were two main strategic questions:

How to set up a literacy and/or post-literacy training scheme in a neighbourhood where there was no pre-existing organization?

Would it be possible to promote solidarity among the families, or some type of neighbourhood organization, in an area where the population was scattered?

The proposed response was an 'endogenous', peripatetic model. This meant starting with the individual family and gradually extending to shared neighbourhood responsibilities until organized bodies could be set up. The model was 'peripatetic' because the students went from door to door both to diagnose the educational situation and interests of the adults and to provide the service. What was proposed was an educational service, for all the families in the neighbourhood, aimed at responding to the educational demand of the adults. The priority content was to be a literacy and post-literacy support and consolidation programme, as a first step in a process designed on a time-scale which extended beyond the formal contract with Unesco, and as a first stage in a people's education project which, if other experiments carried out with similar population groups were taken into account, might require five years of continuous work.

These first steps constitute the initial stages of a long-term project, and the aim is to gain the population's confidence and make them believe in the external agent and in themselves.

The aim of the peripatetic model was to break new ground for education: the family circle. It was hoped that this model would not only help to retain a greater number of adults in the training scheme but also – and fundamentally – that education would be a chance for the complete family group to take part in the process, in a co-operative group experience and in new content designed to open up new possibilities of dialogue and reflection. The approach was one of flexible programming which would make it easier to adapt methods to the needs of the population and the students. Development of the adult education service.

Development of the adult education service

While work was being done in the neighbourhood, activities were carried out aimed at achieving three main aims:

> to go to the neighbourhood and make contact with the population (duration: around three weeks);

> literacy and post-literacy training (duration: around five months, depending on the learning groups);

> to set up mutual help schemes among neighbours (around two months, concurrently with the teaching programme).

Going to the neighbourhood

Making personal contact with a population with a view to obtaining data about their educational level and needs, proposing the educational service and setting up the first contacts with interested individuals or families, were the responsibility of the students, accompanied on their initial visits by university teachers. The purpose of these activities was to assess the degree of receptivity and availability of the population for the service, as well as the availability of the students to carry on with the work.

In general, the students were received cordially; no cases of abrupt rejection were reported. The prevailing attitude was one of welcome, even by those families which did not agree to take part in the scheme. This confirmed the idea that it would be possible to carry out the education scheme in the neighbourhood.

Work began with eighteen families, which meant that, including adults and children, around 80 people were involved.

The answers given by the population for accepting or rejecting the education scheme reflect the adults' subjective needs for such an experiment; they also show how their representation of education might make it difficult for them to join such a scheme.

Most people who expressed an interest in learning – independently of whether they eventually joined the scheme or not – gave reasons related to their day-to-day life: to know enough to be able to help their children with homework, to solve financial problems in their day-to-day existence, the need to be able to read or to do more complex mathematical operations in order to solve problems at work. It is worth pointing out that joining the scheme was backed up by practical reasons and subjective needs; there were no stereotyped replies such as 'education is one of the main reasons for social mobility and personal success'.

On the other hand, rejection of the scheme was related to representations which made it difficult for them to recognize their deprivation or its objective underlying causes. 'Rational' and 'irrefutable' reasons were given for rejection – lack of time because of too many domestic and/or work responsibilities, or an irregular work schedule which prevented them from arranging a timetable with the literacy worker. Other explanations are very probably the result of representations of education which also influenced their decisions in the past.

Most of the answers reveal self-disqualification for learning, for example:

Ignorance of the need for education for women and their subordination to their husbands in decision-making, even the decision to study:

'Anyhow, women don't need to know how to read but men do. All women need is to get married.'

'The wife came to see us at the door. She told us several times that she could not commit herself and, as her husband was not there, she could not give an answer.'

Age-related stereotypes as a barrier to learning were also repeated:

'... He told us that he did not know how to read or write but as he was nearly 40 he was too old to learn now.'

Reasons given to explain learning difficulties: personal inability and ignorance of the structural conditions and the conditions prevailing in the education system which lead to personal failure:

'... she explained that she had gone to school but that she wasn't bright enough.'

There are contradictory answers which show that although education is valued, there is ignorance of their own need to learn. The value judgement is expressed using stereotypes, and we assume that rejection conceals some disqualification which prevents personal educational advancement:

'... he had gone to the adult school ... he thought learning was very important, saying that new things were always happening throughout one's life and one needed to learn. Then he told us that we should speak to his wife. Maybe she would be interested because he felt that he already knew the basics and although the idea of learning appealed to him he did not have much time.'

The literacy and post-literacy training programme

Characteristics of the participants

As a result of the door-to-door campaign among the families in the neighbourhood, a group of 19 adults joined the literacy and post-literacy training programme and this group remained stable until the end. They were joined by other people who were invited to join by relatives or neighbours, and from time to time some spouses joined. This group of people was looked after by the students, in some cases individually and in others in small groups of two or three who met at the house of one member of the group; altogether, there were ten literacy 'groups'. School

support was given to ten children from these families at the same time as their parents were being taught.

The group of adults comprised 15 women and four men. It was probably difficult for men to join the group as the students' timetable coincided with working hours.

Ages ranged from 14 to 70, although the majority were aged between 25 and 40; contrary to the norm at adult night school where most students are teenagers, USS had only three pupils under 20 years of age.

Half of the people were of rural origin, the remainder, except for six who came from other Luján neighbourhoods, were from villages in the interior.

Most of the women (13) were housewives and only two worked as domestic servants; the men were unskilled and casual labourers.

Most of the group (12) had only attended school for one or two years, and one person had never been to school; six had been to school for between three and six years. Four people had attended adult school or the National Literacy Centre but they had dropped out after a short time.

Bearing in mind that teaching was done in contact with the individual's family group, it may be said that due to close contact with the literacy pupils, the service — covering both children and adults — reached around 80 people in the neighbourhood.

Development of the literacy and post-literacy training programme

Literacy training belongs to the stage of 'the search for mutual confidence' and of opening up an educational space within the family.

The aim of gaining the confidence of the people was related both to their own individual educational failures and to the need to reverse previous experiences with external agents who had made

contact with the neighbourhood, made promises and then withdrawn without fulfilling them.

The inadequacy of the education services previously offered, combined with the fact that the adults who joined the project had previously known educational failure and were convinced of their inability to learn, had made it necessary for them to recover their own self-confidence and have confidence in the literacy worker. Bearing in mind the two fundamental features of this stage – the search for mutual confidence, and opening up a space for education within the family – an action strategy was designed to achieve these aims, which included:

strict fulfilment of the bargain by the literacy worker;

forging an affective bond and a symmetrical relationship between the literacy worker and the pupil;

linking the learning of how to read and write with reflection upon reality.

Evaluation of the process

Analysis of the different aspects of the literacy campaign shows that the peripatetic strategy adopted, incorporating real-life situations in the work and fulfilling the commitments taken on with the adults, were the right choice.

In the first place, it is important to point out that none of the adults taking part gave up, except in a couple of cases where unemployed men dropped out when they found employment. The whole group carried on intact and, in some cases, the adults themselves introduced new members.

'While she was doing her work she told me that a neighbour would come to learn and that she had told her to come at 5 p.m.'

The students were able to fulfil both their formal commitment i.e. to turn up and teach, and to establish a positive relationship with the literacy pupils. The field records and

assessment interviews carried out at the end of the year reveal these achievements.

The importance of the peripatetic approach was recognized by the adults, as well as the fact that the literacy workers kept to their timetables:

'I'm so grateful to you for coming here to teach me come rain or shine and for taking an interest in me, because after all you are well-off but you help just the same.'

'Thanks for coming to the house.'

'I could see that you made an effort to make us understand; you're not like the teachers who come to the school. They don't turn up when it rains or for any silly excuse. At least here you didn't do that, and I've haard the neighbours talk and they all say the same.'

The positive group atmosphere and their affection for the literacy worker, which are so important for recovering confidence and for performance, are revealed by many acts and expressions of the adults:

'Happy birthday, the three of them said. This sponge-cake is for you; I wanted to put cream or jam on it but at this stage of the month ... Couldn't you have been born another day or at the beginning of the month? Take the cake and share it with your companions, because by the time you get home at eleven o'clock tonight ....'

Establishing a symmetrical relationship proved more difficult to achieve, and this was clearest in situations where the adult knew more than the student-teacher:

'Then we gave each other an agriculture lesson. He began to explain to me why garbage was a good fertilizer, and I tried to pitch in with what I knew about it. The conversation covered the full cycle, from the time the seed is sown until the new plant is harvested.'

The adults' expressions show affection and concern but they also reveal a view of the literacy worker as someone not only different but as 'above' them; for their part, the students did not intervene to put themselves on an equal footing, and accepted the view of 'sacrifice':

'Miss, how can you come on a day like today? I thought you wouldn't come, it so horrible ... don't get dirty.'

'What a sacrifice it is to come around the houses, isn't it?'

We have already pointed out how difficult it was to overcome this situation due to the objectively unequal situations and the need to work on them in the student training workshops.

The fact that a start was made on opening up a space for reflection and co-operation within the family is revealed both by the support given by the family to the learning adult and by the evaluation which the adults themselves made of the topics discussed at the meetings, which opened up an exchange leading to analysis of reality.

Co-operation by the family group with the learning adult was revealed in the affective support and help they received to solve difficulties:

'I told my daughters that a young teacher who reminded me of them was coming and they were pleased that I was learning.'

'The grandchildren interrupted again and then Mr C. said to his wife:

You explain to them.

The wife went out and said:

Grandfather is studying now so come back later.'

'When my daughter-in-law comes she sets me sums and I do them.'

The young teachers were able to stimulate dialogue on different aspects of private, neighbourhood, work and national life. The topics which cropped up in these dialogues included:

the educational experiences of the adults;

their children's school problems;

conflicts within the family;

relationships with neighbours;

difficulties in organizing the neighbourhood;

deficiencies in neighbourhood facilities;

relations with the town hall and municipal authorities;

benefits and shortfalls of the trade unions;

confidence and lack of confidence in politicians;

unemployment.

Of all these topics, the students were best able to deal with those related to education itself, particularly the education of children. They stimulated analysis of the information provided, improving the parents' assessment of the children's work and making them reflect the causes of learning problems; this was a step forward in breaking down stereotypes for classifying children as incapable of learning.

In general, the dialogue on the rest of the topics remained within the confines of 'common sense', affective expressions or the information which was necessary to solve an immediate problem. The students' immaturity and lack of experience made it difficult for them to direct their interventions. Although they were frequently able to identify the importance of a matter or their mistakes, they could not make much progress in analysing them, so that the university teachers took over when it came to in-depth discussion.

How opportunities were missed to bridge the gap between a 'common sense' and a scientific analysis is clear from the following situations:

'Then we commented on the "living wage" text. He told me that this was indeed true but that nowadays not even the trade unions cared about workers' problems. When you listen to them, each one is better than the next but when it comes to taking action nobody does anything.'

The literacy worker did not intervene.

'Oh, yes, they do collect signatures in the shanty towns.

The lady told me that once a man had come around collecting signatures to have drains put in so that the streets wouldn't be full of water. She signed. She did not say what happened after that. We did mathematics exercises.'

Here is an example of a conversation based on emotions. The family told the literacy worker that they had taken charge of a grandchild because it had been abandoned by its parents:

'I felt I ought to say something, but it took me so much by surprise that I was speechless. After a minute or two I told them that that could happen in any family, and that the real victim is always the child. Children need love and understanding and help to get on.'

Despite these limitations, the literacy workers were always concerned with being alert to the adults' interests, and the adults welcomed the chance to talk to them about personal and social aspects drawn from real life:

'I thought it would be like at school, and that I would have to write and copy and repeat. This is much nicer, because we don't just talk about a book but about what is really happening and about things that happen to us.'

Teaching materials. The literacy workbook

It is very difficult to combine the teaching of how to read and
write with reflection on significant topics when the literacy
workers are not sufficiently knowledgeable and, due to their
youth, are only just beginning their own critical reflection on
reality. In those cases it is of the utmost importance to have
support material which will help them to organize their work.

The project did not have ready-made literacy material, and
could not use the national literacy plan workbooks as the
contents and the degree of difficulty made them inappropriate.
The material required to set literacy work in motion – reading
sheets – was prepared by the faculty member co-ordinating the
field work, and the students were given the first six lessons
which they needed to start their task. With the material and the
indications given about the teaching method to be used for each
lesson, the students then went on to prepare additional material
(e.g. syllabic games, posters).

These first lessons formed the basis for the preparation of
a literacy workbook in which the personages were members of the
families taking part in the scheme, and which included some of
their remarks about their needs and their daily life as well as
some positive experiences in the field of solidarity and mutual
assistance.

Characteristics of the workbook

The workbook is made up of sixteen graded lessons and four
reading texts. The following is the list of 'stimulus' sentences
(the word underlined in each sentence is the stimulus word):

Education is the task of everyone
Luis hasn't got a plot of land
Susana can't read without glasses
I am drinking 'mate' with Leti and her mother
Felisa promotes family unity
We are all united and managing to get along
We all have a right to a just salary
We all have a right to a job

United we can help each other
My house is small but it is my house
When they wanted to raise the rent the tenants complained
We neighbours are helping each other
When it rains the streets in Luján are full of mud
Next year we will be united
If we get organized the neighbourhood will change
Let's learn the latest sounds.

The stimulus sentences and words, and the applied sentences and words, were made up with references to time and space. We tried to chose topics dealing with the present situation of extreme poverty which they were experiencing, with bygone history, an uncertain future, and a political space which was being recovered and which ought to be defended. In time, the starting-point was the present: sentences referring to the extreme poverty being experienced by the majority of families living in the neighbourhood of Ameghino were included. In order to stimulate reflection about the need for change, and whether change was possible, the reference to the present was always linked to the idea of a hopeful future and aspirations for change.

Another group of sentences included a stated requirement of a collective nature: group work, neighbourhood solidarity and the importance of neighbourhood organization. One group of sentences was concerned with topics which are considered to be permanently valid (e.g. the right to work, to education). Most of the stimulus sentences included in their message the present situation linked to a proposal, with some suggestion of a solution: 40 per cent of the stimulus sentences referred to present reality and included possibilities for a future time; 20 per cent of them included in their message some topic of permanent validity.

As regards the historic past and the safeguarding of culture, the workbook is not representative of what in theory one would consider necessary. In the course of conversation with the neighbours, there was evidence of a past which was forgotten or which they did not wish to remember. The inhabitants of Ameghino are like a part of a people which has lost its history. It was thought that it would be difficult to recover the most

significant detailes of that forgotten past in a few sentences, but cultural and historical recovery was borne in mind when the words to be applied in the lessons were being chosen – chucho (shiver), pucho (tip), malambo (an indigenous tapdance), payada (Gaucho verse song), quena (type of Indian flute), quichua, quimili, ñandú (nandoo), gurí (child), etc. These are all words of Quechua or Guaraní origin and are frequently found in everyday Argentine vocabulary.

As regards space – the local situation, and ways of recovering social and political space – priority was given to neighbourhood and neighbour-related topics, starting from the family and spreading out to the national level. Emphasis on local needs and ways of solving local problems was based on the principle that the neighbourhood should be the first space to be won and organized by the group of literacy workers. This statement makes political sense, since organization will be necessary to succeed.

In the field of politics, we considered that the topic to be stressed at present in the country should be democracy.

The stimulus sentences cover topics related to the problems of crowded neighbourhoods such as housing, education, health, unity, solidarity, constitutional rights, work, co-operation, historical background, prices, wages and organization. At the end of the workbook there are four reading texts referring to organization, work, natural resources and democracy.

The following table shows the percentage priority given to the selected topics:

Topics	% occurrence in stimulus sentences	% occurrence in applied sentences
Food	–	8.5
Housing	8.5	13.0
Education	23.0	4.0
Health	5.5	11.0
Economics	5.5	6.5
Social organization	23.0	20.0

Topics	% occurrence in stimulus sentences	% occurrence in applied sentences
Nature	3.0	6.5
Work	20.0	11.0
Culture	3.0	11.0
Legislation	8.5	8.5

It is clear that organizational aspects are given great emphasis, as it is a neighbourhood with no organized social representation. Next priority was given to topics related to work, education, housing and legislation.

The sentences and words were arranged in such a way that, as pupils advanced, a more aware and committed analysis of the needs and problems in the neighbourhood was required.

From the technical point of view, it is important to point out that the sentences and words used in the workbook were graded so that, after the second lesson, the pupil could read all the words as they were introduced. In some of the early lessons this limited the relevance of the topics, due to the restrictions imposed by the available syllable combinations; but no sentences ever lacked a context.

Below are some examples from a lesson and from the short stories included in the workbook.

todos tenemos de**recho** a un salario digno

derecho

de…re…cho

te **ro**   **chu** **cho**

tero   **chucho**

se **re** no   te **cha** mos

se**re**no   te**cha**mos

ma **ru** **cha**

marucha

salario

ENTRE VECINOS NOS ESTAMOS AYUDANDO

Lectura incluida en esta lección

Leamos y pensemos

La vivienda de Verónica se quedó sin techo.
El viento se llevó las chapas.

Varios vecinos estamos ayudando a que Verónica
vuelva a tener bien su techo.

The population organization programme

Schemes to develop solidarity

When the people's education concept on which this project is based was presented, stress was laid on the importance of creating a learning environment and developing alternative cultural forms which would contribute to a process of cultural transformation. From this point of view it is important to work not only with symbols but also with a view to creating the conditions in which the values of co-operation and solidarity can be experimented in practice. The education service itself constituted an experiment, organizing learning groups which met at neighbours' homes to share the learning process. As the experiment developed, an attempt was made to identify common needs in order to set up groups which would help to meet these needs on a co-operative basis.

The need for USS to promote these activities emerged as a result of the diagnosis of the neighbourhood situation which revealed the lack of neighbourhood organization, the failure of previous spontaneous attempts at participation and organization, and the lack of confidence in the possibilities for organization and solidarity within the neighbourhood. This situation led people to believe that self-generated organization would not be possible. It was therefore proposed that the programme should foster both innovation and consolidation, bearing in mind that most of the popular education experiments show that to achieve 'common goals related to social change and people's power is no easy task. The bulk of the responsibility in the cases observed falls not so much on the internal agents within the community as on the promoters, organizers, brigade members, animators, key personnel and, in general, external agents' (Fals Borda, 1985: 51).

Although the project was based on proposals setting a course for change, content was always adapted to the situation and specific problems of the population. We were always on the look-out to identify the needs and practices in daily life which could be used as a starting-point for experiments in co-operation and mutual aid.

After four or five months of preparatory work in the neighbourhood, the next stage was to develop some shared activities. The aim was to get several families to take part in an activiy which would make them identify with one another and unite them as neighbours.

Some activities were carried out by groups of women united by their needs and by women's work. One activity was to teach women to prepare kitchen gardens for the cultivation, for family consumption, of vegetables which grow easily in the area; another was concerned with health (pregnancy). These activities met the needs of the moment but they were not continued.

In the search for an activity which could be expanded, it was thought that housing might be a·subject which would stimulate mutual aid. Starting from a spontaneous relationship – co-operation between neighbours and acquaintances – it was possible gradually to introduce more complex forms of commitment to the neighbourhood which might lead to a greater degree of organization.

