

[HOME](#)

# Nonformal Education and Training

Books reviewed in this section

[Bridging the Gap](#) Disk 23, File 29-726

[Demystifying Evaluation](#) Disk 23, File 29-727

[Doing Things Together](#) Disk 23, File 29-728

[From the Field](#) Disk 23, File 29-729

[Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation](#) Disk 23, File 29-731

[Perspectives on Non-formal Adult Learning](#) Disk 23, File 29-720

Development workers are increasingly recognizing the inadequacies of formal schooling systems in the South. Formal schooling inevitably depends on massive expenditures for schools, teacher training, and centralized administration, in addition to the continuing drain of government revenues to pay teachers' salaries. Typically, the shortage of revenues to devote to education has ensured a chronic shortfall in the number of teachers relative to ever expanding numbers of pupils at all levels. Inadequately paid teachers cannot afford to devote all of their time to their teaching work, and teacher training based on foreign (often colonial) educational systems means teachers inherit curricula and methods that have little to do with problems faced by students and their families. For these kinds of reasons, formal education systems are unable to provide relevant educational opportunities for many of the rural poor.

Given these inadequacies, there is a growing awareness among development workers that the rural poor are often their own best educational resource. Despite lack of formal schooling, they are the greatest source of background and insight on their own recurring problems. They also share, among themselves, a pool of locally relevant skills and experience for tackling these problems. Recognizing this, many development workers now have two main objectives in their activities: to enable the poor to critically define their own problems and educational goals, and to help them find ways to mobilize the skills and resources to pursue these goals.

Such a strategy implies a belief in the capability of individuals and communities everywhere to define and control their destinies. One of the most powerful voices in this "humanistic" school of thought comes out of the South, that of Paulo Freire. His **Pedagogy of the Oppressed** tells how literacy can be a tool for describing and better understanding the world around the learner. This, in turn, is the first step toward useful action. An important part of Freire's method has been to involve illiterates in discussions about how words and pictures might describe or illustrate the troubling aspects of their lives. This methodology has sparked broad debate and has been adapted worldwide. It has influenced, for example, Latin America's liberation theologians, literacy workers in the ghettos of New York City and field staff in bureaus of adult education from Thailand to Tanzania.

Success in the application of Freire's methods, which rely on sharing of opinions and ideas in group settings, have triggered increasing interest in how the value of group insights is often greater than the sum of individual contributions. This well known phenomenon of "synergy" is the focus of **Doing Things Together, which** offers a compelling theoretical illustration of how many individuals, each with different skills and information, pool their knowledge to solve a wide variety of community problems. **Appropriate Technology for Grain Storage** (See review in the STORAGE chapter) provides a concrete example of this effect. Tanzanian villagers concerned with the drying and storage of their corn knew more than the visiting team of specialists about the situation; they also collectively knew more than any of them had guessed about what the real problems were, and how the problems might be solved.

Key assumptions in this "problem posing/problem solving" approach are a free flow of facts and ideas among group participants, and leadership which is responsive to the group instead of "teaching" it predetermined solutions. "Culture Circles" in Latin America, "Family Life Education Groups" in Asia, and "Study Circles" in Africa are all approaches which rely on the increased creative and productive potential of participatory groups in which leadership is shared and not authoritarian. These Non-formal Education (NFE) programs, supported by a variety of public and private agencies, are efforts to reach and involve the young adults lacking formal schooling who are so numerous in the rural South. National NFE projects are often used by governments to channel and disseminate political programs and state ideology. Yet governments are now increasingly supporting the formation of adult groups based on some mutual interest language learning, animal husbandry, tailoring, or some other income generating skill. Examples of this "fictional education" are found in a few parts of Indonesia, where members of "learning groups" (ranging in size from 10-25 participants) pool resources to capitalize projects ranging from chicken raising to silk-screening T-shirts, to installing a locally built waterpump at the community well. Soon the Indonesian NFE directorate plans to make available "learning funds," seed capital for the projects of learning groups.

This chapter includes several publications on NFE approaches and techniques. **Perspectives on Nonformal Adult Learning** is a concise discussion of philosophical bases and practical approaches for NFE fieldworkers and trainers. **Demystifying Evaluation** is a manual on generating useful criticism, or "feedback," about NFE projects.

