



Penang Seminar Paper on Nonformal Education¹

Ted Ward (with Lois McKinney)

What I would like to do at Penang is provide a conceptual framework for the study of learning effectiveness in nonformal education. Putting it another way, a study of the ways by which effective learning occurs within a society: in terms of cultural variables, and also structural variables. The framework is to differentiate between effective and less effective learning experiences as they exist within a culture, in order that when one utilizes nonformal educational channels he or she utilizes the more effective learning procedures. I believe our use of the term “ethno-pedagogy” and our experiences in instructional systems design have been interpreted as an involvement with learning and learning effectiveness. I am convinced that it is better to be concerned with the prescriptive aspects of *instruction* than to be content merely to use descriptive terms with *learning*. Thus, it would seem more appropriate to talk about instructional effectiveness than to talk about learning effectiveness. However, these are so closely related that there is no sense in arguing about the issue. Our practical view of learning effectiveness has to be in terms of instructional effectiveness.

The Penang seminar will include one paper on nonformal education: learning effectiveness. It will be a working plan for the series of studies that we will undertake within our first year of work on the USAID contract. The Penang paper (our working plan) can be organized in terms of four points that illustrate a systematic way of going into the problems of learning effectiveness within the areas of nonformal education. The first part must be done more thoroughly. It will have to bring people up-to-date with the relation between teaching and learning—including Bruner’s point that teaching is not the obverse side of the learning coin—that you don’t look at instruction merely by studying learning—but that instruction must be examined in its own terms and in terms of its own consequences in learning.

The second problem is to relate instruction to teaching. Teaching can be formal, informal, or nonformal. Instruction is going to be either formal or nonformal—in the sense that it is a deliberate set of steps taken to induce learning. The issue is that *instruction* usually connotes planned, structured experiences versus the unplanned and unstructured events of those manifestations of teaching that are informal.

The third will be to contrast purposeful and non-intentional teaching. Ecologists of education, and environmentalists in general, are becoming quite concerned about concomitant learnings that occur often contrary to one’s original motives and purposes; the difference between learning that occurs purposefully and learning that occurs incidentally—and that these can support or negate one another.

The series of conceptual position papers (above) constitutes the first section—a position paper on learning effectiveness in nonformal education. We should include in these papers a statement about the meanings that we give to formal and nonformal education, as differentiated from informal

¹ Ted Ward (with Lois McKinney). Penang Paper on Nonformal Education. Unpublished paper, June 1971

education. Within these papers we relate teaching to learning, instruction to teaching, and purposeful and non-purposeful teaching, and relating all of these to formal, informal, and nonformal education.

The second section will present models for ethno-pedagogical analysis. The crux of the Penang paper will be the raising of the question, “What are the continua of design options that do operate within a society?” Perhaps we can list fifty or one hundred potential design continua. One example is the continuum of planned by the learner/planned for the learner. The four questions that this section must treat are as follows: 1) What are the continua?² 2) Where does the “natural” or the informal pedagogy typically fall (within the specific culture)? Although the ways by which seniors pass on their lore, skills, and values may not ordinarily be thought of as teaching, the anthropological study of ways and means for transmitting culture constitute the informal or “natural” pedagogy of a people. What is it that a mother does when she teaches? 3) Where does the formal pedagogy fall? What is it that schools within a society do in order to teach? 4) When nonformal alternatives are set up, where do they lean (pedagogically)? Toward the formal or toward the informal?

Investigations of these pedagogical conditions, habits, or customs (assumptions?) can lay down the basic data (the normative data for the other two sets of studies); examination of effects of formal on nonformal pedagogy—are the procedures of nonformal pedagogy drawn more from formal or informal pedagogy? The hidden question here needs to be made explicit to what extent are these pedagogies drawn from outside the culture?

There are hazards in importing procedures of pedagogy. For example, in programmed instruction there is the question of how you fit the programmed instruction procedures into a form that is tolerable (adjusted to the pedagogical expectations and tolerances) within the culture, if you fail to do this adjusting you create a second or “overloading” dissemination-adoption problem. For example, if you want to use programmed instruction to teach family planning, you are trying to push through two innovations at once. Rejection of one can become the cause for rejection of the other. How can the pedagogical innovation be made as tolerable as possible? By couching it in terms of some already identified (expected) pedagogical functions.

The fourth series of papers will be a prescriptive model for decision-making within pedagogy, with special reference to nonformal education. Here’s where we bring in Richard Hovey’s work. His study constitutes a model of a way to take the vast quantity of anthropological data that exists in various summaries and collations of societal characteristics and make it available for use in deriving pedagogical prescriptions. The relating of data on cultural characteristics of cognitive style, relating the data on cognitive style to the variables of instructional design, and then building plans for decision-making itself within nonformal education are three aspects of analysis.

Series three, above, envisions field studies to be carried out in other cultures. Participants at Penang should be invited to design and carry out series three studies on the basis of a shared understanding of the series two propositions. Then the series three data could come back in to serve as the basis of the series four studies. This can all be done within a year, dependent upon getting some field studies in series three underway before we have completely developed series two.

² Some may be dichotomous or multi-faceted rather than simple continua.