This idea arose from a wish expressed by one of those taking part in the literacy programme:

'Ah, if only I had a block-maker!'

It was suggested that cement blocks should be made to replace walls made of less lasting materials.

With the help of block-makers provided by USS, the families made their own blocks. Work began with two families and another three joined in later. It was then proposed to pass on to a stage of greater solidarity and commitment, in which families would help each other to build their houses. It was calculated that a week-end would be enough to raise the walls of one dwelling to roof level.

The aim of this activity was group commitment to co-operation as a living experience which would refute individualism and the feeling that 'you can do nothing in this neighbourhood'. It would then be possible to develop the group's

organizational ability and to extend their activity beyond their own personal needs towards commitment to collective and neighbourhood needs.

Evaluation of the activity

At this stage of the activity it is difficult to make a clear-cut assessment: organizing a neighbourhood with no organizational structure and with previous frustrating experiences is a difficult situation to reverse, and it takes time. However, there are signs that progress is being made.

IV. INCORPORATION OF SOCIAL SERVICE IN THE
UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM

Incorporation in the education science course

In planning the student training programme it was borne in mind
that this project was part of a training process for university
graduates in education and that it should therefore constitute a
learning situation with specific characteristics to differentiate
it from other situations in which young people have the chance to
perform services for the community. ·

In Argentina, as in many countries, different bodies offer
young people opportunities to join schemes with social
responsibility: the churches, co-operatives and neighbourhood
organizations all provide opportunities for responsible
participation. We believed that the factor which should
differentiate university social service from other types of
social service was the chance for permanent reflection, applying
knowledge regularly and systematically, and an interdisciplinary
approach linked to systematic professional training.

To integrate the project within the framework of regular
student activities it was decided to link it with the teaching
activity of the Department of Education Science.

The reason for this link was the assumption that the USS
aims could only be achieved if the teaching work of the service
coincided with, and was linked to, the academic teaching of the
university staff. Action by USS designed to change students'
schemata of knowledge, evaluation and behaviour might be
relatively vulnerable to attack from the influences experienced
by students both at university and subsequently. It was therefore
necessary to have a coherent teaching plan so that the cognitive
stimuli received by students would be convergent; in this way the
socializing procedures in their training would act upon each
other, making changes in their frames of reference more likely.

The proposal for linkage took into account the rules laid down by the university for course organization. At the National University of Luján each subject area divides its activities into 'theory classes' and 'practical work'. Students must attend class and do the practical work if they are to maintain their status as regular students of that subject. Each teaching team sets its programme of activities for both theory and practice; subjects are divided into four-month periods (beginning of March till the end of June, beginning of August till the end of November).

The type of linkage proposed was that USS should become an alternative to practical work.

As the USS activity schedule was longer than that of the individual subjects, the problem of how to maintain student participation arose. It was agreed with the Head of the Education Department that students who did their practical USS work during the first academic period could continue to do so for the subjects being taken in the second period.

As noted above in Chapter I, the Degree in Education Science at the National University of Luján had only recently been set up. At the beginning of the project there were only three sets of students, the oldest of whom were in the second year of their degree and had studied or passed only nine subjects. There was therefore little choice of subject areas where the specific contents of the course could be directly linked to the content of USS. During the first four-month period the proposal was put to the teaching staff in the departments of research methods, educational statistics and educational sociology, and during the second period to those of educational psychology. Agreement was reached with these departments as follows:

Organizational aspects:

the rules governing attendance and promotion should be similar to those for the subject concerned.

Curricular aspects:

the content of the USS student training programme should respect the specific area of knowledge of each subject;

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USS experience would be taken into account in assessing student performance for promotion.

To invite students taking these subjects to participate in USS it was considered necessary to use channels which would legitimize the link with regular teaching activities. Information was therefore given by the subject teacher during one of the early classes; in this way it was hoped to imply that the teacher was committed and that USS was recognized as an activity linked to his/her work.

Two alternative methods of recruiting students were considered:

by means of registration open to volunteers, the sole condition being that the student's timetable should be compatible with the task;

by selecting students on the basis of criteria such as their average marks, interests or previous experience of adult education, abilities recognized by their teachers, etc.

It was decided to opt for voluntary registration, so that all the students would have the same chance of gaining experience with USS, given the importance attributed to it for arousing social awareness and commitment and for introducing students to practical work which might serve as vocational guidance and as a way of learning to identify, understand and solve the major problems of one's society.

It was decided to take 20 students at this stage, chosen for their availability to work for USS while keeping up their other subjects. Based on the usual drop-out rates, it was assumed that the group would eventually be reduced to around 12 people.

The university teachers provided the students with the initial information; USS co-ordinators attended a class to explain the proposal in greater detail and to answer any questions the students might have.

Prospective candidates were given an enrolment form to indicate their preliminary profiles and to allow timetables to be drawn up based on majority availability.

As enrolment figures were greater than envisaged, lots were drawn to decide who would take part.

Characteristics of the group of students

The group was made up of 20 students, mostly young unmarried women, as were most of the students taking the degree course. Two important points are that half of the group lived outside the city of Luján, and only one third were full-time students; the rest were employed, working generally for more than 20 hours per week. This necessarily limited the students' time and created objective difficulties in the performance of the various tasks necessary to get the best out of the service.

One third of the students had teaching experience at different levels in the education system; only one was currently involved in formal adult education. It is interesting to note that a considerable number of those who registered with USS had had other experiences as social leaders, with adolescents or adults, in trade union, religious or recreational activities. USS gave them an opportunity to work under the guidance of university teachers in a field in which they had previously shown an interest.

Initial assessment of the students

Once the students had been selected, and before they started their training, an initial assessment was carried out, with a view to obtaining information from which:

to estimate the effect that participation in the scheme could have on the students' knowledge, social representations and practice;

to take decisions regarding the content and methods of the training programme.

Semi-structured individual interviews were held in order to elicit their views on, and previous experience of adult education; their knowledge of the methods and techniques of adult education, data collection and analysis, and of some of the basic work concepts; also information about their motivation and expectations regarding USS.

The aim of the inquiries into their previous participation in adult education activities was to find out both the experience of the group as a whole and their view of adult education. The students' replies to this question, as well as those specifically directed at finding out their view of education and their studies of education and research concepts, methods and techniques, revealed that they had some vague notions. Some of them extended the concept of adult education to activities which were not strictly educational. The majority had not studied systematically, had not reflected on the basic concepts on which the project was based, and had not had the opportunity to learn adult education and research methods and techniques, except for some ideas gained from university courses which could be linked to USS work.

The notions of adult education expressed by the students can be divided into two categories. Although some of the formulations coincided with the general principles governing adult education or people's education practices ('to develop the individual', 'to cultivate a critical turn of mind'), they are expressed in very general terms. The students were unable to provide concrete examples by evoking situations, topics, activities or adult education institutions.

Some viewed adult education as a way of making up for inadequate primary education ('to give them the chances they did not get as children'). Only one small group was capable of expressing a clear-cut view in which different facets could be made more explicit with some degree of definition.

This initial assessment confirmed the need to devote the initial training stage to clarifying some basic concepts which would allow the work to be set within a framework and provide the minimum basis necessary for a coherent education scheme.

The students' reasons for wanting to take part in USS were of several types:

of a vocational nature ('interest in the problem', 'search for knowledge of the professional field');

of a professional nature ('to find out the limits and possibilities of adult education and of one's own role');

search for a new learning method ('to do something practical, to learn from experience');

the need for social commitment ('to be in touch with reality', 'to feel useful', 'to help the community').

These replies reveal that each student shared at least one of the USS aims.

Student training

Training strategies

The students' training course was planned on the basis of the need to link their training as literacy workers with their long-term university education. This meant constant tension between on the one hand, the search for practical professional work which would develop the critical faculty and a constructive attitude in the exercise of the teaching role – implying reflective work, which takes time, and should avoid ready-made 'recipes' – and on the other hand, the need to provide answers to the questions which might arise in the course of their literacy classes and would require immediate solutions.

A programme was organized which included three types of activity: (a) accompaniment during field work; (b) consultation with the university teachers; and (c) a teaching workshop. The aims of these three forms of teaching support were the same: to provide training in teaching skills, to solve immediate problems in adult education work, to make the students learn to recognize the significance of behaviour patterns and discourses in order to

overcome ingrained 'common sense' views, to make a start on a well thought-out construction of the teaching role and to provide the affective support necessary for the next stage of the work. Each of these activities is described below:

The primary objectives of <u>accompanying the students</u> in their field work were to give them self-control, support in activities which were too difficult for them single-handed, and advice concerning the solution of immediate problems. During their visits to the literacy groups, the university teachers intervened actively to prevent uncomfortable situations for both adults and students. The teachers' active participation, as interviewers or literacy workers – depending on the stage the work had reached – enabled them to have the direct contact with the population necessary to obtain information for diagnosing situations, trying out alternative solutions to difficulties and providing an institutional framework for the educational activity with the adults. The model for accompanying students which was designed after preliminary tests was as follows:

a meeting with each student for joint evaluation of the teaching-learning process to date, the plans envisaged and any necessary modifications;

a field visit to carry out what had been proposed;

a subsequent meeting to evaluate what had happened and to draw up future lines of action.

A regular programme was envisaged for all students, supplemented by meetings on request or in response to assessments made by the university teachers in situations where they considered it necessary. In fact, the model as desired could not be put into practice precisely as planned, chiefly due to the work-load which limited the time available to both students and university teachers.

<u>Consultation with the university teachers</u>: this was an optional alternative. The students could have an interview with a teacher during USS office hours to obtain the help

they required: teaching material, bibliography, requests to be accompanied in the field, ways of solving adult learning problems, etc. During the first months of field work, the demand was related mainly to problems linked with teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. As time passed, a qualitative change was seen in requirements, and consultations became mostly concerned with psycho-social aspects of the teaching task.

The teaching workshop: this was the regular session set aside for permanent reflection; it was compulsory, and was considered to be the teaching activity which conferred the character of university teaching practice upon USS. Both on account of the regular nature of the meetings and of the group work with students, it was in this environment that hypotheses were elaborated and put to the test, from which methodological concepts and proposals emerged and were given systematic form.

In view of its importance, the aims, theoretical foundations, educational sequence and development of the workshop are set forth in the following pages. We believe that both the conceptualized reconstruction of the experience as well as examples of exercises used may prove useful to colleagues who envisage similar projects.

The teaching workshop

The workshop was the centre of systematic group training. It was planned on lines adopted in recent years in teacher training experiments designed to build a role based on critical analysis of one's own behaviour and the development of methodological and technical alternatives which make it possible to correlate declared aims with everyday action.

Guidelines for the planning of teaching

The workshop was planned on the basis of three guidelines:

(a) to set aside time for reflection which would help to overcome the literacy worker's preconceived 'common sense' ideas about content and methods of knowledge;

(b) to provide an opportunity to experience and analyse a model of educational practice similar to the desired model described above;

(c) to create respect for the needs of both the population and the students.

(a) The workshop was devised as the context in which to identify how everyday knowledge affects the teaching practice of university students, and to carry out pedagogical work which would help to overcome the dissociation between the structures, content and methods of that knowledge and those of scientific knowledge. The means used was to be critical reflection on how to perform literacy work. The workshop was designed as a laboratory for the gradual transformation of the students' perception, thought and behaviour patterns in their everyday work and the construction of alternative patterns.

This approach responded both to the needs of student training as people's educators and to their long-term training objectives as graduates in education science.

Based both on the concept of people's education underlying USS work and on the assumptions about the influence of everyday culture on the teacher's performance, the workshop was seen as providing a teaching strategy to analyse the significance of the students' discourses and practice, in the belief that the project's aim of awareness-heightening could not be achieved with students who did not understand the workings of their own preconceived 'common sense' ideas.

The hypothesis was that representations of education and of the neighbourhood population are used to interpret real-life situations, and that these representations reflect both 'common sense' concepts and those learned at university.

It was assumed that literacy work would make the students think about the practical aspects of their representation of education (R. Kaës, 1965) – the teaching role, its function, the present-day problems of Argentine education and the education system (drop-out rates, repetition, illiteracy), their causes and solutions, the school as an institution – and that these subjects should be discussed in detail for a proper understanding of the teacher's work.

The hypothesis that the representation of the neighbourhood population is one of 'common sense' views which should be reviewed is derived from the premise that the teacher-adult pupil relations in a poor neighbourhood is a particular example of the asymmetrical relationship between different social sectors, an objective relationship which is reflected in the stereotypes and the categories used to classify and interpret particular situations. It should be borne in mind that the terms 'negro' (from the interior) and 'villero' (shanty-town dweller) are still used in Argentina, and serve as a matrix which gives meaning to social relationships (R. Guber, 1986). It was assumed that illiterates would be perceived as members of a group to which would be applied both the general categories for poverty and the specific categories used in the city of Luján to classify that particular neighbourhood.

As regards getting to know reality, it was necessary to overcome the limitations of pragmatism and uncritical acceptance of appearances by constantly questioning such appearances, through the search for implicit meanings and for a clarification of the contradictions in each situation analysed; and by insisting that judgement be based on sufficient empirical information and explicit theoretical standards.

(b) The need for the workshop to be not only a place for analysis of the literacy experience but also a teaching model similar to the desired model was based on the premise that perception and behaviour patterns are acquired through social intercourse. The workshop should therefore be an environment in which the students could experience and analyse a new teaching style. Research into how teachers learn their 'teaching style' shows that the teaching model, repeated *ad infinitum*, is slowly

learned and assimilated not by means of a student's practical teaching work but through an apprenticeship which is constantly subjected to (so same 'teaching styles' which are assumed to be the 'model' for becoming a teacher (A. de Tezanos, 1985:55).

In this way the workshop could offer the opportunity to resocialize the students, as its content would probably compete both with the learning methods and with the knowledge, prejudices and values previously acquired, and would lead progressively to the construction of a 'counter-definition' of reality.

For this type of work it is necessary to create 'social and conceptual conditions, with the social conditions naturally serving as a matrix for the conceptual ones' (P. Berger, and T. Luckman, 1984:197). Throughout the year's work this aspect of the project was therefore assessed with regard to its feasibility.

(c) In the interests of both the population and the students, the workshop sessions began before the students were sent into the neighbourhood.

Regarding the respect due to the population, it was considered necessary for students to have a minimum amount of training and that they should have decided to continue with the work, so as not to expose the families in the neighbourhood to contact with literacy workers who might either make serious mistakes or give up the task (which would be harmful to the population).

From the training point of view the objective of incorporating USS through the workshop was to provide support so that the students would have a sound background before starting work; in this regard, attempts were made to encourage communication and the integration of the peer group, and to gain their confidence in the teaching team and establish a good affective relationship.

This period had consequences for planning, as the evaluation of the students' knowledge and representations yielded information which could be used as a basis on which to review both the plan of action within the neighbourhood and the training plan.

Stages in the development of the workshop

The workshop was designed to be flexible and open. The first stage was planned and its contents, methods and techniques were then adapted in response to continuous evaluation of events. The students' experiences were always used as the springboard and, as required, these experiences were reflected upon, or analytical exercises were prepared. Prepared by the university teachers to analyse some particular concept or method more thoroughly, the exercises were always based on episodes described in the workshop.

In the course of the year, stress was laid on the development of critical thought and the teaching role, but the dominant topic varied in accordance with the needs of work in the field, the evolution of the problems stated and the process of research into the 'common sense' views of the young people and the population.

This evolution led to the second sequence of stages, which should be seen as a continuous process in which there are no clear-cut dividing lines but only dominant topics.

Stage I – Statement of the problem – two periods:

         Beginning of detailed discussion of 'common sense' views (before going into the neighbourhood).

         Contrasting these views with reality (during the first stage of contact with the neighbourhood).

Stage II – Introduction to learning the methodology of literacy work (during the first stage of contact with the neighbourhood).

Stage III – Conflict analysis (in the course of literacy and post-literacy work, particularly the first few months).

Stage IV – Construction of the teaching role (in the course of the literacy and post-literacy work, last part of the academic session).

<u>Stage I</u> - Statement of the problem - two periods

<u>First period</u>. Beginning of detailed discussion of 'common sense' views

The aim in relation to student training was to build up the basic concepts which would provide the background to the work and which would allow the students to share the minimum frame of reference necessary to understand the meaning of the activity which USS would carry out in the neighbourhood. It seemed fundamental to reach these basic agreements, since practice was conditioned by the educational concepts -- implicit or explicit - on which it was based. The initial evaluation of the students had shown that they were confused about the concept of adult education. In addition, as a central aim of literacy work was to try to respond to the needs of the population, it was considered wise to give priority during the early meetings to developing both concepts (adult education and needs) in order to express explicitly the 'common sense' premises with which the students were embarking upon their work and to begin to construct the basic concepts which would give consistency to USS. The contents (concepts, methods, techniques) which the students should learn in order to be able to carry out the work were built up on the basis of their experiences, knowledge or representations concerning adult education and social needs. In this way, theoretical concepts were incorporated via their convergence with the students' 'everyday knowledge' or by clarification and analysis of instances of confusion.

The teaching methods and techniques were chosen bearing in mind the objective that students should be able to experience different forms of work with adults and, at the end of each session, time was set aside to reconstruct the experience conceptually.

During this first stage, six meetings were held at which the following programme was developed:

pooling of information obtained during the individual initial assessment interviews;

characteristics of the USS project;

basic concepts of the project: adult education, people's education, objective and subjective needs;

adult education methods and techniques: mental training, games.

The activities of problem-stating and clarification of implied aspects were graded on a scale. The starting-point was work based on the cognitive level, clarifying the meaning of the concepts and aspects of reality with which an experience was being described and then gradually relating the problem to the perceptual categories being applied by the students to analyse the situation.

The first classes were devoted to analysis of experiences which the students classified as adult education, to make them state explicitly the criteria which led them to this classification. The concepts of adult education and people's education were developed by reflecting on these experiences and, under the guidance of the university teachers, the different aspects were clarified.

In order to construct the concepts of objective and subjective needs an exercise was prepared which we think it is interesting to describe as demonstrating the line of work adopted.

Exercise: Human needs

Aim of the exercise:

To construct the concept of human needs; to differentiate between need and lack; to differentiate between objective and subjective needs.

To recognize the different views of needs depending on one's position in society:

to imagine the differences between one's own 'views' of neighbourhood needs and those of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood;

to recognize the needs of one's own group.

Content of the exercise:

A.   Answer the following questions:

What, in your view, might be the needs of the population of the suburban neighbourhoods with the lowest socio-economic level?

Do you think that the needs you indicate might coincide with those felt by the people in those neighbourhoods? Give reasons for your answer.

What, in your view, are the needs of the social group to which you belong?

B.   Group the needs enumerated in A, according to criteria which you yourselves must establish.

Techniques used:

In A: Individual written work, later shared with the group.

In E. Card games prepared by the university teachers, using the replies in A.

In this exercise not only was explicit expression given to the conceptual content – concept of need, how one can make use of the concept depending on the model of 'the quality of life' on which the definition of needs is based, and according to one's position in society – but students were also encouraged to realize how they themselves applied these notions, how far they were able to perceive their own needs and those of other groups, and what were the concepts of society and deprivation implicit in their judgements.

This kind of experience made them aware of the conflicts lying ahead for prospective literacy workers.

