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# Ghana and Indonesia: Reforms in Non-Formal Education at the Community Level

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# Ghana and Indonesia: reforms in non-formal education at the community level

During the past decade, non-formal education has become an accepted part of the educational scene in developing and developed countries alike. A good part of its popularity can be attributed to the belief that non-formal education could achieve some substantial reforms in the provision of education. Non-formal education appeared to hold out the possibility of dealing with problems of equity of access to education, of decreasing the distance between education and the world of work and life, of promoting development of rural areas, and of accelerating political participation and social development.

Non-formal education was quickly seen to be a useful complement to the formal school system. Numerous small, local projects were begun that incorporated the basic ideas of non-formal education. Other activities, long in existence under other labels like adult education, literacy training, agricultural extension education, and youth activities, were seen in a new light and received renewed attention and resources. Gradually ministries began to take increasing note of these activities and efforts were made to revitalize and expand existing adult-education departments. More recently a

number of countries have introduced administrative personnel at the national level to coordinate, upgrade, and plan national systems of non-formal education.

The combination of an apparently cheap, easily delivered form of education for those unable to attend schools and the promise of restructuring education along the lines envisaged by the critics of schooling quickly grew into a belief that non-formal education could produce significant reforms in the field of education. Visions of poor countries being able to provide meaningful education to all their citizens within likely resource limits and at the same time being able to address issues of social equity and justice were enticing indeed. Enthusiastic proponents of non-formal education did little to discourage these beliefs in the, as yet, little tested field of non-formal education.

## The limitations of non-formal education

What were the objectives of non-formal education? What reform goals were sought by the application of non-formal education? Primary among the goals was the delivery of educational services to the poorest of the poor, women, the isolated rural populations, and adults who had not been able to attend school. Non-formal education was to give these people a chance for

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basic literacy and numeracy, an opportunity to learn productive skills, and a way to participate effectively in the development of their societies. Participation would allow the development of citizenship skills as people learned to articulate needs and to organize themselves to meet those needs. When combined with other inputs, rural non-formal education was seen as a strong accelerating factor in the economic and social growth of rural areas that had been bypassed by the modern sector. When a component of consciousness-raising was included, the less advantaged would be able to band together, articulate their needs and their rights, put pressure on the existing political and economic structure, and thereby instigate changes leading to more equitable distribution of opportunity and wealth. In short, non-formal education was expected not only to reform education but to have a substantial impact on the structure of society.

To what extent could non-formal education hope to achieve any of these goals? In the light of today's more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between education of all forms and the structure of society, these goals appear optimistic at best and in many cases quite naïve. LaBelle (1976) did an extensive analysis of non-formal education projects in Latin America that clearly suggested several important limitations. First, his inventory demonstrated that most of the non-formal education projects were relatively small in size, involving only small fractions of the potential clientele for which they were designed. Even the largest of the programmes were small in comparison with the overall need of a developing country for educational services. Earlier studies by Ahmed and Coombs (1975) and Sheffield and Diejomaoh (1972) had shown similar findings for both African and Asian non-formal education projects. Many programmes were successful in achieving limited educational goals for those who participated, but had little or no impact on the overall educational system of the country.

A second, and much more basic issue, was raised by LaBelle. He found that nearly all of the programmes, even those inspired by Freirean philosophy and using methods of consciousness-raising, were centred around changing the characteristics of the individual learners. He characterized these approaches as person-centred or psychological because of their emphasis on changing the attitudes and behaviours of the individuals. This is in effect a deficit approach that suggests that changing characteristics of individuals will enable them to participate more fully in the process of development. LaBelle contrasts the person-centred approach with one that focuses on the system. A system-centred approach is based on the belief that inequity of opportunity is a result of the social and political structure of the country. This more holistic approach emphasizes the linkage between individuals, institutions, and the environment. Improvement in individual lives will come about only by modifying the patterns of relationship in society. Person-centred approaches, he argues, leave to the individual the very difficult task of applying their new knowledge and behaviours in a setting whose economic and political structure remains unaltered. When viewed from such an analytic framework the expectation that non-formal education activities will have an impact on basic social structures seems quite unrealistic. The reader can certainly also supply reasons why most non-formal education projects have few opportunities to undertake structural changes, and therefore concentrate on person-centred strategies, whatever their motivating philosophy may be.

Working from a more general analysis of the literature, Bock and Papagiannis (1976) effectively present some of the other limitations of the impact of non-formal education on its clientele. They argue that non-formal education generally lacks the credentialing powers of formal education and that consequently the linkages between completing training and the



likelihood of finding employment are often even weaker for non-formal education than for formal education. Investigation of the more successful skill-training programmes often reveals that varying amounts of formal education are in fact an entrance requirement to the programme, thus excluding precisely those sectors of the population most in need of training. In some circumstances then (ibid., p. 12) non-formal education may in fact serve to reinforce existing inequities, rather than serving to reduce them.

Critics of non-formal education also argue that it often functions primarily to socialize learners into accepting permanent inferior status in the social and economic system. Providing minor improvements in skills that enable a person to perform marginally better in a current role or to aspire to the bottom rung on the occupational ladder may remove a source of dissatisfaction that might otherwise serve to exert pressure on the system for more meaningful changes. If non-formal education is offered primarily to those who are poor and in low power situations, the question then arises as to whether this is not just a disguised second-class educational system. If the resources available to non-formal education remain a very small percentage of the total education budget, then non-formal education will in no way reduce the inequities of the situation (Simkins, 1977). Finally, better distribution of employment in society requires both the creation of jobs and the training of workers. As many vocational training programmes, both formal and non-formal, have found, providing people with skills and abilities does not create jobs in which they can apply those skills. Education has little or no influence over job creation, even in the case of individual entrepreneurs, unless many other inputs are also available in an integrated way.

