Participation in Nonformal Education at the Local Level: Ghana and Indonesia

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past 15 years, nonformal education has become an accepted part of the educational scene in developing and developed countries alike. The rapid growth in the popularity of nonformal education can be attributed to the belief that nonformal education could be used to achieve substantial reforms in the way education is provided. The philosophy of nonformal education also placed renewed emphasis on the centrality of the learner in defining and carrying out the educational process. Learner participation combined with techniques of consciousness raising offered an enticing and refreshing approach to the seemingly insurmountable problems of revitalizing national educational systems. Nonformal education seemed to offer the possibility of dealing with problems of equity, access to education, promoting effective participation by citizens in national development, decreasing the distance between the worlds of education and work, and promoting the development of rural areas. Has nonformal education been able to deliver on these heady promises, and at a scale sufficient to reach the large number of potential beneficiaries?

THE PROMISE OF NONFORMAL EDUCATION

Nonformal education was quickly seen to be a useful complement to the formal school system. Numerous small, local projects that

incorporated some of the basic concepts of the philosophy were begun. Other activities, long in existence under other labels (adult education, literacy programs, agricultural extension education, and youth activities) were seen in a new light and received renewed attention and resources. Gradually, ministries of education began to take increasing notice of these activities and efforts were made to revitalize and expand existing administrative structures to support them. In recent years, a number of countries have introduced administrative personnel at the national level to coordinate, upgrade, and plan national systems of nonformal 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 nonformal education could produce significant reforms. Visions of poor countries able to provide meaningful education to all their citizens within attainable resource limits by using new participatory methodologies and, at the same time, able to address issues of social equity were enticing indeed.

What were some of the reform goals promised by the application of nonformal education? Primary among them 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. Nonformal education held for these people the chance to achieve basic literacy and numeracy, the opportunity to learn productive skills, and a way to participate effectively in the development of their societies. Participatory methods would promote the development of citizenship skills as people learned to articulate their needs and to organize themselves to meet those needs. When combined with other inputs, rural nonformal education was seen as a strong accelerating factor in the economic and social growth of rural areas. When a component of consciousness raising was included, the less advantaged would be able to band together, articulate their needs and rights, put pressure on the existing political and economic structure, and thereby instigate changes leading to a more equitable distribution of opportunity and wealth. In short, nonformal education was expected not only to reform education but to have a substantial impact on the structure of society as well. Enthusiastic proponents of nonformal education did little to discourage these beliefs as various development agencies gradually began to support nonformal education projects.

THE LIMITATIONS OF NONFORMAL EDUCATION

To what extent could nonformal 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 naive. LaBelle (1976b) did an extensive analysis of nonformal education projects in Latin America that clearly suggested several important limitations. First, his inventory demonstrated that most of the nonformal 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 programs 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 nonformal education projects. Many programs 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 (1976b). He found that nearly all of the programs, even those inspired by Freirean philosophy and using methods of consciousness raising, were centered on changing the characteristics of the individual learners. He characterized these approaches as person-centered or psychological because of their emphasis on changing the attitudes and behaviors of the individuals. This is, in effect, a deficit approach, which suggests that changing characteristics of individuals will enable them to participate more fully in the process of development. LaBelle contrasts the person-centered approach with one that focuses on the system. A system-centered approach is based on the belief that inequality 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-centered approaches, he argues, leave to the individual the very difficult task of applying new knowledge and behaviors in a setting whose economic and political structure remains unaltered.

Viewed from such an analytic framework, the expectation that nonformal education activities will have an impact on basic social structures seems unrealistic. The reader can certainly supply reasons why most nonformal education projects have few opportunities to undertake structural changes, and therefore concentrate on person-centered 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 nonformal education on its clientele. They argue that nonformal 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 weaker for graduates of nonformal education than for formal education. Investigation of the more successful skill-training
programs often reveals that varying amounts of formal education are, in fact, an entrance requirement, thus excluding precisely those sectors of the population most in need of training. In some circumstances, then (Bock and Papagiannis 1976, p. 12), nonformal education may in fact reinforce existing inequities rather than reduce them.

Critics of nonformal 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 exert pressure on the system for more meaningful changes. If nonformal education is offered primarily to those who are poor and in low power situations, the question then arises as to whether it is not just a disguised second-class educational system. If the resources available to nonformal education remain a very small percentage of the total education budget, nonformal 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 programs, both formal and nonformal, 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, nonformal education is trapped in the same web of societal constraints as formal education. In fact, nonformal education is often handicapped by its lower resource 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 nonformal education, but viewed from a larger societal perspective, nonformal 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 nonformal education seems to have been effective on a large 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 orientating of formal education and the extensive use of various nonformal educational modes are components of the overall change strategy. In these cases nonformal education can effectively complement and support the new goals of society. By itself, nonformal education would have no hope of achieving such goals.
The hope that nonformal education could function as a means to reform the educational system of a country seems to have been false. Nonformal 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 on nonformal education has raised awareness of the limitations of the school system and of the large proportions of the population that remain unserved. Many of the programs based at formal schools have been innovated. All of these effects are positive but fall short of reform in the sense referred to in this discussion. As experience with nonformal education increases, it becomes clearer that it has many of the same limitations as formal education. On the level of local innovation and as an alternative way to use scarce resources, nonformal education has much to offer, particularly as more resources are made available and programs increase in size and scope. Yet at root, nonformal education seems to serve essentially the same role in relation to society as does formal education.

PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTEXT OF NONFORMAL EDUCATION

Although participation is central to the philosophy of nonformal education, the task of translating this concept into feasible organized structures and learning activities is one of considerable challenge. The challenge is even greater when the vehicle for implementing nonformal education is an already existing structure with a lengthy organizational history. The larger the scale of the organization, the greater the need for structured procedures to insure participation—channels of communication that allow learners and local representatives to be part of the decision-making process.

The ideal of participation is based on the belief that the responsibility for learning and a reasonable level of control over the means for achieving it should rest with the individual learner. This ideal sets a goal toward which nonformal education programs strive. Reality forces a variety of compromises and leads to a continuum of participatory opportunity (Evans 1977, p. 29). The first step above the zero point of no participation might be called nominal participation. At this level there exist structural forms for participation in the guise of meetings or general attempts to assess needs. Analysis of such forums reveals that little or no effective upward communication is taking place; rather, such gatherings usually become platforms for speeches by leaders that lead to a passive, recipient type of participation.

In contrast, consultative participation is characterized by mechanisms that allow decision makers to seek advice and suggestions from those involved. The initiative in seeking advice, the selection of the sources, and the extent to which the resulting inputs
will be used are all firmly in the hands of the decision maker. Consultative participation occurs when decision makers feel secure enough to seek advice, when they see potential value in the process, and when they have the time and resources needed to carry out the process. Typical examples of this process occur in many "enlightened" nonformal education projects, where staff meet with their learning clientele to assess interests and needs. However, the process stops there and the staff disappears with the data to make decisions about curricula, materials, and learning methods.

At the highest level, which might be characterized as responsible participation, clientele discuss issues, exert influence on behalf of one or another alternative, vote, and finally know by what process the final decision was reached. Participation thus extends to all stages of the project, not just the initial choice of topic or provision of requested feedback. Full participation normally leads to both an understanding of the activities and a commitment to them. Many would argue that the effects of a process of responsible participation are more important than the details of any particular outcome. Especially for nonformal education that seeks to mobilize the resources of rural areas, this last and most challenging form of participation is also the most desirable.

However, participation at any level is not free. Participation requires skills, time, resources, and patience on the part of the leadership and the participants. Learning effective participative behavior takes time and practice. In any given situation, the optimal level of participation must be judged by the trade-offs between costs and benefits. Such judgment depends on the goals of the activity, and of course, on who is making the judgment. Effective nonformal education definitely requires some participation by the learners. Without any participation, the chances of even moderate success are small and the likelihood of troubles requiring significant redesign is high. Even limited consultative participation, if done seriously, can significantly improve the chances of success for a project.

In the following sections, two different nonformal education projects are described: one is a small-scale, private organization with a basically democratic structure; the other is a very large, national-level organization that is highly centralized. Both are traced through a process of internal reform as they try to revitalize their structures and programs to meet the needs of their clientele, and to provide more effective means of participation at the local level.

THE PEOPLE'S EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (PEA) OF GHANA

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 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 programs. 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 courses in both Ghana Certificate examination (GCE) subjects and in more general topics offered under the rubric of liberal studies. In addition, branches cooperate 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 50 to 60 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 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.
Any attempt to understand the PEA brings one quickly to the Institute of Adult Education (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-Quarterly 1974, p. 6.). In effect, the PEA was created in part for the purpose of generating clientele for the university extension and adult-education efforts to the institute. The PEA helped to provide an organized body of part-time students with which the institute could work.

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, p. 131 et seq.). The institute has nine regional offices - the same as those for the PEA - 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.

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 since the PEA has little in the way of its own resources it cannot stray too far from its necessary dependence on the staff and resources of the institute.

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 preindependence 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 afterward. Dialogue within the PEA 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 emerged during the early 1970s. The
reawakened interest led to the appointment of several committees during the 1973 Consultative Conference. Recommendations drawn from the reports of several of these committees reflected the new goals sought for the PEA.

There emerged a fairly clear agreement among the consultative committees that the PEA needed to direct its activities toward an expanded membership and become more involved in the community. The goals also suggested that the route to revitalization of the PEA lay in recreating the level of local participation that had characterized the organization earlier.