At this stage in the workshop, group work was organized as follows:

reflection on personal experience (answering a questionnaire, relating an experience etc.);

pooling of individual experiences and opinions (in small groups and/or with the whole group);

group reflection on the items of information pooled, in order to classify and conceptualize them;

reflection on the way the class developed, to clarify and conceptualize the methods and techniques used.

Evaluation of this stage: Students began to use the concepts of adult education and needs more precisely. Significantly, they not only included them in their reflections but also mentioned experiences they had had in the workshop as examples of how one could change, how one could learn new concepts and correct mistaken or vague notions.

They began to be an integrated group, and one felt there was a climate of mutual confidence between university teachers and students.

Although it had been agreed to link participation in USS with formal subjects for accreditation purposes, in the event no linkage took place.

Second period. Contrasting these views with reality

As from the sixth week, the students went into the neighbourhood. At first they went as observers. Establishing contact with the families was delayed to give the students time to review their decision to take part in USS and to define their commitment before making contact with the adults. They were given the task of drawing a map of the sector assigned to them, showing the distribution of dwellings classified by type. They would later go from house to house gathering information about the neighbourhood, offering the educational service and, finally, reaching an agreement with the families who agreed to take part.

As they related their experiences, their views of the neighbourhood became apparent and it became possible to confirm the working hypothesis that their perception, judgements and emotional reactions would be influenced by the stereotyping of the population as 'basely poor people'.

This diagnosis led to the aims for this stage being adjusted. It was proposed to concentrate on making the students aware of their own schemata of perception and evaluation and making them recognize the extent to which their views concorded with reality, in order to build up a view of the neighbourhood based on sufficient empirical data and not on prejudices or stereotypes.

More or less explicit pointers to their lack of fitness to judge were apparent in the adjectives they used both to describe the population and to express their feelings about the task in hand.

Analysis of what they said showed that this lack of fitness arose from two 'common sense' mechanisms:

stereotyping;

using the mores of their own group as a norm or parameter for judging those of the population.

Stereotyping:

Repeated accounts of how they were received in the houses and of how they felt when in contact with the population made it clear that the students expected to find in the population 'low' behaviour and habits: vulgarity, violence, aggression, lack of respect. We refer to remarks such as the following:

Concerning their own feelings:

'I felt very much at ease.'

'I felt calm and at ease all the time I was on the round.'

'It was an earth floor and everything was very clean
... (I felt very much at ease with her).'

Concerning the behaviour of the population:

'He treated us very well, was very well mannered and
behaved very nicely.'

'He told us the names of the streets and showed us
where they were (very friendly).'

'A very nice man attended to us.'

Using the _mores_ of their own group as a norm or parameter
for judging those of the population:

Judgement, without prior analysis, was given concerning
the real conditions in which the event being told had
occurred:

'The bus I went to the neighbourhood on was full
of little children. I was very worried ... how
could they let them travel alone — it's
dangerous ... they were 7 or 8 years old.'

Analysis of the episode showed that there was no risk, and
that their concern implied that the parents were negligent.

Judgement was based on an emotional reaction and they
could not formulate an explanatory hypothesis:

'She told me that she would have to ask her
husband's permission. I nearly said something but
I kept quiet in the end; so much submissiveness
made me mad.'

In these cases reflection was aimed — through questions and
requests for justification of statements — at reconstructing the
chain of significance into which a given situation fitted and at
revealing the hidden contents. With questions like: Why do you
say that? How did you expect to feel? How did you expect them to

treat you? Did you imagine they would behave any differently? Why did you imagine that? It quickly became apparent that their expectations when they went to the neighbourhood were the opposite of the real situation they found there.

Evaluation of this stage: As work progressed, the students began to recognize that their behaviour was influenced by information of a subconscious nature. Through dialogue, the implicit assumptions soon became clear.

In some cases, the students were aware of their stereotyping. Simply being in contact with the neighbourhood was enough for them to criticize their own attitude.

> 'The truth is that I was afraid because, in Luján, people say that people get knifed and there is prostitution in that neighbourhood. But I realized that it is a peaceful neighbourhood where families live and children play in the streets.'

In these cases the perceptual categories which determined judgements about the population acted as shared tacit knowledge which could be easily expressed and could penetrate easily into their conscious mind.

> 'Of course, from the way she was dressed and how she looked I thought she would not be nice to us; I didn't expect her to be so well mannered.'

In some cases, contact with the neighbourhood led to the opposite view, which also denied aspects of objective reality; after perceiving contact as 'dangerous' they began to form an 'idyllic' view which it was necessary to analyse with the group of students, because it was just as uncritical as the previous one. Their statements show:

Views which deny the injustice or risks of poverty:

> 'I felt peaceful. I realized that one can live differently, without rushing, and be happy too; the children were playing in the street and there was no danger.'

Views which deny the critical situation of the population with regard to their rights:

> 'He said to us: What a sacrifice it is for you to come round the houses, isn't it?'

> 'We couldn't believe how quickly he expressed concern about us without knowing us; he didn't distrust us for a moment. One isn't used to that.'

Both the students' participation in the workshop and a semi-structured questionnaire which they answered in writing at the end of this stage revealed very different rates of progress. A small number had not even begun their process of change; the majority, under the guidance of the university teachers, had begun to be aware of the mechanisms which had influenced their behaviour, and a few were able to recognize the importance of the process of clarifying meaning and of the value of this in people's education.

> 'I gained new knowledge ... and concepts, and above all I realized the importance of explaining them.'

> 'It provided me with tools to interpret reality and to act accordingly. Now I have a new feeling — I don't know what to call it — a feeling that I can contribute, even if it is only a little, to changing the view of reality held by many of the inhabitants of the Ameghino neighbourhood and which often prevents them from doing things which would be of benefit to them.'

> 'I developed a new way of communicating: above all of "being a better listener", of being able to perceive more accurately what the other person means, of breaking down what is said to reach the meaning that we all give to the terms we use to express ourselves. I feel different. I feel that I have now got new tools for a critical and self-critical attitude ... this tests how far my values, thoughts and ideas are consistent with my behaviour and commitment.'

Evaluation of the direction given to the work raised the question of whether university teaching could ever have sufficient meaning and density to overcome the past, and continuing, influence of all the other factors in the socialization of students at primary and secondary school.

To socialize students on new lines, the right conceptual and social conditions are necessary. The development of this stage suggested that the minimum conditions required could be achieved within USS:

On the conceptual level, because of the homogeneity of the teaching staff of the Department of Education - through the content of the study programmes, the bibliography and class contents - which created a concurrence of opinion making for continuity and coherence in the 'conservation apparatus' (Berger & Luckmann:192).

On the level of social interaction, strong affective identification was created because:

The teaching aims and the students' expectations coincided, regarding both the social objectives and the teaching-learning strategies adopted:

'I was in touch with real life and I achieved what I thought was impossible; practical classes, PRACTICAL CLASSES!'

'I feel more useful, because through USS I can "do my bit" to improve the situation in the neighbourhood.'

'I met teachers who at other times, and maybe even now in another university, would be labelled as "leftists" just because they are interested in and value popular culture. I am pleased to know that some of my values coincide with theirs, and that things which are as important as popular culture are taken into account by Unesco and in particular by our university. The most important thing in my

opinion is that I can see that something is being done, and that it is not all just abstract talk.'

The relationship between the teachers and the students, and among the students themselves was free, unconstrained, very respectful and cordial.

'Another thing which I think I have learned is to revalue respect for others ... When I felt respected I became aware of my own lack of respect and that of others.'

'... the whole human relationship thing, between teachers and fellow students, the climate of mutual help and understanding which reigned in all the classes made me feel good and very much at ease and it made me want to carry on and help.'

Stage II - Introduction to learning the methodology of literacy work

During the first period of contact with the neighbourhood and before literacy training began, intensive sessions were held to teach literacy training techniques. Demonstration and imitation methods were used. Starting from an explanation of the basics of literacy methods and of the preferred procedure, the specialized teachers demonstrated the role of literacy worker and the students themselves acted as pupils. After the demonstration, all the students practised taking the role of literacy worker in turns, using role-playing techniques.

Analysis of each dramatization was based both on expanding technical information - the use of teaching aids, flexibility in the teaching sequence - and on the imaginative inputs by the students. Basically, analysis of the way the students acted as pupils revealed their assumptions and expectations concerning the possible reactions of the adults and the fears which they consequently entertained.

Evaluation of this stage: Observation of the students during the dramatizations in the workshop and the house-to-house campaign

revealed that although different rates of progress could be foreseen, they had all reached the 'minimum threshold' to make a commitment to the families.

As explained in the previous chapter, to make it easier for them to plan and structure their teaching, the reading material for the adults was prepared and given to them so that they could start their literacy teaching.

It should be noted that by this time the predictable drop-outs (seven students) had taken place. It was assumed that those left had passed the 'commitment test', and they were therefore gradually introduced to work in the neighbourhood.

There is not sufficient information available to assess clearly the reasons for the drop-outs. It is known that one student left USS because she got a job, and her working hours prevented her from continuing to take part. The others failed their intermediate examinations, and left the university during their four-month period. No further information could be obtained because their fellow students had also lost touch with them.

The question remains why they did not stay with USS despite giving up the rest of their academic activities. We believe that their ability to cope with frustration and difficulties, and the crisis of adolescence, affected their attitude to continuing with a task which confronted them with a painful aspect of society; when faced with it, they could not find clear solutions and sought other answers. This hypothesis is based on remarks made by students who dropped out:

'The truth is that I went "round the bend"; I gave up everything (studies, USS, job) because I could see no sense in what I was doing!'

'I had to cut down on my activities because I am anaemic and so I preferred to leave university and only do Catholic mission service.'

<u>Stage III</u> - Conflict analysis

Direct contact with the population and the need to take decisions provoked an avalanche of questions in the workshop. Given the students' early doubts, the tendency of the teachers was to transmit their own experience and to 'advise' them on ways of solving problem situations, analysing the situation from the point of view of the reasons which might explain the behaviour of the neighbourhood population - their customs, causes of frustration, previous experience - or from the point of view of the aims of the project. In a short time it was realized that nearly all the 'technical' questions ('what should I do if?') concealed perception and behaviour patterns belonging to the dominant culture. Starting from this hypothesis, progress was made in diagnosing the views implicit in assuming that a given situation is a problem situation.

During the course of three workshop sessions, teachers and students prepared a long list of questions raised by the students due to their having found themselves in such situations during their visits to the neighbourhood or because they imagined them as possible, based on experience with other similar populations.

As may be seen from the list below, at this stage the questions were related more to aspects of the everyday culture of the population than to teaching problems (the questions considered to be 'technical' are marked with an *).

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF ...

they offer me a 'mate'?[1]

they invite me to a dance?

they offer me herb tea?

I see a little girl chopping a log with an axe?

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1. 'Mate': an infusion made from 'yerba mate', a herb found in America; it is drunk using a ball-like recipient or thin tube, known by the same name, which may be passed around.

I see children travelling alone?

a lady says that she has to ask her husband's permission?

they compliment me?

the children are left alone in charge of the house?

I see a child with no coat on and barefoot in the cold?

a lady has an infection and won't go to the doctor?

I see that that lady is infecting the children?

it is raining? Should I go? And if the house leaks?

* someone pronounces badly e.g. swallows their 's'?

someone speaks badly e.g. puts the definite article before the proper name ('the' Mary, 'the' Luis)?

* someone makes spelling mistakes because of their bad pronunciation?

* if I tell them to think of words beginning with 'la' 'le' ... and they say 'lámpara'?

if I am in a house and I want to go to the toilet?

* if I don't know how to teach a topic suggested by the other person?

if they don't understand me?

if they tell me problems?

if they speak ill of a neighbour who is a pupil of mine?

if they don't have enough money for food that day or for a trip?

if they talk about politics?

if a man on his own invites me to come in and I'm afraid?

if a mother smacks her child hard?

if a mother leaves her child for five days to help with the garden at the centre?

*   if a lady has been absent with justification for several days in succession and asks for work, but does not know very much?

*   if I don't know what to do next when I am teaching?

*   if someone gets a total mental block?

*   if I am not sure of the spelling?

if they try to seduce me?

if I fall in the mud before going into a house?

if a boy in the house asks me out?

*   if I teach something wrong?

if I see a child playing with mud?

if I arrive at a house when there is a big family row going on?

if I see a child all bruised and beaten?

*   if I see that what I am teaching does not interest them and they are bored?

if I am teaching a lady and her husband corrects her over my head?

if I think that the children have not all got the same father?

In the process of trying to understand the significance of the students' questions, the first inquiry was to find out why they felt that the situation was a problem. The first reply generally referred to the dilemma of whether they should intervene or not. The following comments made by some students to sum up this conflict may be presented as 'prototypes' of the contradictions which they all felt:

When confronted with what they considered to be risk situations (punishments, dangerous games, responsibilities given to children):

'... When I think something is wrong or dangerous, if I don't do anything then I feel bad. If something bad happens I would feel guilty for not having stopped it in time, and if I say something, I'm afraid of causing offence and that they will take it badly and think I am interfering.'

When confronted with social interchanges (invitations to go out, to a meal etc.):

'If I accept an invitation unwillingly I feel bad, and sometimes I am afraid of catching something and if I refuse I think they might be offended.'

When confronted with situations where they do not know whether the relationship goes beyond the limits of their teaching activity (children with colds, receiving confidences):

'If I give her money or clothes I'm afraid I will offend her but, if I don't give, then I know they need something essential and that is not fair.'

The contradiction expressed by the students is the fear that non-intervention is inaction in the face of injustice or a neighbourhood problem but, at the same time, they fear that intervention may give offence and lead to a break in their relationship and cause the pupil to drop out.

Starting from this awareness of contradiction felt by the students, group analysis was set in motion which revealed that, although their discourse revealed solidarity with the needs and problems of popular sectors, the common denominator in the reasons they gave to define a situation as a conflict situation was their low opinion of the neighbourhood.

The underlying hypothesis which led to systematic work on these questions was that in the case of questions about methodological and technical alternatives to solve situations which were on the borderline of the teaching function, or in cases where the effects that specific action might have on the literacy worker-pupil relationship were not clear, the doubts or perceived problematical nature of a situation is the expression of a contradiction between on the one hand the students' declared aims, which show a positive attitude to the task and the adult pupil, and on the other the schemata of perception, evaluation and behaviour which are used to interpret the situation and which imply a low opinion of the everyday culture of the population concerned.

This evaluation led to a modification of the objectives set for this stage, with emphasis on the two 'common sense' aspects which are the crux of the project:

its content, to overcome the uncritical views about the population concerned -- both the 'idyllic' and the 'dangerous' -- by an objective interpretation of differences;

the method to be followed to achieve dialectical thought, to question phenomena and to search for the hidden meaning in each situation and its relation with the real world as a whole.

Starting from real episodes or analytical exercises which guided reflection, stress was laid on the following topics:

the antinomies implicit in conflict situations, indicative of the opposite extremes of a contradiction which in our view went beyond the limits of the teacher-pupil relationship and reflected asymmetry between social sectors;

a comparison between what the literacy workers meant to say when talking about what their role should be, and their actions — expressed in implicit, and opposing terms in their statements and behaviour;

the everyday activities of the population, analysed as representations and behaviour patterns which might promote or hinder action to overcome their situation of economic, cultural and social deprivation (i.e. not analysed as an 'undesirable' life-style).

Analysis of these topics gradually included an increasing level of conceptualization, starting from the language used by the students to express themselves in each case. Categories of analysis were gradually introduced, drawn from the theories developed in the subject which they had studied or were studying; where necessary, a specific bibliography was provided.

Below are two analytical exercises prepared by the teachers on the basis of conflicts evoked by the students, which show the characteristics of the method and the content of this stage of the workshop. Once the first exercise had been prepared and performed in class, and the students' interventions assessed, the follow-on exercises were devised for the next s'age.

Exercises for conflict analysis:

Exercise I was presented as follows:

The students were each given a sheet with the list of questions raised by them in previous classes, in the form of 'What should I do ... if?' (see above). They were instructed to choose the problem which related most closely to their own problem, and were asked to analyse it using a guide-list of questions. To describe the exercise more clearly, possible choices are indicated:

They offer me a 'mate' in the neighbourhood.

A.   What worries me?

in the positive case (if I accept the 'mate')

in the negative case (if I refuse the 'mate')

B.   What would I do?

       I am offered a 'mate' at a friend's house.

A.   What worries me?

       in the positive case (if I accept the 'mate')

       in the negative case (if I refuse the 'mate')

B.   What would I do?

Transferring the conflict from the neighbourhood environment to an environment similar to their own was considered an alternative which would make it easier for them to realize, and to state explicitly, that the decisive factor linked to the worries they felt was their belonging to a different social sector from their pupils.

Below is a summary of the worries expressed by the students about how the people in the neighbourhood might interpret their words and actions as literacy workers. The list sums up the replies given by the students based on the conflict situation chosen by each of them.

I am concerned about:

giving material goods;

making them think that I have a low opinion of them, offending them;

interfering with other people's business, encroaching on their lives;

not providing them with information or transmitting a piece of knowledge;

tarnishing my image as a teacher;

going too far in a discussion;

hurting them with my own opinion;

shaming them;

impairing or interrupting the teaching relationship.

When placed in the situation of acting in an environment similar to their own, the students expressed no concern or doubts regarding the right conduct.

The teachers' analysis of the contents of the replies revealed the recurrence of two common, linked themes: a concern with giving - in all cases it was seen as likely to encroach, or generate conflict - and a lack of clarity about the role of the people's educator.

The themes are linked in that the evaluation of giving and consequently of receiving, and the definition of the teaching role, have different significances depending on whether the standpoint is that of individual or of social analysis.

From the individual standpoint, taken out of context, the individual act of giving could be construed as almsgiving, an encroachment, an offence, a humiliation, a paternalistic act. These connotations associated with the act of giving would be a response to associating the situation of deprivation with lack of concern and lack of initiative on the part of the neighbourhood itself.

On the other hand, if these questions are tackled from the social standpoint, the private act of giving would no longer be an isolated individual act: if I give, it is because I have. At the same time, if I have more than the person in need, this is due to a situation of social injustice and not because of individual merits. Giving in this context acquires other connotations: sharing, helping, providing ways and means. The students' difficulty in analysing situations from the social standpoint also limited their ability to think of the role of people's educator from this point of view. This meant that in

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their search for appropriate behaviour they did not consider the social consequences that their interventions might have on the pupils as a group. To continue with the analysis of these problems and to avoid the resistance with which analysis of their own contradictions was met, a further exercise was prepared. This referred to a fictitious situation which nevertheless reflected the doubts, contradictions, conflicts and implicit assumptions which had emerged in the previous exercise.

It was hoped that through this activity the students might recognize the categories of perception they were using to value or discredit the act of giving and/or receiving.

Exercise II was made up of two parts. The first part involved analysis of the recipient and the second of the donor.

First Part

The imaginary situation prepared for working purposes was the following:

Characters: two inhabitants of a poor neighbourhood. Character A is a mother with a lot of children who goes uncritically about her daily life (she complains, speaks ill of her neighbours, says that her husband is lazy); character B is a poor man, able to criticize and reflect upon the social causes of the situation in which he finds himself.

The third character is a charity lady.