In summary then, non-formal education is trapped in the same web of societal constraints as formal education. In fact non-formal education is often handicapped by its lower re-

source level, its lower status, and its lack of generally recognized power to certify its products. In limited local situations there are some distinct advantages for non-formal education, but viewed from a larger societal perspective, non-formal education has few prospects of delivering on the promises of substantial reform of either the educational system or the social and political structure of which it is a part.

The one situation where non-formal education seems to have been effective on a macro level is in revolutionary societies. The well-known cases of Cuba, the United Republic of Tanzania, and China provide intriguing examples. But careful note should be made of the fact that in these settings many of the basic structures of the social, political and economic system are undergoing change simultaneously. The reorienting of formal education and the extensive use of various non-formal educational modes are components of the overall change strategy. In these cases non-formal education can very effectively complement and support the new goals of society. By itself, non-formal education would have no hope of achieving such goals.

The hope that non-formal education could function as a means to reform the educational system of a country seems to have been false. Non-formal education has had some important effects on the thinking of national policy-makers in education and on some of the internal aspects of the formal school system. The dialogue about non-formal education has raised awareness of the limitations of the school system, of the large proportions of the population that remain unserved, and has led to a great many innovations in the programmes based at formal schools. All of these effects are positive, but fall short of reform in the sense referred to in this discussion. With increasing experience with non-formal education, it becomes clearer that non-formal education has many of the same limitations as formal education. On the level of local innovation and as an alternative way to use scarce resources non-formal education has much to



offer, particularly as more resources are made available and programmes increase in size and scope. Yet at root non-formal education seems to serve essentially the same role in relation to society as formal education does.

The two cases discussed below reflect attempts to revitalize and reform existing adult or community education programmes. Reform in this context refers to substantial changes in the goals and the methods of the non-formal education programmes. Success in achieving these goals would result in both a quantitative change in output and a servicing of new needs for a new clientele. Success would not be likely to lead to changes in large societal structures or patterns of distribution of wealth and power within the society.

### **The People's Education Association (PEA) of Ghana**

An effort to reform the PEA took place in the mid-1970s in conjunction with some outside involvement by members of the Center for International Education of the University of Massachusetts, with funding provided by USAID. I shall analyse the goals of the reform, the institutional setting within which the reform was to be carried out, and some of the forces which worked both for and against the reform as it unfolded. The major focus will be on activities in the Eastern Region and on activities within selected villages and PEA branches within that region.

The PEA describes itself, in a pamphlet distributed by the organization, as follows:

The PEA is a voluntary, independent association of adult students. It is democratically constituted and unisectarian. It aims at providing opportunities for serious study for all those who wish to understand the problems of the great changes taking place in their own society, and in Contemporary Africa; and who wish to keep abreast of the world's fast-developing body of knowledge. (*The P.E.A.—What It Is . . . What It Does*, n.d. p. 4.)

The PEA was founded in 1949 and has since evolved into a national-level voluntary organization with an elected president and executive committee. The PEA maintains nine regional offices, each of which has its own executive committee. In each region, PEA branches are established and carry out their own programmes. Branches are typically located in small villages. The larger towns or cities may have several different branches. Each branch elects its own officers. Membership is open to all who are willing to pay a small annual fee. However, membership tends to be drawn from those with at least some formal education and consequently some command of the English language. Typically a branch will contain the educated members of the community such as the teachers, extension agents, and others with positions of responsibility.

The PEA is a voluntary organization, with all members and officers holding full-time jobs in other organizations. The resources available directly from the PEA are extremely limited and constitute one of the major constraints on any plans for further development of the organization.

PEA activities include involvement in Workers' Colleges, which are primarily vehicles for offering evening course in both GCE examination subjects and in more general topics offered under the rubric of Liberal Studies. In addition, branches co-operate with the regional offices to schedule lectures and symposia on topics of current interest. Periodically One Day Schools are held—workshops on issues or skills of interest to the members. The national organization offers a New Year's School, an Easter School and an annual conference. The schools are three- or four-day affairs that are a combination of workshops and conferences where papers are presented and discussions take place.

At any given time there are fifty to sixty active branches in the country. The number fluctuates as individual branches wax and wane, depending on the quality of their leadership and other

local factors. Regions vary considerably in the strength of the regional office, and consequently in the number of active branches. The financial base of the organization is very precarious, with individual dues being a cedi per year. However, collection is erratic, and the total amount collected seems to be less than 1,000 cedi for any particular year. More substantial fees are charged for courses at the Workers' Colleges, but these are handled by the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) and are used to help defray the costs of the colleges.

#### THE INSTITUTE OF ADULT EDUCATION (IAE)

Any attempt to understand the PEA brings one quickly to the IAE and the complex web of relationships between the two institutions. The institute was created in 1948, just prior to the formation of the PEA. From the beginning there has been a close interdependence both in function and in governance procedures between the two (Jones-Quartey, pp. 6 et seq.). In effect the PEA was created in part for the purpose of generating clientele for the university extension and adult-education efforts of the institute. The PEA helped to provide an organized body of part-time students with which the institute could work. In fact, the Workers' Colleges mentioned above are run by the institute, and the PEA solicits students and helps to publicize the efforts of the colleges.

