



Nonformal Education: Curriculum Development Propositions¹

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Involving NFE participants in the objectives-defining activities:

- 1) Why do we need to involve participants?
 - a) To help them discover their needs (true needs).
 - b) To help us understand their needs (because facilitators may identify wrong needs).
- 2) How to do this?
 - a) Establish dialogue (trust) so *shared* concerns are uncovered. Minimize facilitator domination. Establish horizontal relationships as much as possible.
 - b) Assess needs by (and/or):
 - 1) Informal listening survey conducted by group-elected leaders.
 - 2) More formal survey conducted by facilitator through local leaders.
 - 3) Group meetings where dialogue is established.
 - c) Facilitator characteristics:
 - 1) Open-mindedness, patience, willingness to learn.
 - 2) Empathy.
 - 3) Faith in participants' ability to discover.
 - 4) Ability to listen.
 - 5) Knowledge of available resources.

Helping NFE participants discover their own learning resources:

1. Build a sense of community through acceptance, affirmation, openness, and trust. The following points operate concurrently:
 - a) Be a participant in social settings.
 - b) Develop a horizontal relationship among participants and facilitator by sharing responsibility for group action.
2. Through the communication process, resources become known:
 - a) Identification of one's own strengths.
 - b) Through dialogue, identification of others' strengths.
 - c) Through common experiences, observation identifies resources.
3. Resources become clarified and internalized through validating experiences:
 - a) Through group evaluation--which includes process and product.
 - b) Through self-evaluation--which includes process and product.
 - c) Viewing individual resource(s) as contributing to the whole.

Evaluate NFE programs and performance:

1. Three factors: planning, target population, and meeting basic human needs through NFE are basic to determination of curriculum and evaluation of NFE projects.
 - a) In regard to *planning*, the curriculum might reflect decisions in careful allocation of educational functions, and utilization and development of existing educational

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resources. Curriculum might include learning about the total learning system, and what specific part the project assumes.

- b) Understanding the *target population* could be approached, in terms of curriculum decisions, through items that reveal aspects of target population behavior as seen in context. For example, is literacy necessary? What impact will the planner's perspective have in regard to project objectives, or determination of project services/resources? In regard to evaluation and curriculum, it is also important to look at target population participation in the development and assessment of project effectiveness. (Does the project meet the needs of the audience or the planner?)
 - c) A third area of consideration is meeting *basic human needs* through NFE. Here one might ask, "Do the educational means employed correlate well with the development ends"? (Ward June, 6, 1979).
2. Curriculum and evaluation here would take into account the recognition of the unique character and potential of NFE. This might include considering the broad range of alternatives, given the situation at hand, for bringing about change or meeting the needs identified.
 3. If a gap exists, say, between stated goals or aims and actual progress, evaluation of the learning incentives might be appropriate. This kind of assessment could imply a need at the planning (evaluation level) for a re-formulation or re-statement of objectives, or new selection of means to reach objectives.
 4. Action, meaningful work, and use are also important where skill development projects are found. Curriculum here might include decisions to conceptualize action strategies, and arrive at meaningful definitions of work and use. The concept or image would come first, then it would be followed by the design for evaluation (concept then reality).

Helping NFE participants overcome serious constraints:

- 1) Understand the five categories of constraint:
 - a) Personal constraint, e.g., learning stages, self-perception, physical limitations, attitudes.
 - b) Institutional constraint.
 - c) Environmental context constraint.
 - d) Cultural context limitations, e.g., the cultural attitude re the family.
 - e) Economic.
- 2) Identify the nature of the constraints in a given situation.
- 3) Identify which of the constraints can be removed.
- 4) Devise programs to eliminate any of the constraints that can be eliminated.
5. Identify only goals which are possible in light of the remaining constraints.

Designing curriculum that is relevant to non-formal education participants and to their society:

1. We must be aware that designs of curriculum have basic values and assumptions, which they bring with them when designing curriculum.
2. Before the design process can begin, curriculum designers must consider their own cultural and personal assumptions. Some typical assumptions of western educators are:
 - a) Change is good.
 - b) Education leads to a better life.
 - c) Education is structured.
 - d) Education should be relevant.
 - e) By definition, non-formal education must be relevant.
 - f) Education meets the needs of people.

- g) Curriculum designed to meet today's needs will meet tomorrow's needs.
 - h) The educational process has insurmountable problems.
 - i) Society will respond to education, rather than education will respond to society.
3. We must realize that participants in NFE incorporate their values and assumptions when they come to the process.
 4. As educators and participants, we need to make explicit the values and assumptions that each have, i.e., "out in the open". It is useful to go through a value clarification process.
 5. Determine which values and assumptions are mutually relevant and applicable to participants, educators and society. (Eliminate those values and assumptions of individuals, which are not valid to all).

Avoiding the "trap" of functionalism.

1. If an important component of NFE is responding to present needs of clientele:
 - a) How do you lay adequate preparation for a changing future?
 - b) How do you prevent the possibility that perceived needs are subject to cultural myths (and thereby oppressive in nature)?
2. Even if the program is predominately skills- or functional-oriented, it should be developed in terms of its broader contexts.
 - a) Why are we learning this skill?
 - b) What other applications does it have?
 - c) How does this skill affect our future and conversely, how might the future affect this skill and our needs?
3. Skills learning should be oriented to process as well as product. The means is as important as the end.
4. Active participation and group co-operation should be stressed.
5. In the same way that education for critical consciousness was integrated within literacy programs by Freire, it may be integrated within other skills-oriented programs.
6. In programs with definable functional objectives, objectives should be open-ended so as to treat the skill as a means rather than an end.
7. In cases where NFE programs are institutionalized, the program needs to be open and responsive to groups and individuals (and their needs) who may not customarily be clients of the institution.