The situation: a charity lady, clearly distinguishable on account of her clothing and stylish manner, distributes parcels of clothing and food in the streets of the neighbourhood. This lady calls on both our characters in turn. The example attempts to show how each of these inhabitants of the neighbourhood perceives the situation.

CHARACTER A:

Accepts the parcel, is grateful to the lady for her generosity, tells her children to thank her and asks her to bring more things.

CHARACTER B:

Accepts the parcel and explains to the lady the reasons for his acceptance: 'I am taking it because I need it but, by doing this, you are not going to change this poverty and injustice or improve anything'.

The students analysed how each of these characters might perceive him/herself and each other. In the analysis, 'common sense' categories were used.

HOW DO I SEE MYSELF AS A RECIPIENT?

CHARACTER A:

I see myself as inferior, powerless, inefficient, a failure, incapable of coping with my situation, with no right to aspire to anything better.

CHARACTER B:

I see myself as suffering deprivation or difficulties which have a social cause. I therefore see myself as having a right to defend and satisfy my individual needs, perhaps through collective action.

HOW DO I SEE THE DONOR?

CHARACTER A:

I see her as powerful, superior, with power based on her capacity for risk-taking, on her will.

CHARACTER B:

I see her as someone who represents or belongs to groups who benefit from social inequality and who are not interested in changing this situation, either due to lack of awareness or in order to protect their own interests; or as someone who, depending on my conduct, can change or question her own values.

HOW DO I THINK THE OTHER PERSON SEES ME AS A RECIPIENT?

CHARACTER A:

She sees me as inferior, powerless, inefficient, a failure, and feels sorry for me.

CHARACTER B:

(1) If she is not interested in change, she will see me as a rebel, lacking in respect, ungrateful etc.

(2) If she begins to question her values on account of my attitude, she will see me as a person, an equal, as someone she can talk to, and from whom she can learn, as someone who has taught her something and given her something.

HOW DO I THINK THE OTHER PERSON SEES HERSELF AS A DONOR?

CHARACTER A:

She sees herself as superior to me, good and generous.

CHARACTER B:

(1) She sees herself as a generous person unjustly treated.

(2) Maybe she will begin to question her feeling of superiority, and have something else in mind when she gives.

In the analysis of these imaginary conversations some scientific concepts were gradually introduced in an attempt to identify:

The concepts of society, culture and social change implicit in the thoughts of each character. Knowledge drawn from currents of critical sociology and structural functionalism were used to show how different concepts could be formed depending on the theory adopted.

The styles of thought predominant in each character (dichotomous in A and more dialectical in B), revealed by the content of their interventions; observed features were a reference to the historical-social context, analysis of the social reality as contradictory and conflictive, the possibility of allowing individual initiative to solve social problems, people's attitude to power, etc.

The relations between thought processes, and words and deeds.

Second Part

The students were then asked to do the second part of the exercise.

Instructions: Write carefully considered answers to the following questions:

how do I see myself when I give to the people in the neighbourhood?

how do I see the recipient?

how do I think the other person sees me when I give?

how do I think the other person sees himself or his group when they receive?

It was hoped that the exercise would make the students aware of the contradictory feelings which this situation provoked in them, leading them to a critical analysis of those feelings.

However, the students could not face the feelings and thoughts aroused by the questions and were unable to answer.

Some of them made it clear that this activity affected them too much. This stage was therefore discontinued, and it was proposed to continue reading the reference material and applying it to analyse conversations with members of the population. The material was 'fundamentos teóricos para las actividades de análisis crítico de los problemas', by Guy Le Boterf (1979).

The material was read with both theoretical and practical aims in mind. Working in small groups, the teachers guided the students in how to:

conceptualize the differences between everyday knowledge and critical knowledge;

give examples of both types of knowledge drawn from their personal experience in the neighbourhood or from everyday life;

reflect upon the role of the people's educator in relation to knowledge;

put forward pedagogical alternatives to facilitate transition from everday knowledge to critical knowledge.

Once the students were able to apply 'common sense' concepts and the concepts of critical knowledge, progress was made towards the systematic application of a method for diagnosis and pedagogical action.

The following guidelines were analysed and exemplified for this purpose:

formulating hypotheses on the content of the representations which might be associated with the behaviour of the literacy pupils;

identifying the content of each representation (attributes, distinctive characteristics, explicit foundations, assigned values), the object to which it is applied and/or the associated behaviour;

investigating through dialogue the explicit reasons for the adults' behaviour;

analysing the reasons given by the adults:

by applying knowledge drawn from critical theories of education, education sociology etc.;

by identifying the social function played by the foundations which underly representations (conservation, or critical transformation of the status quo);

by identifying whether the expressed foundations are consistent with the adults' behaviour;

if the foundations and behaviour are not consistent, by considering possible implicit, latent assumptions, which are not expressed openly;

comparing the hypothetical sketch with reality.

These guidelines were used to systematize the work carried out in the workshop and to put the experience of the students into a conceptual framework.

Obviously they could not be expected to apply them in a complete and finished way, but it was hoped that they would be able to think up and devise possible interventions on that basis.

Evaluation of this stage: A retrospective view of the year's work allows us to say that this was the most difficult period as far as co-ordination of the workshop was concerned; but we can also say with certainty - once the difficulties had been overcome and the experience could be examined objectively - that, despite the mistakes made and the experiments discarded, an important approach had been found to student training.

The problems confronting the teachers arose from the new characteristics of the task in relation to the habitual forms and contents of teaching.

Difficulties encountered by the co-ordinators were:

to keep the balance between providing immediate answers to the students' questions and to setting aside time to work more slowly, to reflect upon the significance of the questions and to find a coherent answer to each one;

to be alert to their own 'common sense' views which could (and usually did) lead them, like the students, to fall into contradictions between their declarations and their behaviour;

to be able to interpret all the aspects of the problems created by the limitations of their own theoretical training.

The difficulty of keeping the balance between long-term aims and immediate requirements was constantly felt. The university teachers were constantly torn between, on the one hand, the need to transmit routines and to give clear instructions to make the students feel confident, and, on the other hand, critical analysis which would allow the students gradually to stand on their own two feet. We found that a clear instruction was a double-edged sword, a technically contradictory tool: it meant communicating to the student the experience of a professional, and this made them feel confident about what to do. But transmitting successful practices, based only on the requirements of a given situation, led to these instructions being used rigidly because they did not solve the conflict implicit in the question 'what should I do if ...'. These practical recommendations may be considered as belonging to the realm of 'common sense', since 'they allow one to obtain typical, immediate results in recurring familiar situations without knowing precisely why success is being achieved' (R. Guber, 1986:9).

The temptation to support students with practical guidance created a dilemma for the teacher, because although this solved an immediate problem, the guidance tended to become standard practice, which later led to contradictory interventions by the students. One example was the advice given to students that it was unwise to say 'no' when pupils held wrong views or disagreed with them; so as to avoid making them feel that they had been 'put in the wrong', it was better not to answer straight away, or to take indirect action to set them right. The students took this advice as gospel, letting mistakes pass uncorrected, and in general without finding a solution to this situation: although they did not express their opinion they reached no decision on their attitude of passing judgement.

Another difficulty in this work was that the university teachers, whose function was to wean the students from their 'common sense' views, were members of the same social group and shared the same cultural values as the students. They had therefore to make a constant effort to rethink their own assumptions; their task was to clarify the practical consciousness not of people different from themselves, but of those like them (at least in many respects). They were constantly required to differentiate significances, not only for the students but also for themselves.

The need for an interdisciplinary approach was central to an adequate analysis of each situation. Here the absence of any linkage with the university subjects (already mentioned in the evaluation of previous stages) meant that the results were not as valuable as those which could have been obtained from permanent work in a team with specialists from different disciplines.

Evaluation of how the students gradually changed highlights achievements and difficulties as well as the teaching strategies which worked best.

In the first place, it is considered that the stage of eliciting questions and conflicts marked progress with regard to previous stages. Progress consisted in the fact that the students perceived conflicts by recognizing the injustice of the situation in which the people in the neighbourhood lived, although they were not yet able to analyse the social causes or identify the contradictions within themselves.

The difficulties were related to their lack of training in searching for meanings beyond the obvious, their unwillingness to recognize their own contradictions, the anguish occasioned by contact with poverty, and their limited personal ability to find a solution.

The process of discovering implicit meanings provoked different reactions in different students and necessitated a search for different teaching strategies. Analysis of the meaning of statements by members of the population was quickly accepted and tried out by the students. In the workshop they analysed the

episodes which they themselves brought from their work in the neighbourhood, trying to apply the method and the concepts they had learned. This is shown by the following dialogue:

First speaker

I asked C. how the child was doing at school and she said 'fine, thank God'. I wondered why she had said 'thank God'. Was it because she thought that only a miracle could make her son pass his grades? Was she putting him in a category, and that is why she said it?

Second speaker

Could it not be that she is really religious?

Third speaker

Maybe she was only using a cliché.

First speaker

No, I thought about it, and followed her up to see whether she always said that; and she didn't ... only when she talked about school. I think it is her representation of school. I'm going to keep on trying.

Other episodes also show the changes taking place in their thought processes: they gradually replaced assertions with hypotheses which they tried to prove.

Permanent analysis of this type while they were working in the neighbourhood was not always possible, but the students began to be concerned about the approach, to evaluate the methods proposed and to appraise their own efforts observing – after field work – the limitations of their own intervention:

'She told me that her husband had been there for 27 years but that she had only come when she got married. She said that she did not like the neighbourhood because "people were always fighting". (As I write, I realize that I should have tried to make her think why they fought.).'

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The records also show progress in the formulation of hypotheses. Describing the conversation among a group of pupils (putting his own thoughts in brackets), one student wrote:

'She said to me: Rosa got offended the last time, and she came back the same as she went away. Listen, although C. tells me (Oh, I thought, she's probably going to express a low opinion of the population in general) that you can't trust the people in this neighbourhood. (Carlos is her oldest son. In my view, Carlos stands for all the concepts used in self-depreciation by the whole family.)'

The process of applying the method to analyse the contradictions within themselves worked out somewhat differently. During the first stage it was clear that several students were unwilling to recognize the mechanisms of their own 'common sense':

'That doesn't happen to me.'

After several sessions working on contradictions, some students reached crisis point and experienced anguish:

'Stop it! Don't move the goalposts any more.'

The most effective teaching strategies to find the optimal distance from which to objectify the situation were conceptualization and application of the method to analyse the behaviour of others – in this case, the population of the neighbourhood. A document dealing with the characteristics of 'common sense' (G. Le Boterf, 1979:50) was read and analysed, and used to interpret the discourses of the pupils.

Evaluation of this stage shows that work on the 'common sense' views of others may be the first step in a strategy to identify implicit meanings. Recognition of this is less upsetting for people as it does not affect their self-esteem, and from that point on they can begin to make progress in the process of self-observation. Work on the representations of the community produced this effect on students who were more moved emotionally by their own contradictions. The following dialogue demonstrates this process:

Student'- Do you remember that class which was so important, the
          one when we realized what was happening to us?

Teacher - Which class do you mean? I can't remember.

Student - When Frida and Norma (the teachers in charge of the
          class) analysed our answers.

Teacher - But you said that didn't happen to you.

Student - Oh yes! I said so that day but ... (smiling, as though
          laughing at herself) maybe I've changed!

We assume that another factor which might explain later
acceptance of the contradiction is the students' growing
self-assurance based on recognition, in the work itself, of their
ability to teach. Work in the neighbourhood and in the workshop
were complementary, in the sense that they developed the
students' critical faculties.

Stage IV - Construction of the teaching role

Although the aim of the year's work was to train the students as
professional teachers, we believe that the most outstanding
feature of the last period was the chance to conceptualize
alternative plans of action which they themselves had invented to
solve situations with the adults.

The difference between USS and other experiments in
developing trainee teachers' critical faculties is that literacy
training lies outside the school context; the role is not
programmed or assigned by an institution. In workshops with
practising teachers the content is usually centred on analysis of
the school as an institution. The aim is to make the educators
aware of the ideological and epistemological commitments they
take on when they adopt certain methods, techniques or values,
and to rescue from rejection any alternative proposals which may
be generated - consciously or unconsciously - in order to analyse
and develop them and put them into practice.

In USS, as nothing is institutionalized, the role had to be analysed by clarifying representations constructed by the students in the past, probably based on their own experience as pupils. In the early stages the internalized rules governing the students' behaviour had to be explored, and a period was necessary in which they could actually teach and put their representations into practice, in order to have 'material' for analysis and also to experiment with alternatives aimed at solving the problems confronting them.

Of the different experiments carried out in relation to the construction of the role, there are two which we consider to be worth expanding on:

the dismantling of representations of education which might stand in the way of performing the desired role;

spontaneous reactions to which construction of the role might be linked.

The dismantling of obstructive representations. We were able to identify as a major problem the students' representation of education combined with their concept of the teacher, the pupil and the teacher-pupil relationship. The episodes commented on in the workshop and the records showed that the students shared representations reflecting the unequal relationship between the teacher and the pupil. The teacher was placed on a pedestal and looked up to as omniscient. Analysis was aimed at showing the contradiction between this stereotype and the Utopian model of the people's educator, and gave rise to the students trying to devise ways of solving this contradiction and of influencing this representation of the teacher.

Spontaneous reactions to which construction of the desired role might be linked. This work consisted of rescuing strategies tried out by the students and subjecting them to conceptual analysis.

This process had begun in the previous stage, when some students tried to modify obstructive contents in the adults' representations. These episodes were taken up again and new

episodes were recounted in order to place them in a conceptual framework, pointing out the aspect of the view which they had acted upon – knowledge, value, perceptual category – and the pedagogical strategy used – providing information, classifying with a different criterion, putting into context in order to give new meaning, etc.

. Evaluation of the stage: During this final period it was shown that by developing the ability to diagnose the self-depreciating aspects of the pupils' discourses, the students could begin to act, finding answers with which they tried to influence these self-depreciating views. Their field records and the stories told in the workshop show that their intervention was not limited to affective support to provide consolation or alleviate a tense situation, but that they tried deliberately to point out other possible ways of interpreting a situation or behaviour, to investigate the content and origin of a view. This possibility was shown mainly in relation to views on education, which is understandable, because that is the subject of which they had a certain theoretical knowledge. However, there were attempts at intervening deliberately to modify judgements, opinions, stereotypes on different aspects of daily life. It is important to point out that some students even tried to assess the effects of their interventions. The following student's record reveals the effect on behaviour of investigation and analysis of the image – shared by students and the population – of the teacher's range of knowledge. This record is also proof of the greater degree of self-assurance felt by the student, as it includes some remarks with a sense of humour:

'He was doing his homework. His mother looked at the folder and asked him: what does having regard for the balance of the ecosystem mean?

D – I don't know. That's what it says in the book.

Mother – And you are answering a question without knowing what it means? Ask the teacher (referring to me).

(Right then I was glad I had taken a course in general ecology.) I explained, with an example and so on.

Ah! Did you know she knew it? said the mother. (I felt that she had been putting me to the test, and that this was in line with the representation of the "omniscient" teacher that it was up to me to demolish. I thought I would have an opportunity to do so, and I did.) I told Juan that we would practise the four times table all together. We recited it all together, except the baby, and Amalia who was writing the word "mate".

Then, without realizing it, I said 4 x 9 and then I carried on with the nine times table (5 x 9, 6 x 9). They all stopped and said to me: Weren't we doing the four times table?

She did it on purpose to see if you know the nine times table – said the daughter.

Me – Going on with the nine times? No, I made a mistake!

Daughter – You made a mistake?

Me – Yes.

Her – This teacher doesn't know her tables as well as me.

Me – That's right.

I gave them some homework and left.'

By this time the students' critical ability had increased and they were also able to reflect upon different aspects of their work: they could assess the changes in themselves, their skills and shortcomings as educators, the effects of their educational interventions.

One of the students summed up her assessment of her own development:

'In some of my records I can see lots of defects, the most important thing being my limited participation, I hardly ever ask questions or have answers and affirmation of my

own, and when I do, save for a few exceptions, there is not much searching for representations or practices. I can see that I was very much centred on the literacy task itself or, at the beginning, on "social" communication.

In record 5, when the theme of solidarity in the neighbourhood arose, I did not participate in finding out the causes of these representations ... Some time later, in record 21, talking about the floods, the question of solidarity arose again. Entirely deliberately, I then tried to gain more information about the causes of the way they represented relationships between neighbours; also to help them to devise some solution to their problems making the best use of an existing body, the well-attended Peronist Commission, as an agent which might bring people together.'

When the students realized that achievement is the fruit of consistent effort, they began to consider the possibility of planning strategies with a view to identifying representations and practices of importance as subjects of teaching action, and strategies to modify contents which stand in the way of independent development of the individual and the group.

During this final period it was possible to observe the students' progress compared with the first stage. To begin with their remarks and dialogues had been completely naïve, uncritical, and centred on affective relationships which they were obviously afraid of upsetting. In the last stage, after only five months of working in the neighbourhood and seven months of attending the workshop, they were able to reflect, intervene and assess their own capabilities and limitations both in theory and in practice.

V CHARACTERISTICS OF EVALUATION

The nature, aims and extent of the evaluation of a USS project stem from its conception and ultimate purpose, from the type and destination of the information obtained and from the real situation in which it will operate. The predominant problem at this stage of developing the theory and the practice of project evaluation was not to decide whether or not a particular plan was justified, but basically to clarify the criteria of viability, effectiveness and consistency with the programme to be applied to the work of evaluation.

It is from this standpoint that it is useful to reflect on a number of aspects whose clarification may help to give shape to the type of evaluation proposed. It seemed to us relevant to take as the first focal point of analysis, the idea of the university, since the nature and aims of any university social service should be defined in the light of the relationship between the university and society at large, the role to be played by the university and the nature and limits of its intervention. Account should also be taken of the emphasis laid on the content of student training and the methodological options for providing such training.

The tendency towards a more prominent role for the university in the economic, scientific, technological and socio-cultural life of society has gradually been consolidated in most countries, particularly over the last two decades. Statements such as: 'the university should contribute to reducing social inequalities'; 'the university should participate in the construction of a better world, in order to achieve greater human fulfilment'; 'the university should contribute o the sustained independent growth of the country'; 'the university considers that its mission and historical vocation are to promote social change' are frequently repeated in the definition of the terms of reference of an ever-increasing number of higher education establishments.

In the university policies based on such aims, stress has been laid on certain changes in both indirect modes of action (the search for greater social relevance of content; guaranteeing democratization by employing appropriate mechanisms for recruiting and retaining students, etc.) and in direct forms of operation in the university's sphere of influence (scientific and technical advisory services; social service; spread of culture; decisive participation in every situation which jeopardizes democratic ways of life and affects the exercise of human rights, etc.).

The fact that these changes in the role of the university with a view to a greater commitment to dealing with the problems of society are relatively recent explains why in many cases the nature, aims and <u>modus operandi</u> are still at the stage of clarifying debate.

In addition to the above, one can also observe in higher education a marked tendency towards a critical review of the conventional paradigm concerning the methods of producing knowledge; and towards a search for alternative methods, including greater integration of theory with practice and study with productive work, on which there is growing agreement. For example, marked qualitative differences can be seen in these activities, depending on whether one believes that the community is a natural field for professional practice where the students can try to apply techniques learned while studying with a view to acquiring subsequent competence in their profession; or on whether one considers that community service provides a programme for linking the choice of curriculum with activities which will promote critical analysis of the real situation the student will have to work on, combined with his/her initiation into the role of an agent whose changes will help to improve the quality of life, especially for the least-privileged sectors of society.