The emphasis on local definition of learning needs, to be met with local resources, is essentially a strategy for educational self-reliance. One potential role for outside organizations is to share useful information and problem identification techniques among various local groups. **Learning from the Rural Poor** describes training for leaders ("facilitators") and change agents aimed at improving their skills in working with participatory groups. **From the Field** is a compilation of NFE facilitators and their trainers, emphasizing increased group problem solving power through broad participation and mutual trust.

Practitioners of non-formal, community based education have always had mixed feelings about "higher" education in colleges, universities, and academies. On the one hand these institutions are a potential source of bright young people with perspectives and communication skills useful in villages. But on the other hand, they often drain the rural areas of the most talented youth, conditioning them for new roles in urban settings; in this way these students are effectively lost as contributors to village progress. Many countries have established study-service schemes which require that college students live and work in a village before they graduate. However, the stay in the village is usually too brief, the student's work role is undefined, and there may be no practical objective which can be reached in a few weeks' or months' time. Some countries are deepening their study-service schemes and setting up volunteer service programs which place college graduates in villages for a year, two years, or more. These programs generate employment opportunities and provide a valuable educational experience for young people previously unfamiliar with the realities of life for their less privileged fellow citizens. However, the volunteers almost always return to the city and their impact on village life is seldom a lasting one. FITNDAEC at Colombia has been developing a program that attempts an alternative strategy for linking higher education to village development (see **Rural University**). This program draws students from villages and is explicitly geared to dealing with village level problems; traditional fields of knowledge are combined in a unique "cross-disciplinary" approach. (The experiences of "barefoot doctor" programs have shed some light on the requirements for successful efforts to develop new rural based professionals.) Health workers have proven to be most successful when they come from the communities in which they work, and they are genuinely selected by those communities. A great variety of other services could be provided by rural professionals. Some very interesting examples of intermediately trained professionals can be found in **The Barefoot Book** (reviewed in BACKGROUND READING), including rural bankers, lawyers, veterinarians and even small business management consultants!

Both formal and non-formal community education should be based on local situations and challenges. Such an orientation is also crucial to health care and research and development programs (see the [HEALTH](#) and [SCIENCE TEACHING](#) chapters) which build on local skills instead of eroding them. Communities with these organizational tools for self-reliance will be in a much stronger position to innovate and to seek, adapt, and apply useful technologies from other places.

**Pedagogy of the Oppressed**, book, 186 pages, by Paulo Freire, 1970, \$9.95 from Crossroads/Continuum Publishing Corporation, 370 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017, USA.

In this pioneering book, Brazilian born Freire outlines a humanistic theory of education which has become a cornerstone of people centered development approaches. To be human is to both act and reflect upon the world; "To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Men are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection." In Freire's work with illiterates in Latin America, words and sentences became powerful tools with which peasants could symbolize and define the problems and contradictions in their own lives.

The most important consequence of this approach is that language and any educational content must be rooted in the world of the learner. "It is to the reality which mediates men, and to the perception of that reality held by educators and people, that we must go to find the program content of education ... The starting point for organizing the program content of education or political action must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people. Utilizing certain basic contradictions, we must pose this existential, concrete present situation to the people as a problem which challenges them and requires a response not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action." In the South, Freire's work has helped initiate approaches to education and development which begin with local realities instead of planners' visions. For the "developed" world, Pedagogy stands as a warning against homogenized, mass marketed language and culture which bury the human dialogue with the world in the conformity of products and slogans.

**Perspectives on Nonformal Adult Learning**, [Disk 23, File 29-730](#), book, 122 pages, by Lyra Srinivasan, 1977, World Education, out of print.

The purpose of this book is to introduce the basic theory behind non-formal education (NFE) and to look closely at current NFE techniques. In Thailand, for example, "People in nonformal education programs, especially in the rural areas, are not students by profession: they are farmers and fishermen, mothers and market women. They already have enough problems of their own: the water-pump does not work, the birds are all over the field eating the paddy, the baby is sick. So the approach selected by the Thai nonformal youth and adult education programs focuses on the real and immediate needs of the

learners." This applies this "problem-centered approach" by using sequences of photographs to illustrate and spark discussion about community problems. Another approach, "self-actualizing education," emphasizes the capacity of individuals to creatively identify their own problems and goals: "... the pace of development will remain restricted if the full creative and visualizing power of rural communities is not turned on ... it is not the outsiders as much as the insiders whose imagination holds the key to a major breakthrough in rural development."

Appendices contain exercises to encourage learner participation in groups.

Non-formal education is an important strategy for self-reliant rural development. This book is an excellent introduction to the field.