As a part of the University of Ghana, the institute has access to state funds and has resources upon which the PEA heavily depends (Bing, 1979, pp. 131 et seq.). The institute has nine regional offices—the same as those for the PEA mentioned above—and one or two paid, full-time resident tutors in each office. These tutors work with the regional executive committees of the PEA and lend administrative support to the PEA activities in their region. In addition, the national secretary of the PEA is a paid staff member of the institute who is

seconded to the PEA. The national secretary controls the budget for funds that come to the PEA from the institute. These funds support activities like the national schools and any meetings of the national executive committee.

The institute conducts the GCE courses, runs correspondence courses, and provides part-time and evening degree courses for the university. In addition, it pursues the normal university interest in research and publication in issues related to its mission. While these interests overlap with those of the PEA in some areas, they diverge in others. Tension between the two organizations is inevitable. Problems arise particularly when the PEA seeks to move into programming that is of low priority for the institute or is seen as being in conflict with institute goals. Yet the PEA cannot stray too far from its necessary dependence on the staff and resources of the institute, since the PEA has little in the way of its own resources.

#### REFORM GOALS FOR THE PEA

In its early years the PEA was directly involved in community development activities, and in fact received direct government funding for this task during the pre-independence years in Ghana (Bing, 1979, p. 151). The later development of the PEA and its close relationship with the IAE gradually led to emphasis on more academic and lecture-type activities. Membership came to be made up primarily of those with a usable command of the English language who felt comfortable listening to presentations in English and carrying on discussions afterwards. Dialogue within the PEA emerged during the early 1970s about the changing nature of Ghana's educational needs and the need for reinvolving the local PEA branches more directly in the development of their communities. This reawakened interest led to the appointment of several committees during the 1973 Consultative Conference. Recommendations drawn



from the reports of several of these committees reflect the new goals sought for the PEA:

the PEA should concern itself with programmes which will improve both local and national talents and skills, not only for the few educated classes, but also for the illiterate majority who form the bulk of the working adult population. These activities should . . . raise the living standards of the people. (Point 3, Purpose Committee.)

The PEA should be part and parcel of the community and take the lead in promoting and participating in community work . . . (Point 8, Purpose Committee.)

. . . local men who are not necessarily graduates but conversant with particular topics should be used. . . . It is recommended that as far as possible some of those courses should be conducted in the local languages. (Point 1, Programmes Committee.)

. . . the development of appropriate teaching methods using local materials as much as possible. . . . there is a dire need for the Institute to relate its teaching to the local environment to enable students to relate their knowledge to local problems. (Point 3, IAE/PEA Relations Committee.)

If the group of adults which forms the bulk of the people is to be considered eligible for membership in the organisation, then activities organised in the local languages will have to be instituted. (Membership Committee Recommendations.)

There emerges a fairly clear agreement among the consultative committees that the PEA needs to direct its activities towards an expanded membership and become more involved in the community. After these recommendations were made, there were other resolutions at national conferences supporting these goals. Yet in 1975 little progress had been made in moving towards implementation of any of these ideas. They seem to have had strong support from the PEA. Data are not available to this author on what the official or unofficial position of the institute was with regard to these goals. One could hypothesize, on the basis of other statements of institute goals, that there was some reluctance

on the part of the institute. The institute perceived its role as one of doing research on issues of literacy training and community development, but not in getting directly involved in the provision of these services (Bing, 1979, p. 177).

#### A PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE REFORMS

Over a period of months in 1975 a series of discussions took place between several staff members of the University of Massachusetts and the national secretary and other officers of the PEA. There emerged a working proposal that contained a process of making a start on implementing the reforms. Basically, the proposal involved the selection of a series of five or six activities, including new forms of PEA branches that could be designated as pilot projects during 1976. These pilot projects, or in some cases new ways of organizing branches, would receive extra resources, additional staff support and added attention. During the year they would be carefully monitored and after six months to a year a series of case-studies would be written.

These case-studies would then be presented at the annual conference and would be discussed at length by PEA members from all over Ghana. Individuals directly involved in the projects would be invited to the conference to share their experiences and respond to questions. Such sessions would serve to introduce these new models to other PEA branches, along with some practical suggestions as to how they might go about undertaking a similar set of activities. A series of new pilot projects would be proposed for the coming year based on those judged most successful from the first year. A variety of administrative and monitoring mechanisms was also suggested to keep track of this effort.

Suggestions for pilot projects already existed in some unusual efforts of selected branches.



These included a soap project, a music and drama group, a demonstration centre for application of low-level technology using local materials to produce needed implements, and programmes that dealt with co-operative education. Other ideas emerged as well during the next year of activity.

Although there was no overt opposition to this agreement, and in fact individual officers of the PEA expressed strong support for the approach and the ideas, the proposal never received official approval. This could be attributed to several factors. First, there were the ongoing differences between the PEA and the IAE that the PEA could not afford to press because of its dependence on the resources of the IEA. Second, the as yet unclear role and intentions of the outsiders from the University of Massachusetts made caution desirable from the Ghanaian perspective. Instead of official agreement, there was a tacit willingness to let events evolve and adopt a wait-and-see attitude with regard to the reforms. A detailed analysis of the nuances of the relationship between the three organizations and the twists and turns of events is presented in a case-study by Bing for the reader who wishes to pursue the matter in more detail (Bing, 1979, Chapter V).