Secondly, in order to define evaluation guidelines, it is necessary to explain the underlying idea of the USS project. We believe that the most important 'guiding questions' are as follows:

How far is USS integrated into the institutional context of university extension work?

What is the generally held view as to the type of activity
which students or graduates should carry out in USS?

How does USS fit into established practice in the process of
training students?

In setting up a project to evaluate a specific social
service plan, it will be important to take into account the
nature of its insertion within the university.

On the one hand, it should be noted that expressions such as
university extension work, socio-cultural advancement etc.
usually imply a series of activities covering many types of
social action. These may seek either to contribute - through the
transfer of science and technology - to satisfying social needs
defined by members of the public or by a political project, or to
set in motion mechanisms which will stimulate initiatives to
improve the quality of life of populations suffering from
deprivation of all kinds. The activities usually included in
these descriptions are on-site or field practice carried out by a
few subject departments, cultural extension work, scientific and
technical advisory services, the spread of scientific knowledge,
social service and the like.

On the other hand, although extension work as a function of
the university has become general, not all universities have a
single co-ordinating unit to cover the wide spectrum of
activities undertaken, including those described as social
service. In some cases this type of programme does not exist at
all; in others, there are only isolated experiments in some
faculties. In organizations which have made a deeper commitment
to reality and have found ways of putting their aims into
practice, social service represents a responsibility of the
university as a whole, channelled through students and teachers
who, in accordance with an agreed plan, act in the community
depending on priority needs and the established budgetary
limitations. In cases where USS constitutes a systematic practice
with a background history in a given area, it may be important
inter alia to evaluate the population's progress from a given
date onwards (changes in traditional methods of production; a
more just distribution of wealth; greater socialization of

knowledge in matters such as health, mechanisms for political participation, a more scientific interpretation of reality etc.); also to evaluate how graduates already engaged in a profession perceive the ways in which they relate to society; the progress which the university teachers involved observe in their behaviour in real life; and any changes which have occurred in the significance and social relevance of degree subjects, in the methods for producing knowledge, etc. This information, handled in each social service programme, would lead to greater relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the aims, activities and achievements.

If however, USS represents a new exploratory experiment led centrally by one of the university faculties, it is possible to have recourse to other approaches to accommodate its particular position. In this case, the stereo types about the youth of the students and what the adults might learn from them, the identification of the 'novelty effect' on the population, and the 'teaching reaction' to the idea of the programme itself, would constitute the focal point of the evaluation.

As regards the type of activity which the students or graduates should carry out, it is necessary to clarify whether USS is seen as providing students, through their temporary immersion in a given situation and starting from existing problems and together with the members of the social group, with an opportunity for discovering conflicts, contradictions and ways of perceiving a variety of social types and for increasing their own critical awareness; or whether on the contrary USS is seen only as a degree requirement, as a chance for the students or graduates to acquire professional experience which will allow them to round off what they have learned in class and thus guarantee them a better position in the labour market.

In the former case, evaluation will be focused on ascertaining to what degree the students in a given social situation have increased their ability to approach and interpret reality from a critical point of view, and have increased their commitment to a joint reflection with members of the social group on the most salient problems confronting them. In addition, it

will be necessary to find obvious or indirect proof of changes in the views and behaviour of all the social actors concerned.

In the latter case, evaluation will centre on finding out what professional skills have been acquired in the field (field work being seen as the practical application of what has been learned).

As regards the linkage of USS with established student training activities, it will be important to determine whether USS is a part of a wider strategy or whether it represents an isolated experiment in which the students are involved at some stage of their training. If the university adopts the first approach; and considers that the production of knowledge is a dialectical process between theory and practice which, like opposites, are attracted in a dynamic spiral; and if it seeks to organize projects in keeping with this view, it is very likely that it will arrange opportunities for practice at critical points in the progress of each class, so that, by gradually increasing the level of complexity of the students' activities, it will become possible to integrate theory and practice with real situations. In this case USS will be a component of a wider programme, and it will be important to evaluate the extent to which it is linked to the overall existing programme of activities.

However, if USS is an experiment divorced from curricular background, because it is believed that the students can only face a given social reality adequately if they have been sufficiently well prepared academically, and that this is only possible at the end of their degree studies, a different approach to evaluation will be required.

At the beginning of this chapter it was pointed out that the content, methods and aims of evaluating a USS programme would depend on the nature and aims attribtued to social advancement in the context of how the role of the university in society at large is conceived. If it is accepted that, due to the nature of its relationship with knowledge, evaluation should become the 'critical conscience' of the university, then this should help directly, and as part of student training, to generate and apply

methods which will on the one hand help members of underprivileged sectors suffering from an unjust social order to discover not only distortions in the ways of perceiving reality but also the role played by views and practices in maintaining and consolidating that order; and which will on the other hand help to transform these views and practices so as ultimately to bring about social reform for all.

From this standpoint, USS is necessary as enabling students not only to analyse their professional role and social function theoretically, bearing in mind the power provided by the knowledge they have acquired, but also, through real life experience, to make progress in the construction of a coherent 'professional style' based on practice which is constantly subject to joint review.

Consequently, evaluation of the programme is not confined to obtaining information on whether the aims-means relationship is optimized, on whether economic and human resources used to the maximum, or on how effectively science and technology have been transferred. It is also necessary to evaluate whether the project really does help all those taking part to develop sufficient critical judgement to appreciate whether a rational approach has been instituted which is based on the most authentic and free exercise of reason, man's greatest asset – replacing the logic of the 'establishment', of power groups concerned with their sectoral interests. Evaluation should also consider whether the proposed methods make a real contribution to changing the situation. This would allow us to find out whether the service has contributed to changing a social order which has only a small number of beneficiaries or whether on the contrary, with its uncritical acceptance of the status quo, it has consolidated the social consensus required to maintain it.

From the point of view adopted it is also important to assess the experience acquired by the university in utilizing and expanding upon the possible spheres of action in order to contribute to changing the distribution of power to achieve a more just distribution of knowledge.

Evaluation, seen from the standpoint outlined above, is still being developed. Although a wide spectrum of methods is available, the limited number of experiments on the lines adopted by the University of Luján made it necessary to devise aims and plans of analysis different from those applied in conventional models.

Definition and general guidelines for the evaluation of USS

Evaluation was defined as a series of activities carried out systematically from different viewpoints by all those involved in the project, with a view to gathering, discussing and critically analysing all the information which could be used to interpret and explain what happened during the period of intervention; to orienting decision-making while the project was in progress; to defining all the various repercussions, given the nature and aims of the programme, and, in general, to increasing the project's potential impact.

From this tentative definition it may be deduced that evaluation is conceived not only as a way of ascertaining impact (on the before and after model) but also of investigating throughout the programme possible factors contributing to the impact. The central hypothesis proposed is not only compared with reality for the purposes of confirmation but is also related to the ongoing evaluation (description and explanation of events) and the evaluation of its function (confirmation of action, or its reorientation); it is further subject to constant revision throughout the envisaged period. Only in this way can bases be provided for suggesting that it should be generally adopted in conditions similar to those in the programme (which is not the case with merely descriptive evaluations).

It should also be stressed that the formative nature of this evaluation means that all the participants should take part in it, as active members of the reflection-action process involved.

With this in mind, and with a view to clarifying content, it is worth while defining the typical features of USS evaluation. The evaluation procedures conformed to a series of criteria, the most important being:

Systematic recording of information and the integrity of the different sources which provided it, in order to obtain data about the configuration of reality before the service began, during the early stages, throughout the process, at the end and after some time had elapsed.

Concordance between what 'was really going on' and the records kept. (Omission of key data, gaps in the sequence of events, bias in what is observed etc., will affect confidence in the analysis and interpretation of data.)

Continuous critical analysis of the validity of the explanations and the interpretations formulated about a variety of aspects linked to central aims of the project.

Adequate treatment and analysis of the training which each member derived from his experience in the neighbourhood, in order to facilitate — by exchanges of views and contributions from all of them — a clearer view of their own work and a continuous, creative restructuring of direct action in the community.

Inclusion of a broad range of aspects, variations of which it is important to define and explain, as they are considered to be an effect of the intervention process; (degree of achievement of the project aims; foreseen and unforeseen effects; etc.).

Use of a variety of perspectives to analyse a problem or an aspect of reality. Stress was laid on linking each concrete situation with the whole, and with the characteristics prevailing at previous stages of the process; on clarifying the degree of conformity with the agreed criteria, and on measuring the effort involved in reaching a certain situation and the change which that implied, etc.

Permanent participation of all those involved in the programme in the evaluation process and in the sessions discussing perspectives and points of view about its

development, conflicts and contradictions, changes observed etc.

Stages in the evaluation plan adopted

Progress in project activities was characterized by guidelines which were sufficiently flexible to achieve a compromise between what had been planned and what emerged on a day-to-day basis.

However, within this continuing process there were also periods of more specific activity aimed at obtaining information to decide on particular courses of action.

For the organization of the evaluation plan it was agreed that the necessary stages were as follows:

initial stage of the project;

during the process: both continuing and periodic evaluation;

at the end of the project;

on completion of the USS experience (several months after).

Details are shown in the charts below:

STUDY BEFORE THE PROJECT COMMENCED

Information required	Aims	Procedures
* Characteristics of the neighbourhood and its attitude towards the project * Interest and availability of students * Composition of teaching team * Participation by other subject teachers * Finance available * Number of pupils to be covered by USS, and selection criteria * Students' prior theoretical knowledge * Students' experience of adult education	* Defining the conditions which might facilitate or obstruct setting up the project * Deciding on courses of action provisionally based on analysis of data available * Gathering sufficient data on the 'initial situation' in order to compare them later with data gatherd during and at the end of the project	* Interviews with students (tape-recordings) * Observation and interviews with members of neighbourhood (written records) * Interviews with town hall officials (written records) * Survey of cultural and educational projects and activities in the neighbourhood (analysis of municipal documents)

Key questions (designed to guide evaluation of the conditions based on which the proposal would be developed).

* What are the criteria for student selection?
* What are the attitudes and expectations of the students regarding USS aims and activities?
* What types of student experience and knowledge are likely to favour or impede development of the project?
* What initial training is considered essential for project activities?
* How long will it take to acquire this training?

* How many students are considered to be sufficient, given the agreed financial support, the characteristics of the sphere of action etc?
* What will the project's teaching activity consist of?
* What is the attitude of the members of the neighbourhood towards USS aims and activities?
* What support is being given by the university?
* Are there other agents or projects in the neighbourhood with which USS can be linked?
* What are the foreseeable risks once the project is started up?
* What neighbourhood organizations can the project count on for support?

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│           DURING THE PROJECT            │
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Continuing evaluation

Information required	Aims	Procedures
* Characteristics of the interaction processes generated * Handling of basic methodological guidelines * All unforeseen circumstances observed * Changes which occurred between USS agents and members of the neighbourhood, and between students and teachers	* Attainment of greater precision concerning the successful or unsuccessful operational aspects, within certain acceptable parameters, and why; foreseen and unforeseen effects encountered and what caused them; what was predictable and what was unpredictable; the degrees of achievement of the main project aims; defects observed and the reasons for them etc. * Planned strategies continuously readjusted on the basis of the interpretation of recorded data * Provision for permanent, critical analysis by the group of what each member contributed from his/her experience, with a view to widening the outlook of each USS participant	* Sessions held with members of the community (events were later recorded, including the affective reactions of the students themselves) * Sessions to analyse activities (tape-recordings) * Questionnaire to students

Key questions

* In what way do the students feel that they have gained from the project?

* In what way did they change?
* What representations of the neighbourhood have been altered? Which of their contents may favour, and which stand in the way of, the USS task?
* What changes were observed by the students taking part in USS, the project teachers and other teachers involved?
* What defects do the students perceive in the training they received for action within the neighbourhood? What shortcomings did the teachers perceive?
* What new knowledge was produced and on what basis was it identified?
* What foreseen and unforeseen effects were observed, and how can they be explained?
* What do members of the neighbourhood feel about the reason for the proposed tasks?
* In what respects do they feel that they are totally different?
* What practices do the USS students perceive as indicating that the members of the neighbourhood are changing?
* Which statements and practices reveal contradictions in performing the teaching role?

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│         PERIODIC EVALUATION          │
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Information required	Aims	Procedures
* (As in DURING THE PROJECT, with different analytical standpoints)	* Attainment of an overall view of project development by means of a general evaluation every 4 to 6 weeks, allowing the effects of the decisions taken to be analysed. Soundly based proof is required of, _inter alia_, the direction and magnitude of the changes; possible deviations; . degree of commitment to the project aims; emergence of foreseen and unforeseen effects and their significance within the general framework of the aims; proof of qualitative changes, etc. * The conduct, if required by data analysis, of more structural readjustments to the general strategies and more precise definition of the stated aims	* Analysis and interpretation by each participant of all the records made during the agreed period * Group discussion of observations, conclusions, conjectures etc. which each member made concerning his/her own personal experience

Key questions

To date:

* What have been the major achievements and defects of USS?
* What effects have been brought about by the changes introduced
  after the last meeting for critical analysis and project
  evaluation?

* What are the most recurrent and insurmountable difficulties encountered?
* Has the same degree of commitment to the project been sustained? Has it fallen away, or increased? Why?

AT THE END OF THE PROJECT

Information required	Aims	Procedures
* View taken by the different participants of changes in themselves * Nature of certain facts observed in the neighbourhood, university institution, students, etc., attributed to the impact of the project	* Obtaining sufficiently sound information on the levels of achievement related to the project's guiding aims, and on possible factors making a major impact; implications noted and effects produced; human and material efforts required, etc. * Forecasting developments and changes which ought to occur in the medium and long term, in the context of the real situation, as a consequence of the methods used in the project * Defining the level of insertion, justification and possible expansion of USS, taking into account the participants' own experience and the views of the University of Luján on the subject	* Comparative analysis of final data obtained with that recorded at the initial stage and in the periodic evaluations * Analysis of data obtained at the end of the project concerning the impressions and reactions of the members of the different sectors involved * Analysis of data on a variety of facts related directly or indirectly to the general development of the project

Key questions

* What USS aims may justifiably be considered to have been achieved, and to what degree?
* What were the conditions which would have been necessary in order to achieve the stated aims but which it was not possible to create? What were the effects observed?

* Is it justifiable to assume that, as a result of this experience, the neighbourhood will continue to be receptive to this type of USS?
* Does the experience gained constitute a positive basis for institutionalizing and improving USS within the department and the university?

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│           AFTER THE PROJECT          │
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During the first 8 ᵗᴼ 10 months after completion

Information required	Aims	Procedures
* Events, decisions, changes affecting the real situation of the project over a given period, after its completion, and which may be attributed to the project	* Checking some of the forecasts made, and a variety of unforeseen effects	* Periodic interviews and revision of data concerning facts linked to the project

Key questions

* Which forecasts came true?
* Which did not and why?
* Which are in the process of being fulfilled?
* What unforeseen effects have been observed?

Aspects considered as the project developed, and criteria selected

The people's education project proposed by USS covered many situations and aspects subject to evaluation. However, the scenarios most frequently involved took place within the neighbourhood itself – with family groups – and at the university, where the student group reflection sessions were held. In both cases the aim was to set in motion types of interaction specifically designed as a means achieving certain goals.

Work proceeded on two lines, which generated specific operational techniques: on the one hand, the methods used to develop the critical awareness required to interpret reality in a more objective and scientific way; and on the other, the acquisition of methodological skills and better ways of obtaining information.

With a view to obtaining an overall guiding view of the performance in each case and of the achievements obtainable, the outline in Tables No.1 and 2 below was drafted during the first stage of work.

TABLE 1:

USS AIMS RELATING TO CRITICAL EDUCATION.
INFORMATION ON:

ACHIEVEMENTS AND EFFECTS ON STUDENTS	ACHIEVEMENTS AND EFFECTS ON FAMILY GROUPS
- skill and willingness to analyse their own representations, to understand the social function they fulfil, and to contrast them with more scientific explanations of reality	Linked to transformation of representations and practice in relation to: * the health of each member of the family * the rearing and education of children * the family's financial situation * the type of housing, its habitableness
- skill in developing methods which would help them to shape the critical awareness of the literacy pupils	* the group's self-esteem and opinion of its worth * members' roles, feeling of mutual aid, protection, etc. * knowledge of their rights and ways of claiming them
- skill in finding the right methods to explore the views of members of the family group	* group living conditions * feelings of control over and responsibility for important decisions, and ability to face the consequences
- skill in helping to interpret reality more objectively	Linked to transformations of the representations and practices of the neighbourhood: * relations among neighbours * opinion of the neighbourhood * concern for neighbourhood problems
- skill in detecting signs of change in, or maintenance of, preconceived ideas, and deciding on an appropriate course of action	* joining forces with other members of the neighbourhood to find solutions to common problems
- skill in promoting community activities aimed at improving the quality of life in the neighbourhood	* mobilization to set up political organizations, trade unions etc., with a view to achieving a more just

- skill in developing strategies to identify community problems and to mobilize groups to solve them

society where people be given not only theoretical opportunities but also practical facilities for self-fulfilment

TABLE 2:

AIMS OF USS IN RELATION TO READING, WRITING AND ARITHMETIC. INFORMATION CONCERNING:

ACHIEVEMENTS AND EFFECTS ON STUDENTS	ACHIEVEMENTS AND EFFECTS ON FAMILY GROUPS

- understanding of the relationship between teaching methods and theories and their underlying philosophy of the world

- sufficient skill in using procedures and techniques to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, etc.

    * skill in detecting educational needs and fixing starting-points for literacy activities
    * skill in helping pupils to learn to read, write and count, etc. by using appropriate methods
    * skill in assessing reactions, progress, mental blocks, difficulties in understanding, loss of interest, etc., throughout the process, and deciding on the appropriate action

* appreciation of the value of what they are learning

* enjoying the way they are learning

* awareness of progress being made

* assessment and support given to pupil by other members of the family

* Motivation to go on learning

The nucleus of the evaluated activities consisted of the interaction processes and the effects on the participants. Evaluation of the hoped-for effects was no easy task and was not sufficiently reliable. Many effects are not easily seen, usually only becoming visible as a result of an interpretation based on a series of signs extracted from what people say and how they behave. It is even possible that the mechanisms for working out new views of reality put off any appreciable results to a point in time outside the scope of the project. Naturally, where instrumental skills are concerned - e.g. reading and writing - it will be less difficult to obtain information on the results attained.

From the point of view of the achievements expected in relation to the overall objectives, attempts were made tentatively

to identify in each case a set of possible expected 'products'. In addition, practice itself would supply the content of the indicators of achievement. Tables 3, 4 and 5 bolow show the definition of possible 'products' in relation to the established aims.

TABLE 3:

> Through a participatory method and action-reflection,
> reflection-action processes in the envisaged training
> programme, to make students more aware of their role
> as promoters of change, and to help them to acquire
> sufficient aptitude and commitment to be successful in
> carrying out that role.

