

## APPENDIX A

### EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS OF YOUNG BLACK ADULTS

The main lessons of Handsworth Alternative Scheme regarding the education of young black adults can be summarised as follows:

- a) There is a generation of young black people in this country who have left school with serious deficiencies in their educational preparation. A significant proportion experience major difficulties in literacy, numeracy and other basic skills. The experience of HAS concurs with the wider held view that the inadequate development of a multi-racial school curriculum reflecting the social and cultural background of the children of Afro-Caribbean origin has contributed to the underachievement of black school leavers.
- b) While initiatives are being taken to stimulate the development of multi-racial curricula, especially in inner city schools, adult provision has been largely untouched by such developments and in the mainstream remains geared towards academically and technically-able people.
- c) HAS's work with local adult literacy schemes revealed that some use is made by the West Indian community. However, this tends to be restricted to older people; there are very few young black people using literacy and numeracy provision.
- d) HAS's own literacy and numeracy provision using volunteers from the West Indian community did attract some young black people, but was hampered by the lack of teaching aids and materials appropriate and interesting to the target group. This problem was also visible in adult literacy and other projects in the Birmingham area.
- e) The effects of educational disadvantage on employment prospects are well-known. This is particularly acute problem for young black people amongst whom levels of unemployment are dramatically and disproportionately high. Educational disadvantage also has adverse effects on coping with everyday life while unemployed. The HAS staff found that many young black people, frustrated by their lack of opportunity, had a strong desire to improve their educational prospects. However, this motivation was frequently contaminated with negative impressions carried over from school education and was further blunted by a lack of stimulating and relevant material offered in existing adult provision.

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- f) The limited range of materials appropriate for use with young black people is generally poor in terms of format, production and content. This can contribute to feelings of low status already experienced by some black basic education students.
  
- g) The HAS staff conclude that the question of teaching materials and aids is a crucial one. Initial participation by young black people both in the HAS scheme and in other local adult basic provision depends heavily upon the development of sufficiently attractive and culturally relevant materials. The general unavailability of such materials, and feedback from other schemes addressing the educational problems of young black people, suggest that this question is not particular to Birmingham but is shared by workers in other multi-racial areas.