Although these goals had strong support within the PEA, the IAE was obviously reluctant to move in this direction. The institute saw its own role as doing research on issues of literacy training and community development, but not getting directly involved in the provision of these services. The goals of IAE were set by the academic community, not by learner participation in rural communities.

A Process for Implementing the Reforms

At this point, the PEA began to work with a small technical assistance group from outside of Ghana (Kinsley and Bing 1978). The outsiders' need to define their activity led to a process of discussion from which emerged a working proposal to being implementing the reforms that had already been articulated by the PEA. 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. People directly involved in the projects would be invited to the conference to share their experiences and respond to questions. Such sessions would 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 center for application of low-level technology using local materials to produce needed
implements, and programs that dealt with cooperative education. Other ideas emerged as well during the next year of activity.

After the outsiders visited branches in several regions of Ghana, all parties seemed to agree 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 was 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 toward undertaking new efforts and seemed to be willing to work with the outsiders. 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 program and protect their own interests as well. The outsiders 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 program, and acceptance of new ideas there would lend legitimacy to any results achieved.

Development of New PEA Activities

Over the next two years, members of the PEA, working with several outsiders, gradually developed a series of miniprojects, or pilot efforts, of the kind called for in the original proposal. There were four activities, each of which developed somewhat differently, depending on the nature of the activity and the specific local conditions encountered. Each of the approaches involved learners directly and gave them a measure of control over what was happening. The four activities are discussed below in some detail to provide the reader with a sense of the issues raised by implementation at the lowest levels.

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
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process of training to develop the skills of these leaders. At the 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, first on an individual basis, and later through a series of weekend 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 weekend 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 their own articulated needs. The projects included beginning a series of literacy classes; building a middle school; developing a fledgling soap-making industry and an associated literacy effort; reconstructing 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 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 nonthreatening 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 different sets of skills were required for educational projects than for 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 materials and methods was developed and tried in the Ghanian setting. The combination that emerged was called Learner-Centered 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-centered 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 30 facilitators attended workshops, a dozen or more literacy classes were 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, feasible, and able to increase participation and motivation. At the same time, a number of needs were revealed. Taken by itself, the new approach was not systematic and extensive enough to teach full-scale literacy skills, but would have to be merged with some other procedures. Facilitators working with literacy classes needed to develop considerable skills on their own, needed regular support, and above all, required enough copies of materials to use. (Paper of any kind 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, the facilitators expressed a need to be paid. After extensive discussion, the PEA program decided not to pay them, 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.) Conscious effort was made to seek other forms of reward, including 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. These efforts were successful to some extent, but required a good deal of supporting effort from the PEA that might 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 traveled 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, 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 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 of 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 different from those needed to run a performance-oriented educational effort. 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 repairers. 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 Cooperative 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 cooperative 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 cooperative; 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 these needs. 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 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 favorably to formal school types of training, since many had memories of failure from their contact with the school system.

Considerable effort was required to determine the components of a workable program. 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 cooperation 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 in getting the central workshop plans moving and revitalizing the cooperative 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 became 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 cooperative 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 intermediary 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 cooperative 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 appeared to have strong points that would make them feasible as part of the overall PEA program. These models have been written up and the procedures described carefully. No systematic evaluation was undertaken. However, 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 analyzing objectives, setting priorities, planning programs and budgets, and finally negotiating with the USAID also added to the competence of the officers. As a result the Eastern Region was awarded a four-year grant.

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 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 bottom, 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 but the national secretary. The limitations of volunteer staffing have been discussed in several of the approaches described previously. During the period of experimentation there were full-time staff members – some outsiders, and several Ghanians 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 does have some advantages, however. Senior officers who hold high-level civil-service positions in regional offices of central ministries are 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
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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 effectively implement participatory reforms that lead to a more vital and responsive organization. The leadership of the Eastern Region and of many of their local branches has been able to develop a new series of models and use them. Although some outside assistance was involved, the amount was small and there was no substantial input of added resources. However, to spread these reforms to other regions or to the national organization, the basic problem of finding a more secure, long-term source of funding must be solved. On the other hand, this lack of resources has led to a minimal structure at the national level, and has forced the organization to remain responsive to the interests of its members at the local and regional levels. The challenge of finding more resources carries with it the parallel challenge of keeping the organization responsive and participatory if new resources are found.

THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION DIRECTORATE (PENMAS) IN INDONESIA

Penmas (Pendikan Masyarakat means community education) is a nonformal education organization substantially different in both size and structure from the PEA in Ghana. The PEA is an association of local chapters and has a variety of structures that facilitate participation, while Penmas is a centralized government bureaucracy with a history of functioning primarily to carry out programs mandated at the center. The two organizations represent opposite ends of the continuum of scale, with Penmas being one of the largest nonformal education agencies in the world, attempting to serve a population of nearly 140 million spread out over an archipelago whose breadth is comparable to the size of the continental United States. Both organizations have a 30-year history of work in the field of adult and community education and both have embarked on a reform process that emphasizes an increase in participation at the lowest levels.