It will be considered that this aim has been achieved if the
information recorded and analysed throughout the intervention
process provides evidence that the students have, among other
things:

* reached a greater under-
  standing of the real situ-
  ation in poor neighbourhoods
  and the factors accounting
  for it

* attained sufficient skill in
  using methods to help mem-
  bers of poor sectors to
  acquire the skills necess-
  ary to improve their qual-
  ity of life

* acquired skills necessary to
  achieve reasonable success
  in the task of awakening the
  critical awareness of the
  members of these sectors, so
  that they may acquire a more
  scientific view of reality
  and act in consequence

* greater tendency towards
  self-assessment and self-
  criticism as courses of
  action necessary for per-
  sonal growth and personal-
  professional development

* gained valuable experience,
  reflected not only in the
  ethical sense of their
  commitment, beginning with
  their identification with
  the anguish of deprived
  populations and with the
  despair of those who have
  nothing, but also in the
  gratification of knowing
  that they have played a
  leading role in a process
  aimed at the social trans-
  formation of the situation

* developed sufficient cri-
  teria on which to decide, on
  the basis of the experience,
  upon future work options
  linked to this kind of prac-
  tical experience

* reached an understanding of
  the deeper meaning of
  alternative scientific par-
  adigms in which praxis, a
  dialectical unit of theory,
  combined with practical work
  to transform society, be-
  comes a method which deter-
  mines the validity of the
  knowledge necessary to
  achieve such transformation

TABLE 4:

> To develop in the members of the target population a
> greater sense of critical awareness concerning the
> factors determining their situation, a more positive
> view of reality and of their potential for change and
> increased ability and disposition to act, through the
> organization of all possible means to transform the
> conditions which limit or put obstacles in the way of
> their chances for fulfilment.

It will be be considered that this aim has been achieved if the
information recorded and analysed throughout the intervention
process provides evidence that the members of the target
population participating have, among other things, achieved:

* greater willingness to or-
  ganize as a group in order
  to find solutions to their
  needs

* real success in the criti-
  cal analysis and modifi-
  cation of views of reality
  which limit their possi-
  bilities for action and
  fulfilment

* the eradication of deep-
  rooted behaviour patterns
  and convictions which
  jeopardize the chance of a
  better quality of life (the
  search for more scientific
  explanations for a variety
  of phenomena in everyday
  life; more relevant pro-
  jects for their children;
  interest in information
  which will lead to better
  understanding of demo-
  cratic mechanisms and the
  distortions which occur due
  to the interplay of power
  groups; their position in
  the political decisions
  within their sphere of
  action; etc.).

* greater awareness of the
  significance of self-
  organization, and the pro-
  gress it can bring towards
  solutions to their most
  pressing problems

* greater willingness to
  discover and explain their
  own reality

* sufficient ability in the
  instrumental skills (read-
  ing, writing, arithmetic,
  etc.) which are vital for
  participation in their
  spheres of action

TABLE 5:

> To produce a series of positive effects in relation to
> curricula, teaching practices, the organization and
> future inclusion of USS as an organic university
> programme.

It will be be considered that this aim has been achieved if the
information recorded and analysed throughout the intervention
process provides evidence that the <u>university</u> has, among other
things, achieved:

* greater knowledge of how it
  can co-ordinate its trans-
  formation activity in real
  social situations

* a process of revision, in
  some subject areas, of the
  social significance of the
  content and validity of
  university teaching methods
  as a way of starting to
  produce 'new' knowledge, as
  opposed to the well-known
  practices of reproducing
  what already exists

* greater receptivity towards
  considering USS as a regular
  activity in all degree
  courses, linked to organic
  programmes set up at the
  request of local authorities

* a projected statement of
  critical reflections and
  viable proposals relating to
  a clear idea of the meaning
  and aims of a USS provided
  by a university

* student perception of the
  need for a thorough study of
  new forms of contact with
  reality, and for new ways of
  learning how to act in real
  situations

Records. Interpretation and validity of information

The task of systematically recovering the records of what had been done and observed, in order to obtain information for ongoing critical analysis of situations as they arose, was a real challenge due not only to the nature of the techniques involved but above all to the effort required.

Once again, it is stressed that, given the approach adopted, research on evaluation was done by recording information which would allow the many meanings within a dynamic whole to be interpreted and explained. It was therefore agreed to keep as faithful a record as possible of what happened at each meeting with the family groups, including the remarks and emotional reactions of each of the students responsible for them. When considered appropriate, the opinions of all those taking part in USS and other agents indirectly involved (other university teachers, members of the town hall, etc.) were requested. The gamut of sources of information was completed with records of oral accounts, decisions related to the project in some way, etc. and tests to check pupils' progress in acquiring instrumental skills (reading, writing, arithmetic).

Below are some illustrative details.

Records of students' observations

As has already been pointed out, the main aim of this activity was to obtain on-site information on everything that occurred – including the emotional reactions and reflections of the observer – in order to obtain material which would reveal certain recurring features and a variety of meanings, whether manifest or hidden in the statements, gestures and behaviour of the members of the family group and in the details of their habitat. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of the internal logic of the situation, in which the processes for the social changes which were considered valuable should be more organically inserted with a view to operating in conjunction with its members. This information would also allow students to evaluate for themselves, or with the help of the staff team, the relevance and effectiveness of their performance through the achievements

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and defects discovered and to check whether any relationship may be observed between the processes and the de facto results.

With the aim of standardizing the preparation of records, certain criteria and procedures were laid down. By way of preparation, the description of everything that happened during each meeting with the family groups was recorded as soon as possible after the end of these meetings in order to reduce omissions due to breaks in the continuity of note-taking. It is important to state the emotions and feelings aroused by a variety of situations in the daily routine of each of the meetings; also to state precisely the meaning of what has been described (easily misunderstood when notes are being made), which implies interpretation by the observer from his/her own particular viewpoint. With regard to the 'practical' aspects of the records, the idea was to use devices which would facilitate data retrieval: heading the notes with titles; identifying data (date, meeting number, time, participants, etc.); use of short paragraphs and diagrams to facilitate later operations (large margins for subsequent codifications; writing on one side of the page only and paragraphs with wide spacing for future note-making, etc.); use of brackets and braces to differentiate the text being reproduced from observations, reflections, emotional reactions, student opinions.

The most effective work methods were also discussed for the analysis and interpretation of the content of these records. In principle, stress was laid on the creative work required and on the intellectual rigour demanded given the nature of the chosen concept, where interpretations and plausible explanations of reality were sought, leading to reconstruction of that reality. From the stated standpoint, it might be necessary to recognize that there was no 'right' way to organize, analyse and interpret this type of information, only more or less useful approaches. Nevertheless, some practical ideas were put forward, such as relating the significance of different readings to clearly defined aims. Thus, for instance, the use of notes could be focused in some cases on the need to recover information from previous sessions in order to maintain maximum continuity of the critical analysis of views of reality with members of the family groups and to trace signs of incipient change. In other cases,

notes might be used to take a look at the patterns which shaped interactions and the products and effects observed in the many signs recognizable in the situations described in the sessions under analysis. They might also be used, along with other factors, to assess performance and to explain, in conjunction with other data, the progress and setbacks, successes and failures, the gratifying and frustrating aspects of the experiences. Certain 'tracing' readings might be aimed at discovering signs which would allow new explanatory hypotheses of the behaviour patterns observed to be generated which, if confirmed, would provide further bases for judgement in order to operate more effective action strategies to increase the critical awareness of the group.

Another concern about the records was to find some rapid data retrieval system. It was therefore suggested that the pages and lines of the record of each session should be numbered, identified with an order number; the choice of broad category files such as 'representations, critical analysis and processes of change', 'strategies and results in learning reading, writing and arithmetic', etc. Within these files, categories were to be invented depending on the nature of what the students were aiming at; for example, for the first file mentioned: 'Views and practices related to ... and observed in ...'; 'power nucleus represented by ...', 'strategies which I adopted and the changes I introduced'; 'the results and effects I perceived'; etc.

Recording activities at class sessions

Parallel to the students' activities in the neighbourhood (based on their experience in the neighbourhood and on the many questions they raised), class sessions were held for critical group analysis of what had been done and with a view to enriching the theoretical elements necessary to achieve greater maturity and understanding of the nature and aims of their actions.

Tape-recordings of these sessions provided material which was similarly used by the teaching team.

Questionnaires and interviews

Open-ended questions which could be answered from different
standpoints (e.g.: 'what I think about'; 'what I would do if...';
'what I did when'; 'how I think others see me'; 'how I see them';
etc.) provided a valuable source of information for assessing
opinions, points of view and reactions, as well as for deciding
on new courses of action. In addition, they could be used to
observe the changes which might occur in certain viewpoints as a
result of the intervention processes. With this in mind,
questionnaires were prepared for non-structured interviews at
different points throughout the project.

Records of incidental data concerning the experiment

Given the characteristics of USS and the many factors linked in
one way or another to the project, (other non-participating
neighbours; the relatives of university students; the
neighbourhood school; members of the Department of Education;
students from other degree courses; etc.), all those actively
involved in the project were asked to be on the alert for any
manifestations related to the service. This precaution made it
possible for various unforeseen effects to be picked up.

A main concern in the process of research on evaluation is
that an intervention programme consists basically of providing
reliable information on how effectively the aims and expected
effects have been achieved and, in addition, of specifying the
factors to which changes may be attributed. With regard to the
first aspect, evidence must be provided of which aims have been
achieved to an acceptable degree and which have not. The validity
of statements, given the characteristics of the project, can only
be based on the results of the triangular procedure carried out
in relation to the sources of information. The logic of the
procedure indicates that any assertions arising as a result of
the coincidence of, for instance, students' impressions (answers
to a questionnaire), the opinions of the members of the
neighbourhood (remarks in an open interview) and interpretation
of the records, are admitted as valid information.

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As regards the second aspect mentioned above, two questions arise: Are the changes observed attributable to the programme? Which aspects of the programme constitute the factors of greatest impact? (the sympathy and interest of the young people? the methods used? the number and length of sessions? the duration of the programme?). With regard to the first question it could be argued that if, within the normal routine of the family groups in the course of the intervention, no other events occurred which might be considered to be an alternative explanation then, within the bounds of prudence (as no other comparison is available), the 'paternity' of the changes could be attributed to the project. As for the second question, the answer within the scheme operated is rather more difficult to sustain. Only a very careful reading of the records and the accounts of the teachers who accompanied the students for long periods can provide an even approximate identification of the factors which had greatest impact.

Functions of, and criteria for evaluating, a university social service

The University of Luján experiment makes it possible to state a number of generalizations considered useful for evaluating university social projects. We describe below these ideas about the functions and criteria which at the various stages of the project determine the genesis, adoption, planning and execution of the programme.

Any USS programme is built around an aim-activity to be carried out in a given population. It requires a feasibility study; specific aims have to be drafted and guiding strategies set which will be adjusted and changed on the basis of the information drawn from the evaluation activities decided on. Evaluation activities will be carried out at all times during the programme and at each stage their function will be different. As with all social projects, the stages involved are: a general study of the feasibility of the commitment to be assumed by the university; a plan; execution and management control; synthesis of what has been done and achieved; in many cases the a posteriori search for information which describes precisely the impact gradually observed in the target population, and the contribution to the process of social change. Bearing in mind

this practical order, stress may be laid on some characteristics which, taken together, will shape the type of evaluation proposed.

The objective of an initial evaluation activity will be to define whether the university, when confronted with a problem situation in a sector of society, is financially and technically able to embark upon a USS project with some prospect of success. This initial step is an evaluation in advance of a diagnosis which does not involve detailed examination of the situation as a whole but simply a general appreciation of the situation and of the nature and extent of the task required. The information must, in any event, be sufficiently reliable, as the decisions taken concerning the future course of action will depend on it.

Assuming a positive decision on this stage, it will then be necessary to formulate the aims of the programme, the basic function of which will be to lay down the guidelines which will be used as a reference as activities develop in order to maintain the maximum possible coherence. These guidelines will reflect the university's philosophy concerning the nature and significance of its socio-cultural promotional activities, and will be sufficiently explicit to contribute to the creation of coherent, clear and valid rules. It is assumed that university action cannot contribute to increasing the critical awareness of a culturally and socio-economically underprivileged section of the population simply by transferring technical knowledge or disseminating information of possible use. Consequently, all types of USS should include, together with the scientific, technical, cultural activities, etc., a pedagogical component aimed at stimulating, among the members of the groups involved, more scientific, critical and objective views of reality which will overcome the views formed as a consequence of their position in an unjust social order which needs these representations to justify and perpetuate itself. This will also be included in tne aims of the programme.

The next stage will be to reflect upon the conditions which would guarantee a reasonable degree of success. It is essential to spell out the aims, in order to compare the

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findings of research, experience and logic as to these aims with the information about what is already in existence or what it is possible to obtain. This information will be provided by a diagnostic assessment.

Defining what might be termed the necessary theoretical conditions is not a mere intellectual exercise; it involves seeking research precedents in similar situations and accounts which explain the impact of a variety of factors on the effects and results sought. It also helps to differentiate the obvious from what is not, what is evident from what is difficult to reveal except through more profound analysis.

Diagnostic assessment of what exists in reality or of what one may soon be able to have is a complement to the preceding task. Thus, for instance, does the population reveal a positive attitude towards the university students' participation? Are the necessary resources available to cover the needs specified? etc. The next stage will depend to a large extent on the accuracy and adequacy of the information obtained at this stage.

The aim of the next stage will be to evaluate degrees of tolerance between what is reqired to guarantee a reasonable degree of success and what is available to achieve it.

Should marked discrepancies exist, the ability and commitment of the university to find what is needed at the appropriate time will have to be assessed; failing this, the initial aims will have to be revised to make them fit in with what is considered possible.

It will be obvious that the limits of what is possible depend on whether the university's commitment to changing social reality is sincere, or is only a rhetorical expression to be stated among its aims or 'missions'. The important point is to clarify whether the necessary conditions are available to produce

graduates with a socially useful training and with a social conscience sufficiently well-developed to act in an environment which needs them, and to make a valid impact on the problems in which they are involved. If these conditions are met only in part, or only a half-hearted effort is made, the results may well lack real significance and be little more than a simulacrum of the stated aims.

Based on the information on the preceding phases and assuming that the possible ways of creating conditions to achieve the aims of the programme have been clarified, the general lines of the plan of action will then be drafted; these will be used only as guidelines, as terms of reference to give meaning to the series of activities selected. More specific plans will be the product of what is decided on in conjunction with the members of the participating population. This scheme is only a working hypothesis subject to continual revision when compared and contrasted with reality. Its adoption as valid will be a part of the ongoing evaluation throughout the programme. The activity carried out during the programme will be limited to certain organizational criteria which will also be criteria for assessment of the proposed strategic and tactical planning. Examples are: a sense of anticipation when confronted with a dynamic, changing framework; consistency of action with the agreed aims; selection of activities on the basis of feasibility, efficiency and effectiveness regarding what is being sought; adoption of shared control methods and opportunities to reflect together on what is being done; foreseeing of reaction mechanisms in the face of possible outcomes, defects observed, new ideas, etc.

The execution and management control stage is a continuing process of dialectical exchange between the planned guidelines for on-site action and the inevitable contingencies of a dynamic reality. Here the ongoing evaluation by all those involved is concerned with precise details about: What works within certain parameters and what does not? What foreseen and unforeseen effects are observed and due to what factors or group of factors? What outcomes

have become points of concern or bases for new lines of action not envisaged in the plan? What is the internal coherence observed in the activities carried out throughout the programme? How effective and efficient are the forms of interaction and the methods used? Which signs may be interpreted as signs that the foreseen changes are occurring and which are signs that nothing is happening? To what degree are imagination, critical sense and determination used when confronted with a new situation? What evidence exists that the members interacting are producing new knowledge, that their participation in the programme is a mobilizing, and gratifying, experience in that it makes them feel that it is increasing their chances of better integration in the environment where they live? etc.

At this point account should be taken of different standpoints in order to focus the analysis of the information recorded. Close up, i.e. on completion of the stage, it is of interest to differentiate between immediate decisions, the result of continuing evaluation, and decisions which arise from overall views of how the programme is progressing obtained at different points along the way. Both types of decision are obviously important because they provide useful distinctions on the focal points and because they influence different sets of decisions. From a distant standpoint one can see the general outlines of what has been done, and detect possible breaks, trends, deviations, progress etc. As can be seen from the Luján experiment, the processes of integrating theory-practice and the related dialectical reflection become properly systematized in work sessions which are organized throughout the programme in parallel to the field activity.

These reflection workshops provide an opportunity to analyse performance from basic theoretical standpoints and at the same time to reformulate theory with a view to confirming the realism of the hypotheses adopted. This activity benefits from open, critical interaction generated among the students and teaching staff on the

programme. One or two members playing the role of external evaluators will promote joint analysis of the effectiveness of the activity carried out and make provision for any suggested adjustments.

The inevitable complexity of an evaluation process such as this one suggests some final reflections. The aggregate of knowledge and assessment tasks to be carried out by all the members of a USS programme is an integral part ·of the intervention activities and is inextricably linked to them. It is not presented as an option. The idea is not that of a deliberate human action but of a conscious or subconscious process of evaluation of its various component parts. (Still less is it the carrying out of a complex institutional activity without management control.) It would be dangerous to underestimate it, or imagine that it is a task which can only be carried out by experts in the field, or an effort which might seriously upset the balance of the main lines of action of the programme. Prior preparation by both university teachers and students for USS work and the analysis and reflection workshops are required to help prevent possible distortions of the significance and extent of the evaluation of programme activities as a whole.

VI. EFFECTS OF THE UNIVERSITY SOCIAL SERVICE

This chapter presents an evaluation of the effects of USS activities on the students, the population and the university.

The changing attitudes of those involved are analysed as regards ways of thinking and acting which are relevant to the project aims. An attempt has been made in each case to mark the difference between the initial situation and the situation at the time of evaluation, and whenever feasible the changes which took place in people's attitudes are described.

Effects of USS on the students

Before presenting the evaluation of the effects which their USS experience had on students, it is worth remembering the aims of the work, which are the parameters against which these changes are analysed.

In USS, through practice and reflection upon the process, the aim was to develop both a commitment to overcoming situations of economic, social and cultural inequality, and the ability to act effectively and consistently to that end in a specific professional field.

We believe it is useful to clarify a few points which may be obvious but which we consider necessary because they constitute the guidelines of this experiment.

The idea of commitment implies not only identification and solidarity with the target population but also a concern to act in full knowledge of their way of life and without judging them according to the value systems of one's own social group. This required making an effort to find the significance of their

representations and practices in the context of their living conditions and their objective needs.

The ability to act implied being able to put methods and techniques into practice, and to choose and apply them consistently to achieve educational objectives.

Both aims – commitment and the ability to act – required:

a critical review of the students' schemata of perception, thought and behaviour in order to reinforce those which were in consonance with the aims of people's education, and to modify those arising from their own social background which made them depreciate – implicitly or explicitly – the practices of the target population; and

redefining the professional role and applying new methods – forms of interpersonal communication and specialized methods and techniques – which would lead to better professional practice in people's education.

