



Importance of the Current Emphasis on Nonformal Education: *Especially for the Concepts and Practices of Religious Education*¹

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Nonformal Education—New Terminology for an Old Phenomenon

- Promising new collective term for education that is different from socialization and formal schooling (e.g., deliberate, functional education is different from “mother’s knee” or from lock-step learning).
- Acknowledgment of “where it’s at” (e.g., much education occurs in non-school environments).
- Reversal of trend toward increasing mechanization and standardization of social processes (e.g., “de-schooling” and search for alternative models).
- Reaction against extrinsic valuing of education (e.g., grades, diplomas, passing and earning academic status are less valid concerns than knowing in the Hebrew sense of application to experience—obedience).

Hopeful Escape from Undesirable Traits of Formal Education

For example, focus on limited sets (classes by age and content), regimentation, teacher/learner dichotomy (hierarchy), abstraction from experience, and emphasis on intellectual acquisition.

Corrective of the Word Association Problems Which Suggest Conceptual Narrowness

- Education meaning *teaching, school, and children* rather than *everyone, learning, and together*.
- Methods meaning *classes, instructional materials, and teaching as telling* rather than *shared responsibility, inquiry, and experience*.

Corrective of the Hellenistic Excesses

- Intellectual acquisition, not applied to lifestyle
- Pride in intellectual achievement
- Hierarchical relationships in learning

Issue: In what ways can mission organizations provide new visions of nonformal education after being the major bringer of formal education to other countries and cultures?

¹Ted Ward. Importance of the Current Emphasis on Nonformal Education: Especially for the Concepts and Practices of Religious Education. Handout for a mission’s conference workshop, 1983