However, an overt decision did not have to be made as to where the new activities were to take place. After visits by the outsiders to branches in several regions of Ghana, there seemed to be general agreement on the part of all parties that initial efforts should be focused in the Eastern Region and be based at Koforidua, the location of the regional office of the IAE/PEA. The reasons for selecting this region and the influence of that decision on the reform effort are worth some comment. By general agreement, the Eastern Region was one of the most active in the PEA and had a recent history of strong leadership and active involvement in literacy efforts. In addition, the leadership there was well disposed towards

undertaking new efforts and seemed to be willing to work with the outsiders, despite some misgivings about their role.

Other factors also supported the choice of the Eastern Region. The region was easily accessible from the capital city, and transportation within the region was adequate, with many villages being accessible by vehicle. The then national president of PEA resided in Koforidua and was an active supporter of the proposed activities. The institute may have felt that having the new activities within close visiting range to the headquarters would allow them to monitor the programme and protect their own interests as well. The outsiders from Massachusetts were satisfied because the situation in that region seemed to offer a good environment for trying out some new ideas. They were aware that new efforts above all else needed to demonstrate early success if they were to have a chance to expand and influence PEA branches in other regions. The Eastern Region was recognized as having a strong programme, and acceptance of new ideas there would lend legitimacy to any results achieved.

A brief word needs to be said about the nature of the involvement of the staff from the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts. The project in Ghana was a field site in a larger grant whose purpose was to develop collaborative methods of working together in the field of non-formal education. As such, the effort combined service, training, and research in one activity. The budget for overseas activities was very modest, providing essentially maintenance-level pay for the one or two staff members residing in Ghana during the period of activity. No funds were available to purchase large amounts of equipment or pay for project activities. The PEA was made aware from the beginning that this was not a technical-assistance project, but rather a means to work together on some common problems that would both assist the



PEA in pursuing its reform goals and would provide experience for the Center in developing understanding about collaborative approaches to programme development (Kinsey and Bing, 1978, pp. 5 et seq.).

#### DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PEA ACTIVITIES

During the three years of involvement with the PEA a series of individuals from the Center spent periods of time in Ghana ranging from six to eighteen months. Four of these individuals, working with officers and members of the PEA, gradually developed a series of mini-projects, or pilot efforts in a manner not unlike the idea set forth in the original proposal for a reform process referred to above. Each of these four activities developed somewhat differently, depending on the nature of the activity and the specific local conditions encountered. Each of the four activities is summarized below to give the reader a sense of the implementation of the reform at the lowest level.

##### *The village-facilitator approach*

The major thrust of this reform was to create a means that would allow the PEA to return to its earlier pattern of involvement in direct community-development activities. The basic steps of the approach chosen were the identification of village needs through a participatory process, the gradual emergence of leaders within the villages for these activities, and a process of training to develop the skills of these leaders. At the very beginning contacts with the villages were made by PEA officers and one of the outside team members. A series of ten villages showed interest and began a process of discussion and problem identification.

Within a month or so, various individuals within the villages began to take leadership roles in these meetings. The team from the PEA encouraged these leaders to begin functioning

as facilitators, following the models set by the members of PEA team themselves when they had made the original contacts with the village. The PEA team began working in a training capacity with these emerging facilitators, first on an individual basis, and later through a series of week-end workshops for groups of facilitators. The PEA team also helped facilitators to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to begin accessing resources from various government agencies to supplement the self-help efforts of the villagers. The process of training-design and of skill-development was gradual, with trial and error forming the basis for many initial efforts. By the time the week-end workshops were begun, enough experience had been gained to know what skills were needed by the facilitators and to develop effective training procedures.

During the next year seven of the ten villages undertook specific projects to meet needs articulated by themselves. The projects included such things as the beginning of a series of literacy classes, building a middle school, developing a fledgling soap-making industry and an associated literacy effort, reconstruction of an entrance road to the village, roofing two unfinished classrooms, strengthening a village Sugar Cane Growers Association, and building a four-mile piped waterline to bring treated water to a village. This last project was the most ambitious of all, and when successfully completed after six months of effort brought considerable visibility to the efforts of the PEA. The result was an increase in the credibility of the PEA efforts and increased support within the PEA and the IAE for the new direction of programming.

The overall result of these efforts was the development of a model for new PEA activities and the creation of a body of experience within the leadership of the PEA. At the same time a fairly clear understanding of the role of the facilitator also emerged. Seven key tasks, each requiring some skill, were identified as being

essential for the effective functioning of village facilitators (Abrams et al., 1978, p. 103):

Establishing a participatory atmosphere and process that is non-threatening to traditional leaders

Offering techniques of problem analysis and problem solving

Creating a self-image of the community as having the right and the ability to seek government resources

Emphasizing persistence and planning for setbacks in the development process

Providing information on where resources may be available

Decentralizing and distributing project tasks

Recognizing and rewarding individual and group efforts

Recommendations for future training and support of facilitators included the development of workshops around each of these themes and the further development of methods by which facilitators could successfully meet these challenges.

### *The adult-literacy approach*

As the process of working with the village facilitators proceeded, it became clear that quite different sets of skills were required for educational projects in comparison with those involved in the physical and economic development of the village. Villages seeking to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills wanted to have classes and learning materials. Other villages not in the original group of ten expressed interest in having their own literacy classes, as did some existing branches of the PEA.

