



Increasing the Emphasis on Nonformal Education as an Area of Graduate Study in the College of Education¹

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Nonformal Education (NFE)

Planned educational experiences other than in the formal education sector. The term is usually taken to mean out-of-school education in support of community development processes, especially in reference to such concerns as “*third world development*”. Nonformal education, therefore, is of primary concern to those faculty who are committed to an international perspective, purview and intellectual sphere of influence for the College.

Clients

Three sets of persons have been participating in roughly equal numbers. The mix created by these three sets provides an intercultural emphasis in courses and programs as well as assuring two-way knowledge-building in the field: from our technological society toward the regions of accelerated development and vice versa. The three sets follow:

- 1) Americans engaged in careers in nonformal education in overseas assignments with various international agencies, missions, relief and development agencies, and USAID.
- 2) Americans intending to go into careers as described above, usually engaged in master’s-level study as a way to build a theoretical foundation and to engage in reflective analysis of a previous short-term experience, as for example, a Peace Corps assignment.
- 3) Foreign students in educational careers which include a partial or primary responsibility for program planning and staff development in nonformal education. Increasingly, these people come from Ministries of Education and are being re-assigned to roles including nonformal education. Some of these students are professional staff members of American and international agencies who are supported by their employers while they are here.

Rationale for Including Nonformal Education as a Priority of the College

The intellectual reasoning begins with the fact that a College of Education as a Land Grant University should fulfill a mission of service through its professional training and research. Nonformal education is no less education than is formal education. This College of Education is more than a “college of schooling”. What can be learned about teaching and learning in the nonformal sector helps to inform teaching and learning in the formal sector. The pragmatic rationale begins with the fact that this College has an enviable and well-earned worldwide reputation as one of several leading centers for studies in nonformal education. For this reason, and because the nonformal sector is one of the most rapidly growing areas of educational investment today, there has been, and will continue to be, a pool of highly competent applicants for graduate degrees in this field. Since much of the coursework included in graduate programs for NFE is in common with the programs for formal education and adult education, augmented by three distinctive courses exclusively focused on nonformal education,

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the net economic effect on the College is positive, bolstering course enrollments and qualitatively strengthening many programs.

Transition

During the early 1970's when the College expanded and identified its involvement in nonformal education, the logic for multiple academic "homes" for nonformal education was compelling. Today, the need for increased program visibility and comparability to other graduate programs argues for locating the nonformal education master's and doctoral programs distinctly within a given faculty and program code.

The overwhelming majority of NFE-related students have been in two programs: Adult and Continuing Education, and Curriculum and Instruction. Thus, one or the other of these programs could be designated and appropriately adjusted to accommodate the nonformal education programs as a whole. The alternative would be to specify and send through University governance, a distinct program for Nonformal Education. This alternative seems unwise on two counts: (1) Confusion and apparent overlap between adult education and nonformal education would be compounded;² and (2) 1983 is hardly the propitious moment for adding a program.

The choice between Curriculum and Instruction, and Adult and Continuing Education as program-home for NFE seems also to have a compelling logic, and to be based on essentially the same issue of visibility; though one important emphasis in nonformal education must continue to be *curriculum*, a decision to put the NFE program into curriculum and instruction would raise confusion about the relationship to and contrast with adult education. Thus, if it is wise to choose one of the two extant major affiliates as the sole-program location for NFE, it should be Adult and Continuing Education.

Recommendation

Following is a list of operational tasks, which would effect a higher visibility and potential for programmatic expansion of this College's graduate studies in NFE:

- 1) Establish a study group to oversee the transition.
- 2) Negotiate with the Faculty of Adult and Continuing Education to resolve the practical considerations, including the re-naming of the program,³ continuity of students presently enrolled, adjustment of program requirements to provide for the NFE emphasis for those who elect it, the re-working of admission policy if needed, and other matters identified by the study group.
- 3) Submit appropriate documentation through governance, as necessary.
- 4) When agreements are reached, effect the administrative changes, including the re-designations of affected faculty.
- 5) Reconstitute the study group, if necessary, to undertake the development of a five-year plan for expanding and strengthening the area of NFE in the Department, to include concerns for appropriate overseas activities for faculty and graduate students, the development of appropriate special-use program variants for specific clientele, and the stimulation of research in the field.

² Adult education and nonformal education are not the same, but they extensively overlap.

³ Adult, Nonformal and Continuing Education would seem to be a promising name for the program and the unit.