All these aspects are fundamental because:

if there is only an active ethical commitment, this may give rise to an attitude of aid, charity or naive spontaneity;

if the only change is in frames of reference, the ability to act effectively will not be developed;

if only techniques are taught, there is the risk of adopting a technocratic, developmentalist approach;

if practices are incorporated which do not coincide with existing frames of reference, this can give rise to contradictory behaviour; conflicts may remain hidden, thus limiting the possibilities of coming up with new solutions.

In evaluating results, it was borne in mind that the aims constituted guidelines for the desired flexible change of direction, and that it was necessary to identify progress and qualitative changes by comparison with the students' initial

situation. Changes may take more or less time, depending on the nature of the primary socialization of each participant. It was borne in mind that the students were at an early stage of their degree course and that the pedagogical activity would be continued by an institution whose aims were consistent with those of the project, thus paving the way for continuity.

An analysis was conducted of the effects observed on the students' schemata of perception, thought and action, which were regarded as signs of progress towards commitment; and on their ability to act professionally in a more effective and consistent fashion.

Effects on the development of social commitment

When they embarked on USS, only about a quarter of the initial group of students had been involved in activities directed at poor sections of the community. This they had done as members of religious groups, in general as an expression of commitment to the poor. There had been no continuity in these activities, which lasted for a short period (two or three weeks) during the summer vacation. The students' comments ranged from affective expressions such as 'being able to help', 'feeling useful' to somewhat more elaborate expressions like 'contributing to social change', 'groups with power and groups without'. This indicated that they were concerned about social problems before they joined USS. As enrolment was voluntary, it is clear that those who decided to join had a manifest initial motivation to take part in a scheme such as this one. However, it may be assumed that participation in USS was an experience in commitment quite different from previous ones, and an opportunity to develop a special way of acting on that commitment.

This experience was for all the students their first opportunity for continuous uninterrupted work, maintained with a calender of activities in accordance with the needs of the service and which continued the following university year. This was not only on the decision of the teaching staff and authorities, but at the express request of the students participating. The group remained intact, with the exception of

one student, from one academic year to the next. The students were active in spreading information about the experience and in recruiting other fellow students to USS.

When the evaluation of the stages in the adult education project was presented, we analysed the regularity of student attendance and their respect for the agreed timetable and work programme. This was something they learned through the service – remember that the students asked whether or not they would have to go to the neighbourhood when it rained – and they persisted in the task despite the disillusionment they felt when faced with their pupils' irregular attendance and resistance when confronted with learning difficulties.

As regards the affective component of commitment, we observed a gradual change from personal affection for the members of the group in their charge to an attitude in which, while maintaining the positive interpersonal link, they analysed the problems with greater objectivity, placing each problem as a particular case in a general situation which should be collectively solved through gradual, organized participation.

Here the component of reflection was not achieved by all students to the same extent. Some of them were able to make progress in overcoming their depreciative attitude to the everyday life of the population, and in learning to suspend judgement until they could evaluate situations with fewer prejudices, in the light of the living conditions and needs of the population. The 'balance-sheet' of one student shows that the students also recognized this effect of their experience. We include below a long excerpt, because it proves what has been said about integrating interest and critical reflection without prejudice. It has been chosen not only because of its clarity but also because this student started out with a naive attitude and showed, during the first few months of work that her sole concern was with the personal problems of her adult student (his absent son, his sick wife, looking after a pet) without analysing these situations or perceiving other aspects of the life of the family.

'... Although I had some experience in a marginalized neighbourhood, it was not at all like this one. Here there

was a combination of situations: the literacy training
programme, the specific situation of each family and the
attempt to organize part of the neighbourhood around a
common activity. The interaction of all these situations
gave me an insight into aspects of other people's lives,
attitudes and thoughts which had previously been unknown to
me. Thanks to our theoretical training, I was better able to
understand people's behaviour patterns; and a knowledge of
their representations made me familiar with certain
hypotheses about their causes or origin.

... As for C. (the literacy pupil), the situation is
described as complex.

... He was surprised at his own progress. In other areas I
didn't notice too many changes. He is still hostile and
distrustful of neighbours who show individualistic
attitudes. I think this is due, in part, to the fact that we
have been in contact for a short time only; in a few months
it is much more difficult to break down a representation
which has been formed over many years ... This makes me
think about what is needed in the neighbourhood, and all
that I still need to learn so as to take the right kind of
action.'

Statements of this kind, showing a 'development of
commitment' combining personal affection, concern for collective
aspects and critical reflection, were frequently made in the
final stages of the programme by most of the participants.

The most difficult problem was to overcome prejudices
arising from an analysis of the life of the population without
taking into consideration their material living conditions.

The opposite extreme to that presented above is that of a
student who, in her final self-assessment, says:

'It allowed me to see the human relationship from a more
reflective standpoint. I am able to understand some
situations better than before although I can't adapt
completely in cases where, for instance, disorder and filth

are "justified" by lack of water when, in fact, it is not that there is no water but that they do not have it on the spot (and have to go a long distance for it).'

Despite the fact that this student continued to have a low opinion of what she saw, and passes judgement without considering the difficulties of the material conditions of daily life, this statement represents progress from her initial attitude because it is clear that she has developed the ability to identify and verbalize her own view of reality, and that this may lead to her reviewing it. It is interesting to note that, despite her unconquered prejudice, when the literacy programme started up again after the summer recess she continued voluntarily as a literacy worker.

However, the statements of the majority show that they were aware of their conflicts and of the need to overcome them. Some also acquired the ability to think of the social service from a standpoint in which the professional aspect is linked coherently to other aspects of life: this is expressed by another student in her final assessment:

'... (USS) satisfied a need which I felt ... to pay back to the community something which the community had given me ... It widened my horizons of reality, of my role as a professional and as a citizen ... The change in me was that I found new channels for participation ... to act and not just talk.'

Effects on the development of effective and well thought-out professional practice

It has already been pointed out that the project was aimed at achieving reflective commitment and the ability to act effectively and coherently as adult educators in the literacy and post-literacy campaign.

Literacy teaching requires linking the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic with reflection upon the different problems of the daily life of the population in a co-operative

group situation. Obviously, the performance and development of each student in these different respects was not homogeneous, either in pace or in achievements, but changes were observed in all of them which showed increasing autonomy in the technical aspects of teaching reading and writing and greater critical awareness of their professional performance.

Students were assessed separately in these two respects to facilitate the task of describing both processes.

Development of the ability to teach reading, writing and arithmetic

In order to assess student development in the strictly technical aspects of their teaching role, consideration was given to their ability to:

carry out a continuing evaluation of the knowledge and interests of the adults;

apply the appropriate procedure for teaching them to read, adapting instruction to the conditions observed;

plan the teaching activity in the short term;

co-ordinate the work of the learning group.

Evaluation of the level of instruction and interests of the adults

The students followed the guidelines indicated in the workshop. They were able to obtain information concerning the educational level attained and the adults' perception of their own knowledge; also to test that level, using material prepared for that purpose. Some students added to this information a series of other indicators which they gathered during their first meetings.

At this point it was time to close this diagnostic period and to take teaching-related decisions, suited as closely as possible to the needs and motivations of the literacy pupils.

A marked concern to respond to the pupils' motivations resulted in the adoption of an ongoing evaluation procedure with a view to adapting the instruction to the pupils' educational levels.

Evidence of the suitability of performance was obtained both from analysis of the students' field records and from the pupils' rate of progress in learning.

'We went from language lessons to arithmetic'. The pupil knows all his numbers from 0 to 999. He finds it difficult to write a 5. I explained addition, with an example. As I had added up fast, he checked the addition himself (as though he did not believe me). In some cases he used his fingers. He solved the problem quickly. He did not understand the hundreds, tens, units table but I told him we would look at it in the next lesson ...'

Application of teaching procedure

This was one of the aspects where all students showed good progress, both in their rate of progress and in other respects.

At the beginning, the students applied the procedure mechanically. The first step was the most difficult. This consisted of talking, using a picture as a starting-point, to stimulate the ability to observe, describe verbally and reflect upon a problem alluded to in the stimulus sentence. The students found it difficult to conduct the process of description and reflection and their records show that they did the task as though carrying out an instruction without understanding its significance in the teaching context.

During this early period a marked dissociation was observed between communication established with a view to maintaining an affective link and communication which they perceived as deliberately educational.

'Then we went back to the subject of what interested us.'

'He described the drawing (cf. the lesson: Education is the
task of all). "There are people writing, the photo must be
old because they have a paraffin lamp. In the other drawing
there is a teacher teaching them and his hands are like this
because he is explaining something". We went on to the
sentence; I read it ...'

Gradually they became more flexible and it was observed that
the students were able to handle the interrelation between the
ongoing assessment of learning ability, changes, difficulties and
motivations with greater ease. Based on this assessment, they
took decisions and began to suggest work plans which were usually
limited to one class.

In general, these decisions were immediate responses to
requests or difficulties.

This planning activity is evident in the preparation of
classes and teaching material. The preparation of material also
shows a greater degree of autonomy; besides using the materials
provided by USS, the students invented, adapted and evaluated
them.

The ability to be alert to different aspects of the
situation at the same time – the results of the teaching, pupils'
motivations – allowed them to direct the dialogue, rectify
activities or support pupils' initiatives and voluntary efforts
in order to organize them while keeping to the set course.

'The conversation began when she told me that she was not
feeling well – she felt tired – as besides working, she
helps her husband because they are building on a plot next
door ... Taking advantage of the subject I took out the
drawing "Luis has not got a plot" and she found it funny
because her husband had bought the plot ...'

Progress in being able to handle the learning group came
later. Up to a certain point, the students' attempts at being
flexible in their methods and adapting the methods to the level
or requirements of each adult led to individualized teaching. As
they became more sure of themselves and of their teaching

ability, they began to include group activities, at least at some point in the class: they included activities involving several adults or relatives or friends who had come by for different reasons:

'I suggested, as I had already told them, that we should make up words together. Laughing, I said that now they would have to do the work (it was very enjoyable).

One of the two would say a word and together they tried to work out the sounds and form them. They worked very well together. M.C. suggested a lot of words (he is nearly at L's level now). They laughed and worked actively (it was a very enjoyable class).'

Some students could diagnose problems in the dynamics of the group and intervene to effect changes.

'... They looked at the drawing

Literacy worker – Why do the men, the husbands work? what do you do?

M. – If you don't work you don't eat!

M. came up and said: What a cough the child has got!

Having interrupted the conversation M. wanted to go on talking to me alone.

I said – Stop, I want you all to listen ...'

and later on

M. I worked as a cleaner (I felt that M. was monopolizing the conversation)

A. And what about you, R?

R. I worked in a bakery ... I never liked working in private houses.

I did that for 15 years.

R. went on talking.

'(I am glad that R. could express herself like that; she got her say)'

This sequence of changes, although each student went at a different pace, may be considered as proof of the effect that USS had on the development of their professional training and of their increased ability to diagnose, decide and act with the aim of helping the adults to acquire the three Rs. Evaluation of the adults' learning – as will be seen later – shows that the students were capable of directing this process on the right lines.

Development of critical professional practice

The aim that students should develop critical professional practice implied being able to analyse the significance of their own representations and practices, as well as those of the population, and to choose teaching alternatives suited to the situation and consistent with the stated educational aims.

It was foreseeable that achievement of autonomy in this respect would be slow, because it was necessary to develop a certain degree of critical awareness to be able to work with others.

As we were aware of these difficulties, the students' performance was analysed to trace signs that this critical ability, which they had shown in discussion in the workshop, was beginning to have an effect on their practice as adult educators.

To evaluate progress towards the aims, it was our view that an educator should be able to diagnose, with the support of scientific knowledge, the behaviour or aspects of personal, group and social reality which are relevant to the stated aims.

It was also assumed that the diagnosis was a working hypothesis to be confirmed in practice. The diagnosis allowed

them to decide on a way of intervening in problem situations and to conduct a continuing evaluation of the effects of that intervention. From our point of view, it also included the need to be objective about their own behaviour and, therefore, to look on themselves as subjects under observation.

Given the 'common sense' mechanisms observed in the workshop, it was considered important to assess whether the students were able to suspend judgement on the behaviour and reactions of the population in order to seek information with an open mind; alternatively, they should be aware of their own 'common sense' mechanisms which were triggered into action under certain circumstances.

When work in the neighbourhood began, the students' starting-points in relation to the above factors were not always the same; they therefore developed in different ways and at different rates.

On the basis of these desirable parameters changes occurred which were observed as they took place and which were considered to be proof of the effect of professional growth produced by USS experience.

In the development of some of the students, a first stage was observed in which they were unable to identify the content of dialogues as signs of the adults' representations or practices; others were more alert and were better able to assess the meaning of statements by the population. Their records show that they tried to find the significance of the facts they observed in the dynamics of the learning groups, in the relationship between members of the family, and in the adults' feelings; but certain limitations are evident in their efforts. They make 'common sense' interpretations with an emotional content; they do not include themselves in their observations, and act as observers, without intervening in the situation. This stage lasted for a longer or shorter period depending on the student, and changes began to occur which we considered to be signs that they were overcoming these limitations.

We believe that signs of progress are the ability to express explicitly the relationship between a situation and the

educational aims; the ability to manipulate dialogue in order to find out about relevant aspects of the life of the population (education of their children, participation and organization of the community, relationships between neighbours, etc.); the ability to formulate the diagnosis in terms of a hypothesis; and the search for information to verify the aptness of their conjectures.

Another change considered relevant was the passage from observation to action: in the early stages, the students assessed but they did not intervene, whereas later they did so. The type of intervention was usually conditioned by their interpretation of the situation: in cases of 'common sense' interpretations, intervention was directed at alleviating the emotional content; when the situation was interpreted as a 'clue' to an obstructive representation, the intervention was usually aimed at breaking it down.

Another change observed was the ability to be objective about their own practice. The students began to record the effects of their own actions, to assess their coherence, to recognize their limitations and the differences between their perception of a situation and that of the adults.

The limitations observed were that unless directed by the teachers, the students were unable to apply theoretical knowledge to diagnose, plan, conduct and assess the teaching process. Knowledge which was not explicitly assimilated in the workshop was not used to analyse problems. For example, despite having studied three courses with psychological content (the psychology of development, courses I and II, which cover childhood, adolescence, adulthood and educational psychology), they reverted to a 'common sense' analysis, without applying their scientific knowledge to individual and group situations.

This may indicate that at least at that stage of their degree the students were unable to transfer theory to practice without the systematic direction of the teachers, which shows the importance of directed practical work. One probably needs a greater accumulation of knowledge to be able to make the qualitative leap involved in applying that knowledge; and even

then, it may be assumed that when faced with complex situations with a large number of contributing factors, they would fall back on the most deep-rooted schemata. It requires practice over a long time for theory to become an integral part of one's established frame of reference.

Evaluation of the process and of the position of each student at the end of the year's work as literacy educators shows that they achieved different rates and levels of development, which probably depended on how rigid or flexible they were as individuals as well as on their previous knowledge. The permanent search for meanings and contradictions implied a questioning attitude; it may be assumed that those students who were more questioning in some aspect of their lives were those who made more rapid progress. We believe it is no coincidence that the greatest changes occurred in those students who took an active part in student affairs or in those with psychoanalytical experience. On the other hand, the students who we thought at the beginning of USS would make most rapid progress, because they were intelligent, interested and active in class, did not progress as expected; we believe that this is due to the fact that they were less questioning and more 'studious'. Positive, affective commitment to the task (enthusiasm, love of the task) was not enough either; this attitude allowed them to be persistent and 'good teachers' but it did not increase the likelihood of change in the student.

Analysis of the changes which occurred in the students in the course of the year allows us to classify them in what we could consider three 'levels' of growth in their ability (a) to observe reality and their own performance critically; and (b) to take action with a view to modifying the representations of their adult pupils.

As evidence of these effects, three cases belonging to each of these different 'levels' of development have been chosen. A sequence is presented from each one to show the changes between the early records and the final ones. The first is the case of a student who, at the beginning of the experience, found great difficulty in talking to the population and in perceiving the relevance of the problems of daily life as part of the content of education. Her records show her development:

Difficulty in identifying the relevance of the content of a dialogue in which she is given information about activities in the neighbourhood:

> 'She told me that the people in charge of the club are not very nice ... that they organized a masquerade for the carnival ... Then we went back to the subject which interested us. The man showed great interest in learning more.'

Ability to identify the relevance of the content of a dialogue and to interpret it with 'common sense', without intervening:

> 'She told me that she had started to go to night school ... and that this year she had only gone once because she was afraid of coming back at night and also because they had changed the teacher she had confidence in. That made me realize her embarrassment, and why she spoke only a few words to me.'

Ability to identify the relevance of a personal matter, interpret it with affective content and intervene using 'common sense':

> 'The family related a problem with a grandson, which the student recorded. The student then added:

>> I felt I ought to say something, but it took me so much by surprise that I was left speechless. Then after a while I said that these things happen in every family, and that it is the children who suffer most.'

Ability to identify social causes for personal problems, without intervening:

> The pupil related different aspects of her personal life, which the student recorded. The student then added:

>> 'I just listened. When she asked me a question I tried to answer her in as fair and sensible a way

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as possible because I thought she was telling me things which could be very important in her life and which explained her present conduct, such as her taste for alcohol and not wanting to work.'

Ability to maintain a conversation on a matter of social reality:

'Then we talked about how expensive things are and she told me that her husband worked in a bakery and that the baker's union helps its members.'

The case of the next student differs from the last one because she did not find it difficult to talk but, during a period of some months, conversation was centred on personal matters and the content was interpreted only through the affective significance it had for the family. From that level, her records show the following development:

Perception of the need to investigate and solve a situation relevant to the task, difficulty in so doing and perception of that difficulty:

'I told him to tell me a little about his experience at night school. (I wish to explain that I had already spoken twice to this man and, because I was so nervous, I had forgotten what he had told me in our previous interviews about his educational experience ... I felt a bit stupid and thought "he must think I have a bad memory".)'

Difficulty in facing situations of conflict:

(The pupil usually arrives late.)
'I considered talking to him about it. I was afraid of losing him if I was strict about timetables. I really don't know what to do. I feel comfortable with them and I would not like anything to spoil our relationship.'

Ability to formulate hypotheses about the adult's representations to intervene with suitable information, to

assess the effects of one's own performance and to apply the methods used in the workshop to analyse reciprocal perceptions:

> 'Their mother arrived to see how everything was going. (I could see she was very anxious for me to help her children, as if they were subnormal and would fall down any minute and would not be able to get back up again. They were all quick and intelligent) I told her that the children were very intelligent and talkative. She smiled (but I thought she did not believe me). She said that sometimes they have problems and she was afraid that they would be "thick" because there was a "family history", that many of her relatives had left school. (I would have laughed if I had not realized how afraid this woman was that her children would fail at school). I told her that failure at school is often the fault of the teacher, the school or even the system, and not the child's fault. But that she shouldn't worry about her children because they were intelligent. But she asked me to come back for another hour when I finished at Mr. C's. I told her that I could not because I had to study and that, in any case, her children did not need it. (I felt overpowered, as though I were the guarantee of her children's success and she was holding on to me like a life raft) ... I felt that she was very attached to me, I felt that she was taking me as a "model" and that she observed my gestures and attitudes ...'