Literacy classes had been an ongoing activity of the Department of Social Welfare for many years, but both the department and many of the teachers were disenchanted with the long-used Laubach materials. Using a philosophy and an approach that had emerged from another project in Ecuador several years before (*Nonformal Education in Ecuador*, 1975), a series of ma-

terials and methods was developed and tried in the Ghanaian setting. The combination that emerged was called Learner-Centred Literacy and was made up of a combination of factors: a participatory atmosphere where a learning dialogue took place between the facilitator and the learners; the learning and writing of key words selected by the learners because they had meaning in their own lives; the use of games and simulations to provide skill practice and to maintain learning motivation; and the inclusion of a process of reflection on the larger social and political meanings of the words being learned.

As the learner-centred approach evolved and was tested, a series of workshops for groups of literacy facilitators was begun to train them in the use of both the methods and the materials. As many as thirty facilitators attended workshops, a dozen or more literacy classes were ultimately begun, and in some cases ongoing classes began to use the new approach in combination with the old one.

At the end of the period of development and pilot implementation a number of things had been learned. First, the new approach was well-liked, was feasible, and was able to increase participation and motivation. At the same time, a number of needs were revealed. Taken by itself, the new approach was not sufficiently systematic and extensive to teach full-scale literacy skills, but would have to be merged with some other procedures. Facilitators working with literacy needed to develop some considerable skills on their own, and needed regular support and above all sufficient copies of materials to use. (Paper of any kind was and is very scarce in Ghana and consequently is very expensive when available at all.)

A special problem with the literacy facilitators related to their status as volunteers. Perhaps because their efforts were needed on a more systematic and regular basis, and because their activities were closely parallel to those of teachers, there was an expressed need



to pay the facilitators. After extensive discussion, the PEA programme decided not to pay the facilitators, primarily because it would bring them into conflict with the Department of Social Welfare, whose policy was not to pay their literacy instructors. Of course there was the added problem of lack of resources to provide the pay in any case. Conscious effort was made to seek other forms of rewards, including such things as public recognition, periodic opportunities to attend workshops where food and lodging were provided, regular visits by PEA officials to the village, and the creation of long-term options for more extensive training of the facilitators. These efforts were successful to some extent, but would require a good deal of supporting effort from the PEA that may not be feasible in the long run. In the final analysis, the consensus of the pilot project staff was that the Government of Ghana would have to make some resources available if they wanted a serious literacy effort to be undertaken either through the PEA or the Department of Social Welfare.

### *The culture-group approach*

A third type of pilot activity emerged from an already existing form of popular culture. Culture groups were locally organized and led teams that gave performances of singing and dancing for the enjoyment of various audiences. The better-known groups frequently travelled to give performances. One such group had already become a PEA branch. This particular branch was approached and agreed to work on an experimental basis to expand the goals and the methods of the culture group to include articulation of local needs and the development of community activities that went beyond musical performances.

After a period of exploration a method was devised for introducing cultural groups to some new approaches. Adapting the concept of a One Day School, which was a familiar PEA

approach to running workshops, proved to be an efficient training and development model. Each school had three components: a needs assessment and problem identification session in the morning, a rehearsal and problem-solving session in the afternoon, and a subsequent performance for the entire community (Russell, 1978, p. 121). During the first session, village leaders were engaged in a discussion about local problems with members of the culture group. A particular problem was chosen, one or more possible approaches to solving the problem were discussed, and a skit was created that illustrated both in an entertaining fashion. The skit was then rehearsed and finally performed for the whole village population. A series of One Day Schools was run for different culture groups. Leaders of other culture groups were always invited, and in time took major responsibility for running the One Day Schools themselves.

At first the activities of the cultural groups were seen as a vehicle for transmitting educational messages and raising awareness of both villagers and their leaders. An evening's performance would include singing, dancing, a skit or two and a general atmosphere of enjoyment. Some of these evenings drew crowds ranging up to 500, all of whom went away having been exposed to a message about a problem and some possible solutions. Such evenings could provide a very effective setting for efforts of extension workers from various ministries to make contact for subsequent follow-up activities.

Some of the cultural groups began to go beyond presentation and to become directly involved in village action to solve the problems. Group members would meet with villagers, plan action, and travel to meet with government officials whose assistance was needed. In the process of shifting from an educational activity to an action unit, a number of strains began to appear within the culture groups. Roles played in skits sometimes carried over into real life,



with villagers modifying their treatment of the actors. Conflicts inherent in problem-solving began to creep into the dynamics of the culture groups themselves. The skills demanded of culture group leaders in promoting problem-solving action were quite different from those needed to run a performance-oriented educational effort. Partially to meet some of these needs and to provide more effective support for the leaders, a Cultural Group Union was formed in the Eastern Region.

### *The vocational-trades approach*

As part of the effort to create new forms of PEA branches, contact was made with groups of wayside fitters operating in and around Koforidua. Wayside fitters operate small, privately owned vehicle-repair workshops along the sides of roads. A typical workshop will contain various artisans including mechanics, electricians, body-workers and upholstery repairmen. In addition, many shops have a number of apprentices who are undergoing training with the masters in the shop. Efforts were made to understand the workings of these shops and to discover what educational needs might be served by a PEA activity.

There turned out to be an already existing Artisans Co-operative Society with a formal structure, officers and regular meetings. However, the society was languishing, having been unable to meet some of the needs of members. Several different activities were undertaken to explore possible PEA involvement: working with the co-operative to move ahead on a long-blocked plan to establish a central set of workshops where all the artisans could relocate, improving the organizational skills of the officers of the co-operative, and seeking to establish some training classes for masters and apprentices.

