



Two Modes of Nonformal Education¹

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In Mode 1, the term “nonformal education” is used to help in the teaching of new technologies (e.g., health, co-ops, agriculture); in Mode 2, the term “nonformal education” is used to heighten the awareness and deepen the concern of learners about the situation in which they are living (conscientization). Both modes are valid but, in most cases, Mode 2 is required so that the learners realize the importance of their participation in Mode 1.

Questions for Reflection:

- Which of the two modes would be more appropriate for a project with which you have had contact? Why? Is either of them inappropriate? Why?
- In what ways, if any, could evangelism and spiritual growth be considered part of Modes 1 and 2? Why? How? Why not?
- What are your feelings and experiences in encouraging Mode 2?

Nonformal education includes many types of learning experiences. “Nonformal education” is a broad term in much the same way as “formal education” broadly embraces all sorts of schooling. 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.

So nonformal education can be understood broadly: 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 nonformal education.

However, the use of the term “nonformal education” is more narrow and more 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 and 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:

¹ Ted Ward. Two Modes of Nonformal Education. Original paper written at Michigan State University, 1984. Subsequently adapted for publication: Ted Ward. Two Modes of Nonformal Education. *Common Ground Journal*. Vol.11 (1) Fall 2013, pp. 44-46.

Nonformal Education 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.

Nonformal Education Mode II: Pursuit of Humane Values

When the spotlight was turned on nonformal education in the early 1970's, many theorists and practitioners were well aware of Paulo Freire and his analysis of the socio-political meaning of underdevelopment (1970). For such persons, 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.

For example, 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.*