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Abstract

As one of the early writers on the topic Ward claims “squatters’ rights” to its clarification and definition. In this article he describes and distinguishes among the “big three” in the modal purposes of education: informal education, formal education, and nonformal education. Unpublished paper by Ted Ward, Program of Studies in Nonformal Education, Michigan State University, not dated.

Nonformal education is not yet a standardized term, more’s the pity. As one of the early writers on the topic I claim “squatter’s rights” to the following points in its clarification, if not definition—particularly as one of the “big three” in the modal purposes of education: informal, formal, and nonformal education.

Informal education is socialization as represented by the teaching and learning of the ordinary and commonplace information and skills required to function competently in a society. It just comes along naturally as one deals with life. It is rarely planned or structured.

Formal education (schooling) as represented by the teaching and learning that are assigned to and preserved by the common schools and the school-based series of educational events organized as a sort of ladder toward the reaching of higher places in the society. Formal education is the only self-justifying of the three purposive modes. You learn because further learning in this mode will be built upon what you are learning. In general, the clue that it is formal education is the “counting toward a degree.” Primary school is formal education; medical college is formal education. Formal education includes any deliberate, staffed, funded and organized education that uses the schooling mode and fulfills a step-by-step purpose on the “ladder” of becoming educated.

Nonformal education is a socio-political designation that tells us more about the social role than about the form. It is concerned with functional learning in planned contexts. Similar to formal education, there is a plan, specified purpose, and intentionality. Similar to informal education nonformal education is contextual and “hands-on.” It justifies itself in practical learning much more than in honorific paper and symbols. Nonformal education includes many types of learning experiences. It is a broad term in the same way that formal education broadly embraces all sorts of schooling. Teaching village health promoters how to get their families and neighbors to talk and think about the relationship between sanitation and health is nonformal education; helping people discover their own worth and the potentialities for seeking a better life is non-formal education. Nonformal education is a broad term that includes everything from swimming instruction in a youth club to the unionization of a factory. These are different sorts of education.

The use of the term nonformal education is more narrow and specific than its contrasting term formal education. Nonformal education is not just a theoretical category of the social processes of human learning; it has a particular importance in reference to the accelerated change processes required for deliberate national development of community development. In most cases, nonformal education is concerned with the human learning tasks associated with a particular program of social change.

No single methodology is characteristic of nonformal education. Indeed, most methodologies of nonformal education are also used in formal education. The distinctiveness of nonformal education is its

function in the community or society. At this point, a comparison should be made *within* nonformal education: there are two basically different modes of non-formal education:

NFE Mode I: Facilitation of Technology

The mode of nonformal education that many think of first is the technology-facilitation mode. Examination of the literature of the first decade of nonformal education reveals this mode as the major focus of Coombs (1972) and other development planners. Thus, in respect for the intentions of those who first popularized the term, when nonformal education is used for the facilitation of technology, it should be called NFE Mode I.

The need for human learning and the development of skills for the appropriate utilization of new technologies and the solving of ancient problems through proper applications of scientific knowledge is the concern of NFE Mode I. Thus, one thinks of such matters as health education, family planning, marketing cooperatives, improved agriculture, and a host of new employment-generating skills as being the emphasis of NFE Mode I.

NFE Mode II: Pursuit of Humane Values

When the spotlight was turned on nonformal education in the early 1970's, many theorists and practitioners were already well aware of Paulo Freire and his analysis of the socio-political meaning of underdevelopment (1970). For such people, the linkage between nonformal education and the pedagogy of the oppressed (to borrow Freire's language) was obvious. For the more doctrinaire of these believers, facilitation of technology could have no meaning apart from a socio-economic transformation. For some, this transformation was to be rooted in a political revolution; for others it was to achieve its ends through a process of personal/communal renaissance, generally called conscientization. Either way, nonformal education in the service of broadly defined human fulfillment can be called NFE Mode II.

Conscientization, a concept that refers both to heightened consciousness (awareness) and deepened conscience (concern) of the learner has become the watchword for NFE Mode II. In Freire's writing, conscientization appears to be less a methodology than an outcome or the evolution of a complex process. Conscientization is a master objective to which all other objectives are subordinated—in the absence of which nothing else counts.

The philosophical nature of all of this—indeed, the general and vague nature of such an educational purpose (which hardly lends itself to crisp measurement)—is disconcerting to those who see development traversing the more precise path of technology. It is no wonder that nonformal education has become divided into two schools of thought.

Reconciliation

More can be gained from a quest to unite and blend than can be achieved by further isolating NFE Mode I from NFE Mode II. Both are needed. Knowledgeable combining comes less from the high degree of tolerance and acceptance shown by Srinivasan (1977) than from a deliberate subordination of lesser to greater values.

In community health, which has become the particular focus of my own recent fieldwork in nonformal education, we can see the necessity of both Mode I and Mode II. If the Quechua Indians are to be free of the oppression that disease and premature death has inflicted upon them for generations, basic knowledge of the technologies of sanitation and nutrition is essential. Thus one argues for NFE Mode I. But

in the worldview of these people, there is little to build the technological skills on. They have no particular views of themselves or the world they know that can recognize in the health technologies anything of worth. Their life is as it is, as it has been, and as it will be—what is to change? Outsiders with their ideas of what the Quechuas *need* will continue to come and go—life remains the same.

The conscientization that is now emerging among the participants in the Chimborazo Quechua Community Development projects is the foundation for their emerging concern about health. These folk of the high Andes are discovering that they have worth, and that their dignity finds fulfillment as they act to affect their environment. Conscientization is not health; but health without conscientization is hard to imagine.

So it is with the two basic modes of nonformal education. Both are needed. In many cases, Mode II is the prerequisite. In other cases, Mode I can be undertaken directly. *The people must decide.*