Most important for the PEA were the efforts to meet some of the educational needs of the apprentices. While continuing to work on the first two problems, attention was devoted to

assessing the learning needs of the apprentices. Analysis of the learning environment in the workshops showed that the apprentices were learning the practical skills fairly well but that many lacked even the most basic of the theoretical concepts that explained the working of the components that were under repair (McLaughlin, 1980). Organizational training was explored as a possible means for meeting this need. But most of the apprentices had little schooling and were unlikely to respond favourably to formal school types of training, since many had memories of failure from their contact with the school system.

To meet this need, considerable effort was required to locate the components of a viable programme. Fairly expensive equipment and tools were needed. Suitably qualified instructors had to be located and trained to provide an acceptable style of teaching, and some sort of institutional support was needed to subsidize the training so the fees to the apprentices would be within their means. The PEA, in co-operation with the IAE, was able to provide the institutional framework once they were convinced that a suitable group of learners was willing to participate. Progress on getting the central workshop plans moving and revitalizing the co-operative had also been made. With these initial successes, outside sources were approached to provide equipment and instructors. Eventually all the components were assembled and training activities could begin. The training activity was formally instituted as a branch of the PEA and came to represent another pilot model in the overall reform effort.

The outcome of this effort demonstrated the ability to reach another audience—one that spoke little English but was engaged in a viable economic activity. The process led to a strengthening of the co-operative and the establishment of a working relationship between the PEA and that organization. In addition, the PEA served as a legitimate vehicle for articulating needs and demands of a local group to larger funding



sources. The equipment was donated by a foreign development agency that was convinced that the PEA was representing a grass-roots organization and that the resources would be used appropriately. The PEA thus served as an interface between a small local group and an outside resource. The effort also demonstrated some of the limits of such an approach. There is an ongoing tension between the self-interest of the individual entrepreneurs and the value of their time and the demands and services provided through the co-operative and the PEA. Achieving a reasonable balance between these two forces requires a level of leadership and organizational ability that is not easily available.

#### THE RESULTS OF THE EFFORT TO REFORM THE PEA

The first stage of the reform effort was relatively successful. Four new approaches were developed, field tested, and implemented on a pilot basis within the Eastern Region. All of the approaches appear to have strong points that would make them feasible as part of the overall PEA programme. These models have been written up and the procedures described carefully. However, no systematic evaluation was undertaken. Through visits and annual meetings there is a good deal of informal knowledge about these approaches among the national officers of the PEA and to a lesser extent in the Institute for Adult Education.

An indirect outcome of the process has been a considerable strengthening of the skills of the officers of the PEA in the Eastern Region. In fact, the executive committee, when faced with the prospect of the departure of the outsiders, sat down with them and wrote a proposal to USAID for funding to carry on these activities for the next four years. The process of analysing objectives, setting priorities, planning programmes and budgets, and finally negotiating with the USAID also added to the competence of the officers. As a result the Eastern Region

was finally awarded a grant and is now part way through the four-year period of implementation.

Under the new grant they are focusing primary interest on village-facilitator activities that lead to the physical and economic development of the region. The PEA is particularly interested in supporting the development of new businesses and services within villages. The grant contains within it a small revolving loan fund to start up such activities. Work with the literacy groups and the cultural groups continues as well. With the added resources these models can be expected to spread to new PEA branches throughout the Eastern Region.

What long-term reform effects can be expected for the rest of the PEA? At this time there does not seem to be sufficient staff skills or resources in the other regions of the PEA to apply any of these new approaches, although there is no lack of interest in the ideas or of expressions of official support for them. At root however, the PEA remains trapped in the nature of its institutional setting.

The PEA is an almost totally volunteer organization with no full-time staff with the exception of the national secretary. The limitations of volunteer staffing have been discussed in several of the approaches described previously. One should note that during the period of experimentation there were full-time staff members, some from Massachusetts and several Ghanaians hired by them during their stay. The lack of at least some full-time core staff answerable directly to the PEA remains a crucial deficiency. The fact that some of the core officers are volunteers and hold full-time jobs elsewhere, however, does have some advantages. Senior officers who hold high-level civil-service positions in regional offices of central ministries are in fact invaluable to the PEA in helping them gain access to decision-makers and resources to carry out community activities. The PEA also benefits from the services of highly skilled officers who have retired, and who bring

their considerable professional skills to the organization.

An even more serious limitation for reform is the lack of any resource base. Dues are nominal, and there is no way to increase them without excluding the very people the PEA is trying to serve. The financial and organizational dependence on the IAE remains. With that dependence goes the unresolved tension between the research and academic mandate of the institute and the more service and development oriented activities set forth in the reform goals of the PEA. The reform effort has demonstrated that the PEA can create and implement effective new approaches when given access to resources. The Eastern Region appears to have started down the road to developing the skills and experience necessary to raise outside funds for such efforts. Whether, even there, finding a more secure long-term source of funding remains problematic. The chances of the reforms at the regional level spreading to the national organization are not good until some of these basic structural limitations can be addressed.