Ability to intervene in order to analyse more deeply conflict situations linked to collective problems (to describe prior experiences, identify channels of participation) and to propose alternative co-operative action though institutional channels. (The record where this ability begins to appear is after the text about 'common sense' was analysed in the workshop):

> 'Then C. said to me: "Thank God you didn't come on Sunday: you wouldn't have been able to get across because there was a terrible flood". I said that a solution had to be found for that. He said that he was

fed up and had resigned himself to going, along with
two other men, to the Town Hall ... "when it comes down
to it", he said, "they all make promises but when they
get into power nobody does anything". He told me that
he had been speaking to the Mayor.'

(The description of Mr C.'s story about the
ineffectiveness of his personal attempts to find a
solution to the problem of flooding in the
neighbourhood continues.)

'We went on speaking and he remarked upon people
leaving the neighbourhood ...

Then I asked him if he could not do something, as he
was a member of the Peronist Commission. He said that
he had talked to the party candidate once ... I said it
would be a good way to get people if they gave real
help in the neighbourhood. He thought about it for a
while and said that he would try and bring it up again
at the next meeting.'

After this record there are repeated interventions aimed at
finding clues to representations and practices, and at
influencing their value content or acting on the information they
contained.

Ability to confront conflict situations:

'Right then, C. arrived and said to me:

"If you let me down, I can arrive late too." (The
last time I had not been able to come and had sent
a message by a fellow student). I replied "why are
you attacking me like that, when I had said
nothing about you being late"; he laughed and said
"just in case".'

A third level is that of the students who began their
activity with the ability to perceive and analyse contradictions;
not to trust appearances; to search for the meaning of their own

discourses and practices and those of others; and to be flexible
in applying work instructions. In these cases the ability to
diagnose, assess as they went along and to intervene to modify
views which have a negative effect on personal and family life,
was enhanced by the progressive use of theoretical knowledge to
interpret real situations through analysis of contradictions and
by influencing representations in a continuous, planned way.

In these students, as with the others, during the early
stages 'common sense' analysis and affective identification were
uppermost. It should be noted that the development of critical
thought did not cancel out affective reactions, and that they
were able to include affects and thought in their practice.

The following series of records of one student illustrates
the development referred to above:

Ability to analyse contradictions, but with 'common sense'
content plus the weight of affect:

'There is another child who also goes to kindergarten
but who was not there because on Mondays she takes him
to his grandmother's as her house is near the
kindergarten and he stays there during the week. (I
really could not understand how the child could stay
all week without its mother and how she could be
without him; on the other hand, I think it is important
that she should send him to kindergarten and that she
is concerned about education, because she told me that
she went to the parents' meetings of the littlest one
because she thought that when they are little they
should be accompanied more ... In any case it breaks my
heart to think of that child away from the family unit
all week).'

Ability to influence representations, showing other ways of
assessing a situation:

'When they had read it they commented on it; I asked
them questions to see if they had understood it ... I
congratulated them and M.E. said: "We were not so

stupid as you thought". I said: "No, on the contrary,
I didn't think that but normally when a person does not
use what he learns he forgets it. You are showing me
that you really want to learn, that you have made an
effort to learn more and to hang on to what you know.
That is why I think that from now till the end of the
year we will have plenty of time to practise more".'

Ability to diagnose, devise interventions, take action and
assess the conditions required by that intervention:

'While we were drinking "mate" C. began to prepare
bread and butter on the table. She got angry because he
did not do it on a plate and she said to me: "I don't
think you have been so roughly treated anywhere as in
this house". (I tried to say that it was no problem,
that, on the contrary, I was grateful for the bread,
but I realize that these answers leave me in a poor
position because my answer should be skilful enough to
help overcome her low self-esteem. On the other hand, I
had recorded the same thing so many times during this
meeting that I was getting nervous. I could not believe
that people as attentive, welcoming and well-mannered
as they are could feel so inferior when confronted with
such silly situations as not saying good morning or
cutting bread directly on the table).

Then the child began to put sugar on the bread (so,
afraid that another value judgement would arise, I
said: "he's doing the same as I used to do when I was
a little girl; he's putting sugar on it instead of
jam" - which is true.'

Ability to guide reflection on matters of social content, to
identify the adults' difficulties, to formulate hypotheses:

'We had a marvellous exchange of ideas about the idea
of knowing that every job in society is essential. I
was trying to make them see that their husbands' jobs
were important (bricklayer, manual worker); they said
yes, but then they went on to the subject of the

countryside (reading text). I don't think it is because
of the image so much as that they find it more
difficult to look inside themselves than to reflect
about the countryside. This is a very vague hypothesis
and I haven't got it very clear myself yet.'

Identifying the implicit meaning of the discourses as
indicators of social representations which need to be
revised; establishing relationships between situations, and
thinking in advance on how to act in such situations:

One of the wives told us that she was having a party
because her husband was forcing her into it. She
complained about the work and the cost involved. The
student recorded all the conversation and her
reflections:

'(I still don't know what to make of all this, but
what is clear is that M. did not want to have that
party... I think she ought to think it over more
or see what happened at the party and what people
thought about it. Besides, I think there is
another theme inside this one and that is whether
or not the husband values the wife's work, the
desire for improvement, improvement in housing and
living conditions).

Then I went away to have some "mates" and I did
not leave them much homework. That is another
thing I think about: whether or not they like
having homework, and how much, because one of the
things M. stressed was that Norma (a university
teacher) gave M.E. a great pile of homework; "I
didn't do anything because I had nothing to do"
... I think that behind this there is the typical
assumption about education that if you do a lot of
homework you learn more; that is why the mothers
get angry and protest when their children have no
homework to do ... I am going to give them a
little bit more but I hope to have an opportunity
to talk about this, to give homework its rightful

place, which is to practise and fix what one has learned. It is not however a vital part of the teacher's role.'

In short, it may be considered that USS experience had positive effects on the ability of the students to act as people's educators. This may be seen in their progress in:

Assessing situations:

finding the significance of facts observed;

establishing a relationship between what they observed and the aims of their task or theoretical approaches learned in the USS workshop or at subject classes.

Including themselves in this assessment in order to:

analyse the consistency of their interventions;

recognize their own limitations;

recognize the differences between their perception of a situation and that of the adult.

Formulating hypotheses and devising ways of finding confirmatory information.

Intervening on the basis of the assessment:

providing a basis for the decision adopted;

analysing the effects of their own intervention.

Effects of USS on the population

In the chapter describing the development of the adult education subprogramme, two facets of the work done were presented: literacy and post-literacy training, and the burgeoning development of attitudes and practices of solidarity and

organization among neighbours. It was also stressed that during the early stages the aim of the work was to achieve progress in learning to read and write, and to gain self-confidence; and that the other aims were more long term.

Before presenting this information and in order to understand the changes which USS may have produced in the daily - personal, family and social - life of the population, it is necessary to situate the work within the context of Luján and Argentina in 1986.

This period was characterized by constant deterioration in institutional infrastructures and difficulties for participation, which were a product of the politics of the last 20 years in the country. Throughout this period, especially under the last military dictatorship (1976-1983), violent suppression of any attempt at civic participation and the destruction of the institutional fabric meant that any attempt at popular organization would have had to contend against not only individual and neighbourhood history but also a situation of isolation and fear shared by the population and groups which were committed to social or political change.

During 1986, the economic situation of the country gradually deteriorated affecting the living conditions of the poorer classes. Unemployment increased at all levels, but particularly among the most needy, expanding the army of unemployed who accepted casual labour in which they were exploited to the maximum.

This situation was felt in the Ameghino neighbourhood: during the year, the living conditions of the population involved in USS went from bad to worse. In this context, the changes which might have been hoped for during this first stage were focused on inter-family and personal aspects rather than on aspects of the social life of the population; here it was hoped that the network of communication and mutual aid might gradually expand. A comparison of the initial situation with the situation after the stage which is evaluated here shows that progress was made in the direction foreseen and at a rate which may be considered similar to that of other adult education experiments.

The effects of the programme on the population are to be seen in the progress made in literacy and numeracy; in increased self-esteem; and in some aspects of daily life.

For purposes of evaluation the differences are described between the adults' initial abilities and the results obtained on completion of the first five months. (It will be recalled that the service was restarted in 1987, to coincide with the university terms. All the adults continued in the project).

The sources of information used were the students' field records; the answers given by members of the population in semi-structured interviews at which they were asked to give their opinion about their achievements; and the observations of the University teachers.

When work began, the adults could be classified at two levels of educational need:

the literacy training group: made up of adults who were illiterate because they did not know the letters of the alphabet (five people) or knew only some letters (four people), or because they had never managed to understand the mechanics of reading and writing although they did know the letters (two people, one of whom had learned using the alphabet method);

the post-literacy training group: made up of eight people who already knew how to read and write;

the achievements in literacy training: according to the recorded observations of both teachers and students, everyone can now read with ease sentences and words which combine 12 sets of syllables (beginning with either consonants or vowels). This means that they can form more than 60 words frequently used in everyday vocabulary. They have all mastered reading, and can construct and read simple words and sentences, using teaching aids such as syllable or word cards, blackboards for collective use, etc.

As this teaching service was carried out by students, it is important to assess whether they were able to match the minimum

performance of other literacy experiments in Argentina. Although no research findings are available, information provided by an adviser at the General Directorate for Adult Schools in the Province of Buenos Aires and by people who took part in similar experiments suggests that the learning rate of our group was similar to that in other literacy training situations in the country.

The achievements in post-literacy training: For evaluation purposes reading ability was graded at three levels of comprehension (Municipalidad de Buenos Aires, 1982):

literal comprehension, which 'assumes the grasp of the literal meanings, main ideas, details, sequences, etc. of the text. This first level includes the ability to identify the concepts and ideas expressed in the text through the written code, i.e. to grasp the meaning of the vocabulary used, to detect the sequence, the organization of the message, and to distinguish important ideas from details'. (Municipalidad de Buenos Aires);

comprehension by inference, which 'implies discovering hypotheses, conjectures, anticipating or predicting results, interpreting the meaning of the text';

critical comprehension, which 'involves critical assessment of the text. It covers training to distinguish facts from opinions, reality from imagination, and the relative worth of a text'.

In several cases there were difficulties at the level of literal comprehension of the written word and the sequence and order of ideas. Comprehension by inference and critical comprehension also depended in this group on each individual's previously acquired skills.

Work on the different forms of comprehension was not centred exclusively on the written message. Effects were sought through analysis of different media of expression, and significant progress was made in comprehension by inference, although not so much in critical comprehension.

With regard to writing, the ability to express oneself also varied widely at the outset. In all cases we tried to increase skills through activities which would help enrich the content and lead to more correct expression. For both groups – literacy and post-literacy – wide differences were noted with regard to the adults' initial ability to reflect and express themselves orally; but the literacy workers considered that they all made significant progress. We cannot however vouch for this evaluation, because it is not clear whether the progress was due to the growing technical skill of the literacy workers or to increased mutual confidence between them and their pupils which made verbal interaction easier. There is also the hypothesis that detection of signs of progress may be due to increased vigilance or observation on the part of the students which allowed them to observe signs which they had formerly been unable to perceive.

At all events, while one should be prudent in evaluating this effect, it is important to note that these groups provided a framework within which verbal interchange could and did take place. In an urban environment, verbal expression is a mechanism for acting with one's peers and for defending individual or collective rights against encroachment by other sectors of society; and difficulty in self-expression is recognized as a barrier by the adults themselves in poorer communities. In studies carried out in Argentina on people's culture and daily life, evidence has been presented of the importance of greater communication skills for adults: the fact tht an institution is involved makes adults feel secure and able to act in defence of their collective interests (Sirvent, 1978). From this standpoint, we believe that the provision of this facility for interchange and dialogue has had a positive effect on the living conditions of the population.

If one takes into account the experiences of the population in different situations, it is clear that, with regard to family and personal life, progress was also made in the desired direction.

In their personal life they began to perceive the learning situation as pleasurable, and to have greater confidence in their own ability to learn; these changes in their perception of

themselves and of education may make it easier for them to learn new skills.

The following statements by the adults are an example of the type of change referred to:

'Now that you are coming to teach me to count, I'm going to see if I can enrol at the school to learn dressmaking.'

'I feel more confident. I have more contact with people who know more than me. The very fact that a girl who knows more than me is teaching me makes me feel more sure of myself. And if I should ever be left alone because Rodolfo died people wouldn't be able to swindle me so easily.'

'Literacy worker - What did you expect of us?

Adult - Oh, I expected the very best, because this is something I would never have dreamed of ... that you would come and I would study and learn what I have (...) and now that I've learned, other people here often learn from me and this year, God willing, I'll carry on.'

'Yes, now I realize that I hadn't forgotten everything I was taught as a child, and that I can learn many things.'

Changes in family life depend, of course, on the characteristics of each group, but effects were observed - which have already been pointed out in the evaluation of the process - which may be summed up under these two headings:

education became a matter of interest for the group, and a shared constructive activity;

people's confidence in their children's ability to learn increased, and the mothers were better able to distinguish the factors which contribute to their children's success or failure at school.

The effects at social level are less pronounced, but they do fall within foreseeable limits. In order to assess them it is

necessary to bear in mind that we started off with a neighbourhood situation where there was no formal or informal group organization; where they had had frustrating experiences with the intervention of external agents; and where the relations between neighbours reflected a social network with only sporadic links of solidarity, and obvious signs of rejection and conflict.

This being the case, the ongoing nature of the service, the credibility built up among the population and the kind of relationship established between the population and the university students are signs that, despite the brevity of the work period, progress was made in the achievement of the aims to change aspects of the daily life of the population. Significant features were:

the incorporation of the service in survival strategies: the university agents (students, teachers) received pleas for help, guidance to solve problems, with no expectations of receiving welfare-type help;

these home-based study sessions constituted an exercise in solidarity different from previous ones. In general, the machinery of affective solidarity was set in motion to deal with situations of grief or danger (illness, outbreaks of fire, etc.). In addition, the learning sessions were meetings in situations of growth, and communication networks were called on from time to time to disseminate the aims of the service or to put students in touch with people who might need it;

the communication network among neighbours was extended; and through the building project personal contacts were established among neighbours who had previously had no contact with one another;

the attempts to create an effective mutual aid model showed that it was necessary to work more gradually, since what was being set up was a mechanism for mutual aid. The first step was to create pairs of neighbours who would help each other, thus making it possible to plan a whole chain of mutual collaboration.

Effects of USS on the university

The effects of USS on the university are still fragmented and isolated. The most important immediate effect was it initiated a review of the study plan for the Degree in Education Science in order to incorporate the activities of the service as a regular and accredited part of the degree course. USS is now offered to students as an alternative to the preparation of a case-study which is compulsory at a certain stage in the course. The case-study, originally conceived as a piece of work of theoretic integration based on bibliographical research into a problem, has been widened out into an essay integrating theory and practice, i.e. an analysis of USS experience.

The possibility of writing a case-study as a report on or analysis of the experience is in our view important as conferring legitimacy on the social service through its recognition as an option in the degree course. Since it remains an option, this guarantees the voluntary element which is necessary if commitment to the task is to be real; a compulsory activity often means that it is performed perfunctorily.

The problem of integrating theory and practice in the study plan is still under review, and the spread of USS is having an effect on the plans of the governing body of the Department of Education. The teaching staff on the Department's Board of Directors believe that the experiment highlights aspects of the plan which ought to be revised for greater flexibility so that the students' work may be formally recognized. Another effect has been a concern to modify the organizational structure of the department to include a standing interdisciplinary team of teachers who would plan and co-ordinate periods for the activities required of the students at different points during their degree course (and not only at the end, as at present planned for workshops).

In the plans for communicating experiences for the benefit of the teaching staff, USS experiment was proposed as one of the first items on the agenda.

One of the unforeseen effects of the service was that it became an important topic at meetings of USS students, who spread

information among their fellow students inviting them to join. The students taking the degree course considered their experience to be a desirable model of academic work, and asked the teachers and the authorities to increase the opportunities for such activities. It is probable that this student pressure will increase the chances of expanding this work model.

USS is at present included as a permanent activity of the Adult Education Division of the Department of Education, and provides an opportunity for integrating research and teaching. Research is done into problems and methods of training university teachers in people's education, which it is considered will lead to the development of people's education methods and techniques and research into the daily life of the poorer sectors of society.

The workshop experience made it possible to identify key problems of university teaching. This opinion is not only the result of our experience but reflects the evaluation of colleagues from other universities who received information on the experiment at meetings for exchanges and discussion.

We believe that the effects of USS will take some time to percolate through the university because, during the early stage of the work, the aim was not expansion but consolidation, and the preparation and evaluation of the approach and of the student training methods. Expansion of the experiment is now planned, and alternative ways are being sought to link the work of the service with that of the degree subject departments, in order to include the teaching staff and to achieve interdisciplinary analysis of the problems of work in a poor neighbourhood.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Reports on work carried out usually close with a chapter entitled 'Conclusions'. On completion of this report we wondered·whether it was appropriate to end with conclusions, since the evaluations themselves - both of the student training processes and of people's education, and of the effects of USS on students, population and university - represent the conclusions drawn from the experiment. However, we thought it necessary to amplify some of the main ideas which are answers to questions which we ourselves raised from the outset.

From the time that we began to think about the project, even before establishing contact with the academic community, \e were convinced that USS would be an enriching experience for the community. But we had doubts and concern about the population who would be served by young people who were enthusiastic, but who lacked experience and professional training. What would the benefits be? What would the risks be? At the end of the project, we can state that at no time has the population been at risk. On the contrary, a group of illiterate and semi-literate adults managed to remain in the learning project, and it was requested that the project should continue. People began to recover confidence in their own ability to learn and in that of their children, and co-operation was achieved between neighbours in activities other than those linked to immediate emergencies. The experiment both surmounted the limitations of previous literacy training schemes as related by the adults who had attended night school, and belied the categorical views of the teachers whom we ourselves saw at work in the schools in Luján.

The university students did not try to persuade or convince. They did not impose their view of reality. They taught as good teachers, and were concerned to understand and support the population and to try to overcome practices and representations which would hinder joint action, in a spirit of criticism designed to change everyday life for the better.

The benefit of the experiment from the students' point of view was a type of apprenticeship which was qualitatively different from previous types. They began to develop a critical view of their expectations and behaviour in relation to the target sectors, not only mobilizing their conscious system of ideas and beliefs but also learning to identify the meanings and values implicit in their opinions and behaviour. They began to develop a coherent, reflective and creative professional practice.

The answer to the question whether, in the short time available, it would be feasible to change the construction of the students' world, is positive. The effects went far beyond the limits of professional activity; some students stated that the critical revision of their social views had become a 'way of life' which affected every aspect of family life, the life of the couple, friendship and civic spirit.

We believe that the experiment succeeded in providing an educational activity of sufficient depth and intensity both as regards the diversity of instructional and advisory activities and as regards its concordance with the theoretical teaching of the university departments.

For a project of this kind to be successful, the personal characteristics of the teaching team and the university facilities required are not always easy to find. For the teaching team, the requirement of an ongoing critical review of its own schemata of perception and behaviour calls for not only a theoretical and intellectual grasp of the subject but also flexibility and commitment to the aims sought.

In the university context, given the twofold need not only to teach the subjects concerned but also to stimulate evaluation, the project must guarantee coherent approaches to interpreting problems.

This particular USS project was an attempt to overcome alienation in the daily and professional lives of all those of us who took an active part in it.

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