**Demystifying Evaluation, Disk 23, File 29-727**, book, 69 pages, by Noreen Clark and James McCaffery, 1979, World Education, out of print.

An important task for the staff of any village-level development effort is to ask whether or not the project or program is achieving its objectives and addressing villagers' needs. This short book describes a low-cost, flexible approach to program evaluation. It provides a detailed outline of a practical seminar concentrating on "1) helping program administrators and field staff become aware of the need for evaluation to improve decision making and 2) assisting them to ask the right evaluation questions about their projects. The seminar is not designed to produce experts in evaluation; it is intended to assist administrators to identify and initiate evaluation approaches to improve the operation of their organizations."

The seminar includes small-group discussions exploring the reasons for evaluation, developing common-sense evaluation questions, and collecting data. The greatest amount of time in the one-week seminar is devoted to visits to the "case project," in which teams of participants try out and refine their evaluation strategies in the field. Instructions for leading or "facilitating" the sequence of activities are clear and complete. Emphasis is on getting work done in groups, with authority and responsibility shared among members; the group problem-solving techniques included could be adapted for use in a wide variety of cultural situations.

Recommended as a guide to help project staff develop experience in evaluation techniques. Easy to read and well illustrated.

**From the Field: Tested Participatory Activities for Trainers, Disk 23, File 29729**, three ring binder, 148 pages, compiled by Catherine Crone and Carman St. John Hunter, 1980, World Education, out of print.

Non-formal education practitioners have, in recent years, reached an important conclusion about their "target" groups of rural people without traditional schooling. While their needs for information and skills are many and varied, their own pooled experience is the most important source of knowledge relevant to solving local problems. Thus horizontal or community wide sharing and exchange of ideas is a crucial key to meeting local needs. Non-formal educators believe that this kind of communication is most likely to occur in a group of people with a mutual interest, in an atmosphere in which all members share authority and submit ideas.

Many teachers and other leaders have never experienced such a "participatory" atmosphere. This collection of group activities is intended to help them learn about this approach. "(Participatory education) emphasizes mutual learning rather than teaching. In this kind of process, the teachers or leaders or trainers take on some roles that may be different from those they are used to. What they are learning is not so much how to teach nutrition or family planning or moral values. What they are learning, rather, is to work with particular groups of people who are affected by their own unique circumstances."

Most of the exercises require less than two hours. Many involve large and small group discussions, demonstrations, role-playing, interviewing, and eliciting ideas with photos and pictures. Each exercise is presented in the context of a particular training session (most of which were held in developing countries): "We introduced this activity to enable the group to identify important facts they should know about the rural people with whom they work, and how they can collect the information they need to develop effective learning experiences .... The trainers wanted to discover whether village-level facilitators could invent and use games in their own educational activities .... The trainer wanted a group of materials developers to become adept at selecting pictures that stimulate active learning, and to discuss and establish criteria for choosing such pictures. He hoped that this three part mini-course would help to extend the group's use of visual learning materials."

A sequence of exercises on developing and testing learning activities is included. An appendix contains an excellent outline for an introductory planning workshop on simplified PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique). Recognizing the unique value of every individual contribution to a group effort, participatory learning approaches are an important tool in mobilizing local human resources. This manual provides practical material to accompany the introductory book **Perspectives in Nonformal Adult Learning** (see review in this section).

**Learning from the Rural Poor : Shared Experiences of the Mobile Orientation and Draining Team**, book, 114 pages, by Henry Volken, Ajoy Kumar, and Sara Kaithathara, 1982, Rs. 15 in India, \$3.00 overseas, from Indian Social Institute, Lodi Road, New Delhi 110 003, India.

Practical insights for supporting grass-roots-based development are compiled in this report by a mobile training team. The four-member team has spent 2 years in the villages of India, working among the poor and offering training to other voluntary organizations. The group notes that the major task for voluntary organizations is a difficult one: "to shift the emphasis from a predominantly *managing* role in development to a new role of *facilitating* educational processes" and helping the poor create their own organizations.

"The rural poor are 'voiceless' not because they have nothing to say, but ... because they have no 'say' in the decision-making structures of society. In this perspective it is legitimate to say that development begins with listening to the people .... Unless we begin with an attitude of respect for traditional knowledge we will never be able to make an objective assessment of traditional practices."

The team reports on their goals and methods, the experiences of one member in agriculture, and the training of illiterate women as basic health workers. "Often we were surprised to see that the rural poor are not even aware of the resources they have .... Our agriculturalist ... has been able to concretely point out the many possibilities people had in each place we went, to develop their local resources ... there is scope for a mutual give and take."