### **The Community Education (Penmas) Directorate in Indonesia**

This is a non-formal education organization which is substantially different in both size and resources from the PEA in Ghana. The educational goals and even much of the methodology used are similar, but these similarities are overwhelmed by the differences in scale. The approach to reform of the organization is also very different. Both organizations have a thirty-year history of work in the field of adult and community education and both have embarked upon a reform process. Penmas is attempting a centralized reform process that begins in Jakarta and spreads to the provinces and then to smaller subdivisions. The PEA began at the lower level and had hopes that the reform would spread to

the national level from there. The Penmas effort will be presented in a more summary fashion, partly because of its size and complexity and partly because it is intended primarily as a contrasting example to highlight some of the characteristics of the PEA. Penmas is an unusual example that has not been characteristic of most non-formal education programmes because of its size and the level of resources it receives from the government.

#### **THE ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITIES OF PENMAS**

Penmas (*Pendidikan Masyarakat* means community education) is a directorate within one of the five major subdivisions of the Ministry of Education and Culture. With more than 6,000 employees spread out across the nation, Penmas is one of the largest organizations of its kind in the world. Penmas has major offices in each provincial capital, a smaller office at each district headquarters, and in theory an officer in each of the more than 3,000 subdistrict centres in the country. The lowest level of field officer is known as a *Penilik* and has the responsibility for carrying out the learning activities of Penmas. The *Penilik* in turn works with volunteer facilitators of village-level groups and hires instructors who work on a part-time basis to teach specific vocational-skills courses.

The training provided by Penmas is intended to create practical skills and knowledge that will supplement incomes, improve family health, create community infrastructure, foster awareness of government services, and create a receptivity to development efforts. Major learning activities centre around vocational skills, particularly those at the level of cottage and home industry; family-life education; community education; and basic education in literacy and numeracy. Until recently the major training method used by Penmas to achieve these goals was classes run at convenient times of the day in local settings. Teachers were



individuals paid a fee to teach a particular course.

Penmas had been in existence for more than thirty years, but in recent times had suffered from a decline in effectiveness. Penmas suffered from an overly centralized programming and budgeting process and a lack of flexibility in responding to local learning needs. To be effective in reaching the most needy of its potential clientele, Penmas needed to substantially upgrade the quality and quantity of learning materials available, and to find ways to involve the learner more actively in the learning process. In addition, Penmas needed to improve the training and the support of its field staff. Recognizing the weaknesses of Penmas and faced with a population of 17 million out-of-school youths and an estimated 23 million illiterate adults, the Government of Indonesia decided to launch a substantial reform effort.

#### THE PENMAS REFORM EFFORT

The Government of Indonesia embarked on a large-scale reform of Penmas. Working with officials of the World Bank, the government designed a project that in its first phase is to cover the six most populous provinces (containing 70 per cent of the population) and will last for four years. Half of the over \$30 million cost is being provided from the government budget, and the other half is in the form of a loan from the World Bank. Included in the project is a provision for a technical assistance contract with an outside organization to provide specialists and to provide training for key Penmas personnel overseas (Comings, 1979). The goals of the reform included the following major points:

Strengthening the management and supervision capabilities of Penmas.

Establishing a programme for regular in-service training for staff of Penmas.

Creating institutional capability to develop, manufacture, and distribute improved learning materials.

Introducing a continuous process of evaluation into Penmas programming.

Establishing a system of local learning funds to support learning activities in the villages. These goals make clear that the purpose of the reform is a thorough revitalization of Penmas so that it will become a significant contributor to non-school education in Indonesia. The implementation of the reform has two major components: the development of facilities, equipment, and learning materials; and the substantial upgrading of the capabilities of the human resources at all levels of the organization. For both components the initial emphasis is being placed on activities at the national centre and at the six provincial offices. When fully trained teams supported by appropriate facilities are established at the provincial level, then training and materials development will start for activities at the district and subdistrict level. The reform strategy is thus one of beginning at the centre and working downward in steps. Consolidation at each step is to be achieved before using the newly achieved capabilities at that level to carry out training and development at the next lower step.

A reform effort of this magnitude did not spring into being all at once. Smaller-scale efforts with Penmas had been under way for a number of years in selected pilot locations. Primary emphasis in these efforts was on the development of effective local materials and methods that would work in village settings. Out of these efforts, many of which were based at one of the provincial offices of Penmas (Kindervatter, 1979, Chapter V), there grew a Penmas philosophy of non-formal education. This philosophy sets a tone for the reform effort and has had particular influence on the proposed learning activities at the lowest level.

The philosophy is essentially one of a learner-centred process of defining needs, working together in groups with the aid of volunteer facilitators, making use of nationally distributed materials supplemented by locally produced



materials, and involving the learners in an ongoing process that remains closely related to their live experiences (Iskandar, 1977). These 'learning groups' form the foundation upon which the plans for reform of Penmas are based. The development, guidance and support of these groups is the major task of the overall Penmas structure being revitalized by the reform. The project calls for many thousands of these groups to be created during the reform process, so that by the end of the reform Penmas will have the capability to serve up to a million learners each year.

#### ISSUES RAISED BY THE PENMAS REFORM STRATEGY

The process of reforming Penmas is now in its second year. At this stage in an effort of such large magnitude it is much too early to judge the degree of success to be anticipated. However, some issues may be usefully raised that will provide guidelines for future observation of the effort. Running through all these issues is the challenge created by the magnitude of the undertaking. How can approaches that work well in limited local situations be generalized in a way that will allow administration and monitoring by a large-scale bureaucracy, while at the same time maintaining the flexibility and sensitivity that are necessary to fit into local situations?

