



Knowledge Building for Nonformal Education: *Procedural Outline for Nonformal Education Projects at Michigan State University*¹

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The *knowledge-building* component is a continuation and expansion of the concern of the University for systematically adding to professional understanding of the realities and potentialities of non-formal education. Whereas in the past our knowledge-building activities have been largely integral with the service activities we have performed, there is now the need to detach certain of these activities in order to pursue in more detail certain key questions.

A current study of the knowledge needs of the MSU team of NFE specialists is serving as a main guidance mechanism for the proposed activities. Five sectors represent particular known needs in reference to the overall understanding of learning effectiveness, costs for various levels of effectiveness and social worth of the various combinations of NFE operations.

Each sector is coordinated by a faculty member with demonstrated competencies in inquiry methodologies and experience in NFE.

The staff assistance for each sector comes from combinations of other faculty and graduate research assistants (typically two such participants per sector). Data-gathering costs, data processing costs, supporting secretarial services and publication/printing services will comprise the other major elements in the budget for the knowledge-building activities.

An Explanatory Word About Knowledge-Building and Research

“Knowledge-building” is used in the plans described here in a sense distinct from the classical uses of the term “research”. Some of the key distinctions follow:

1. Where *research* seeks to enlighten the unknown, *knowledge-building* seeks to make readily available and applicable whatever knowledge exists or can be readily derived from valid experience.
2. Where *research* seeks to expand basic theory and provide a basis for further experimentation, *knowledge building* seeks to make practical the theoretical, providing a scientific foundation for applied and practical decision-making.
3. Where *research* explores with relatively unlimited concepts of time and resources, *knowledge-building* searches from high-payoff sources with commitments to deliver responsible products within the limits of specified time and resources.

¹ Ted Ward. Knowledge Building for Nonformal Education. Procedural Outline for Nonformal Education Projects at Michigan State University, May 1976

4. Where *research* addresses its outcomes to the scientific community, *knowledge-building* addresses its outcomes to the practitioners of the applied fields—consultants, planners, managers, and technician-operators.

In our preliminary plan for the 1976-77 knowledge-building activities, we identified six sectors for particular focus.

Sector I:	Instructional Components and Systems for NFE
Sector II:	Relationship Between Work and Learning
Sector III:	Ecological Assessment of Contributions of NFE to Socio-Economic Conditions
Sector IV:	Community Communication Linkages
Sector V:	Educational Components of Rural Development Programs
Sector VI:	Determining Costs and Benefits of Formal and Non-Formal Education in Developing Countries

These six sectors were (and are) seen as important areas of potentially useful knowledge for effective NFE consultation and planning. Adjustments in the plan were necessitated by such factors as faculty reassignments (e.g., Prof. Levine, Coordinator of Sector I, became The Chief of Party in the NFE Project in Indonesia) and the shift in fiscal planning and budget reduction for the knowledge-building component.

The current approach to the knowledge-building component in the HSU/TAB contract has taken account of several recent factors:

1. Certain of the areas of needed knowledge are being specifically contracted by USAID through RFP procedure (e.g., benefit-cost analysis). Thus MSU's need for dealing with certain topics is reduced.
2. The interview-study of nonformal education which has shed new light on our system of priorities about needed knowledge.

Knowledge-building activities for 1976 are now organized into five sectors. Some of the sectors names are similar to those above. The major changes are the elimination of emphasis on matters for which USAID is developing separate contracts. Also, the re-division of the sector activities indicates newer insights into the knowledge building needs.

Sector I:	NFE in Rural Development
Sector II:	Factors in Learning Effectiveness
Sector III:	Communication Linkages
Sector IV:	Personnel For NFE
Sector V:	Using Community Resources in NFE

Guidelines for the 1976 series of Knowledge-Building Studies

1. Each study is designed to respond to a series of related specific questions. These questions are known to be of concern to consultants and/or planners and operators of NFE.
2. Each study is to culminate in one or more practical booklets, written in a non-technical style, providing suggestions and advice for planners and operators of NYE.
3. Each study is to be short-range and capable of delivering its outcomes (in the form of practical booklets) by the end of December, 1976.

4. Each study is also to identify and state priorities on specific areas of needed research. Criteria for this identification areas follows:
 - a) Of importance to effective decision-making in NFE,
 - b) Not currently well documented or adequately studied,
 - c) Capable of being studied in 1977, and
 - d) Of interest to known USAID NFE projects and programs.

Knowledge-Building in Nonformal Education

Three Purposes:

1. Collecting insights from the field work of NFE consultants
2. Developing of specific information needed in the field by NFE consultants
3. Facilitating dissemination of information needed by planners and developers of NFE operations

Activities underway in 1976

Interview-study of all MSU people with overseas NFE experience

Intermediate Objective:
Identifying information

Knowledge-Building Studies
(See “Studies underway in 1976”)

Purposes

Collecting insights of consultants.

Developing information for consultants needs for information

Facilitating dissemination of information needed

Studies Underway in 1976

Sector I (Grandstaff) NFE In Rural Development

- Comparative Study of Exemplary Programs
- Survey of Adult Education in Africa

Sector II (Ward) Factors in Learning Effectiveness

- Relationship of Work Experiences and Learning
- Reward Systems for Non-Formal Learning
- Cultural Expectations about Teaching and Learning
- Effects of Multi-Media Systems of Instruction

Sector III (Bain) Communication Linkages

- Review of Research on Cross-Cultural Transfer of Communication Procedures
- Relationships of Formal and Informal Communications Infrastructures

Sector IV (Corl) **Personnel For NFE**

- Identification and Training of NFE “Teachers” in China
- The Skills of Facilitating Learning in Non-School Environments

Sector V (Nelson) **Using Community Resources In NFE**

- Procedures for Identifying Community Resources
- Recognizing and Removing Barriers to the Use of Community Resources
Effecting Linkages with the Formal System

Knowledge-Building in NFE: Plans for 1977

1. Identifying and collating the non-formal education knowledge from LDC experiences in reference to specific questions:

- What do the experiences and research in mass communication say to NFE?
- What are the promising practices in community development and rural development that need to be understood by NFE planners? In what ways can strategies and technologies of multi-media education be utilized in NFE?

2. Broadening the basis for inputs about knowledge gained and knowledge needed for overseas consultants in NFE.

- Installing and maintaining a system of debriefing interviews for all returning consultants in the MSU/TAB and other MSU/AID contracts.
- Interviewing procedures to be extended to cover returning consultants from other NFE operations (e.g., UNICEF, World Bank, World Education, and other AID contractors).
- Analysis of correspondence generated by the MSU/TABNFE Information Center. The files of inquiries and correspondence related to seeking knowledge and attempts to bring experiences to the attention of the NFE field promise to be very productive of knowledge-building data. Follow-on may include field visits and information-gathering from important but “unsung” programs in obscure locations.

3. Continuation of small-scale field studies dealing with high priority needs for information. These will grow out of certain of the studies underway in 1976. It can be noted in the “Guidelines for 1976” that each of the current studies is charged with identifying and stating priorities on specific areas of needed research. It is assumed that these statements will be referred directly to AID/TAB for judgment as to whether research proposals should be solicited or further rudimentary knowledge-building is appropriate.