In agriculture, training began with and built upon existing agricultural practices. The team always emphasized working with the marginal and small farmer groups who form the poorest half of the population; the others tend to know how to tap available credit and information resources. Special attention was given to low-cost and no-cost ideas that, once introduced, would spread by themselves. One of the goals of the team was to create locally based teaching material, using the ideas and images of the people themselves.

"Today there is much talk about 'total revolution' and radical transformation of society. But what really matters are the changes taking place in the socioeconomic reality of the villages where poverty crushes the poor. In this stark reality of life the rural poor can hardly envisage more than creating for themselves some free space in society where they can breathe more freely and begin to stretch themselves. What is crucial at the moment is to create a base for joint action which is relatively free from control of the locally powerful. Wherever this has been achieved, people begin to move."

"What does expanding the space of freedom concretely mean? It can mean the ability to reduce maternal and child mortality, to double agricultural production by a scheme of dry farming, to get goats for all the families, to get rid of bondage to money-lenders."

These new experiences can convince the poor "of their capacities and new possibilities of collective action. By analyzing the obstacles they encounter in these endeavors they come to understand gradually the working of society and the deeper issues of a more just society."

Highly recommended.

**Bridging the Gap A Participatory Approach to Health and Nutrition Education**, [Disk 23, File 29-726](#), book, 103 pages, edited by Martha Keehn, 1982, available in English and Spanish, free from Save the Children, 54 Wilton Road, Westport, Connecticut 06880, USA.

"This manual is addressed to nutrition and health educators who are interested in trying out new participatory ways of working at the community level. Its purpose is to describe simple techniques by which field staff can be trained to approach local communities more sensitively and to involve them more fully in achieving better health." Topics include planning and carrying out workshops for community health workers, methods and materials for non-directive assessment of villagers' needs, creating learning activities, and techniques for planning and evaluation which involve the villagers. Full of practical material which can be adapted to local situations.

**Doing Things Together: Report on an Experience in Communicating Appropriate Technology**, [Disk 23, File 29-728](#), book, 108 pages, by Andreas Fuglesang, 1977, \$9.00 surface mail or \$11.00 airmail from the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Övre Slottsgatan 2, S-752 20, Uppsala, Sweden.

In this report on a workshop on A.T. in village development, the author makes some contributions towards a new theory of communication compatible with appropriate technology principles. Among the key issues he identifies: Who chooses what is appropriate? What is leadership in a context of people's participation?

Because individuals have different skills and information "the mass (community) can carry and handle an information burden far beyond any individual's" capability. "The mass (community) is a perfect communication system .... It covers all fields of importance to our society's life. It adapts continuously to changes .... The communication flow in the mass is controlled by

the interests of the individuals." This observation has interesting implications for the way in which problems are identified and solutions proposed in development projects.

"Leadership is a communication problem. Decisions must be based on information from the mass. Otherwise they are non-responsive to social realities .... The ideal leader is an individual in the mass whose perceptions of the need for social change are ahead of the mass, but who recognizes that the ideas originate in the mass itself."

"It has been commonly assumed among information specialists that an information intervention follows a two-step flow, from mass media through opinion leaders to a number of individuals . This idea offers intriguing opportunities for those who have a manipulative outlook, but it is fortunately not borne out by experience. The opinion leader theory is probably little more than a superimposition of outmoded authoritarianism on modern sociology."

**Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: Handbook for Training Field Workers**, [Disk 23, File 29-731](#), book, 51 pages, by Alexandra Stephens, 1988, available from FAO, Phra Atit Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand.

"Participatory monitoring and evaluation is a tool for learning from experience. It helps everyone to learn, and it helps everyone plan better next time, or improve upon existing ways of doing things. It is above all, a system developed primarily for use by those who are also beneficiaries of the project or programme . As part of a self-help management system, it enables the various partners in rural development to learn from experience, from success and failure."

"This booklet is a guide for training fieldworkers to assist village groups who want to develop a monitoring and evaluation system which allows everyone to participate, to benefit from, and to use data collected and generated in the process."

#### **ADDITIONAL REFERENCES ON NONFORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**A Solar Water Heater Workshop Manual** describes a weekend training course given to a community group; see [ENERGY: SOLAR](#).

**Rural Small Scale Industries in the People's Republic of China** notes that these industries have contributed to the "scientification" of the rural population; see [LOCAL SELF-RELIANCE](#) .