The key administrative reform involves a substantial decentralization of Penmas. At the moment, primary emphasis is being placed on shifting decision-making and resources to the provincial-level offices. Then, in turn, efforts will be made to strengthen the capability of district-level officials to undertake greater programmatic responsibility. Even at the district level, the size of a programme may be so large as to inhibit effective serving of the needs of a diverse population. There are districts in Java with a total population of over a million.

Decentralization of Penmas will not be an

easy task. There are strong cultural and historical factors working against such a reform. Decision-making has long been highly centralized, and civil servants are thoroughly imbued with a sense of deference to their superiors in the administrative hierarchy. Yet this reform is at the heart of the entire process. The philosophy of Penmas calls for problem definition and initiative for learning to take place at the lowest level of the hierarchy—namely the learning groups. Learning groups are to be guided by facilitators, who perhaps significantly are volunteers and therefore not directly answerable to Penmas.

Assuming that learning groups are effective and that they are willing to articulate demands for assistance in learning and development activities, they will then put pressure on the *Peniliks*, who are the lowest staff members of the Penmas structure. *Peniliks*, to be effective in responding to this need, will have to reorient themselves away from their strong tendency to seek direction from the district and provincial offices and towards articulating needs from below to these offices. In reality the *Penilik* will most likely face the difficult task of reconciling conflicting sets of pressures from above and below. How well the *Peniliks* can be expected to cope with this responsibility is an open question, particularly in light of the fact that they are the least-trained, lowest-paid and lowest-status members of Penmas.

A transitional problem caused by the reform results from the fact that Penmas has an ongoing programme that must be maintained while undertaking the development of new procedures and programmes. During the transition phase, for instance, nearly forty of the top national and provincial level Penmas officials will go overseas for training, which ranges from two to six months in length. The reform programme also calls for a massive in-country training programme which, for instance, will provide an in-service period of training every six months for every *Penilik*.



Simultaneously, a large-scale effort is under way to develop learning materials at both the national and the provincial levels. Meanwhile the normal programmes have to be maintained, the annual government budget cycle has to be observed, and most of the traditional forms and reports have to be completed. The reform will clearly require an effort of awesome magnitude from all parties concerned.

The reader should not conclude from this discussion of issues that the reform has little hope. Even in the short while that the effort has been under way, very significant progress has in fact been made. Most of the overseas training has been completed—some of it even ahead of schedule. An excellent start has been made on materials development and the design, and implementation of in-service training is well started. Progress in the difficult area of decentralization is occurring but is hard to judge this soon. Decentralization will be a long-term, gradual change. At the village level, there are numerous examples of learning groups, some of which are approaching the goals set out by the philosophy of Penmas. The degree of success in reaching the poorest and most needy sections of the population remains to be assessed. Achieving this last goal will ultimately determine the success of the reform in the more basic sense of the word.

### **Summary comments on reform in the context of non-formal education**

The analysis in the opening section of this article highlighted the clear limits of the capability of non-formal education by itself to have any substantial impact on the structure of society. Most non-formal education projects are small in size and have little power to make changes in the social or economic position of learners. While non-formal education can and has had some impact on the overall educational system in many countries, such changes have

rarely reached a magnitude that could be characterized by use of the word 'reform'.

Reform within national non-formal education projects does seem to be a possibility, although neither of the cases presented in this article has yet achieved reform on a national level. Most efforts at change in non-formal education today could be better classified as innovations, partly because most change efforts have focused primarily on pedagogical processes and associated learning materials.

Effective reform on a larger scale requires the development of administrative procedures that meet the dual needs of providing resources on a large enough scale and at the same time allowing enough autonomy and flexibility at the lowest levels to respond effectively to diverse local conditions. While such organizations have been designed in theory, attempts to implement them have not been particularly successful. There is an inherent conflict between the line of authority and accountability of large administrations and the philosophy of local initiative and control of the learning process. The Penmas reform plan contains several devices that are intended to address this issue. The emphasis on decentralization, if carried to the lowest levels, will be able to assist learning groups in meeting their needs. Likewise, the concept of the learning fund that will provide resources to the groups upon their request also has the potential for increasing the local control over activities. However, there may well remain an area of unresolvable conflict between the needs of local groups and the needs of the larger organization.

The reform effort of the PEA began at the lowest level and is intended to move upward to the region and then to spread horizontally to other regions. Only the first step in the spreading process has so far been achieved. A variety of factors outlined in this article hinder further spread for the moment. The reform of Penmas at the earliest stage also took place at the lowest level, focusing on the methods



and materials that have since become part of the basic philosophy and have been incorporated into the learning group. In contrast to the PEA, the next step for Penmas was to begin a large-scale national reform that would then proceed from the top downwards. Whether the end product of this national reform will ultimately result in an organization that can effectively facilitate the development and the support of learning groups remains to be seen. The Penmas reform is significant in that it represents one of a very few non-formal education projects that has the potential of reaching significant numbers of people. The PEA reform, even if fully implemented, would be unlikely to reach a population of more than 5,000.

Non-formal education is a concept that is still relatively new. While there has been widespread acceptance of the legitimacy of the ideas and a commitment to a non-formal education component in national educational systems, there exists only limited experience in attempting to develop and run large-scale non-formal education efforts. In this context, reform really takes on the meaning of experimentation and development of new systems for meeting the goals of non-formal education. The experience of the past decade has been instructive, particularly in revealing some of the limits to what can be expected from non-formal education. The next decade will bring a better understanding of what can in fact be accomplished on the national level by non-formal educational systems.

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