The PEA began its reform at the regional and local chapter level and hoped to spread to the national level from there. Penmas is attempting a centralized reform process beginning at the national level and gradually spreading to the provinces and then to the districts. While the PEA effort might be characterized as seeking to reintroduce consultative and responsible participation, Penmas faces such an immense task that achieving even a fair amount of nominal
participation would be a considerable achievement. The Penmas case will be presented in a brief summary form.*

The Organization and Activities of Penmas

Penmas 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 of the world. Penmas has major offices in each provincial capital, a smaller office at each district head-quarters, and an officer in each of the approximately 3,000 subdistrict centers 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 center on 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 paid a fee to teach a particular course.

Penmas had been in existence for more than 30 years, but in recent times had declining effectiveness owing to 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 substantially to 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.

*A full discussion of the program can be found in a recently published book entitled Indonesia: Implementation of a Large-Scale Nonformal Education Project (1982).
The Penmas Reform Effort

Working with officials of the World Bank, the government designed a project that in its first phase covered the six most populous provinces (containing 70 percent of the population) and lasted for four years. Half of the over $30 million cost came from the government budget, and the other half was a loan from the World Bank. Included in the project was 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 goal of the reform included the following major points:

- Strengthening the management and supervision capabilities of Penmas;
- Establishing a program 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 nonschool 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 center and at the six provincial offices. When fully trained teams supported by appropriate facilities are established at the provincial level, training and materials development will start for activities at the district and subdistrict level. The reform strategy is thus one of beginning at the center 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, Chap. 5), there grew a Penmas philosophy of nonformal 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-centered 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 life 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 be able to serve up to a million learners each year.

Penmas Learning Programs

The reform of Penmas programs is focused on the Penilik, the lowest-level paid official. The Penilik seeks out tutors and facilitators and supports these volunteers in their efforts to promote learning by means of four different processes: self-study, apprenticeships, courses, and learning groups. The reform effort stresses these four types of learning to move Penmas away from dependence on the formal, teacher-centered course method. The new methods emphasize the importance of the learner and seek to use the learner's interests and experience as part of the learning process.

During the first phase of the reform effort, Penmas has evolved four different learning programs, using combinations of these methods. The basic education program uses a set of booklets (Paket A) to teach literacy and numeracy. This program is the cornerstone of the Penmas program, one that is relatively easy to start since the booklets provide most of the needed material. Groups can progress at their own rate through the booklets, choosing those that meet their interests after they have completed the initial twenty. (There are 100 booklets in the Paket A series.)

To supplement the first program, Penmas runs vocational skill training programs in home industry and marketable skills. Typical of the skills taught are baking, batik design, brick making, home gardening, and bicycle or radio repair. A third program focuses on women and is called family-life education. The content emphasizes knowledge and skills that women can use to further the development of their families and communities; nutrition, family planning, child care, and health are typical.

The learning fund, the fourth program, is meant to help convert learning activities into productive income-generating efforts. The fund provides loans of up to $240 to help groups develop small-scale
enterprises. Penmas encourages learning fund groups to engage in an integrated program of learning and working. Group members improve their literacy, accounting, and marketing skills as the enterprise develops. The learning fund is a significant innovation that holds real promise for the future, but also contains a number of challenges that will have to be successfully met.

These four learning programs provide a system that Penmas hopes will meet the variety of needs of the learners. Any learner can enter this system at any point and go as far as desired. The programs offer a variety of content and styles, ranging from structured classes to informal learning groups. The variety and flexibility of this approach, a major strength of the Penmas program, creates the potential to adapt these programs to meet the widely diverse conditions and needs found in the different provinces.

Issues Raised by the Penmas Reform Strategy

At the end of 1982, Penmas completed the first phase of its reform process. Considering the enormity of the task, the progress has been impressive. The major challenge that continues to face Penmas can be summed up as follows: How can nonformal education processes 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 meet the needs of learners in specific local situations? The Penmas learning programs described in the previous section provide a framework that has the potential to meet this challenge. These programs are now functioning well in some situations, although they have not been widely disseminated and the necessary skills and resources to support them have not yet been fully developed.

The key to further success lies in a substantial decentralization of the Penmas administration. During the first phase, emphasis was put on shifting decision making and resources to the provincial offices. These offices are now functioning well, with new buildings and facilities and newly trained staff in each of the six provinces in the project. The challenge is now fully to empower these offices to proceed with development and training of district and subdistrict offices. Continued decentralization is essential – districts on the island of Java often have more than a million inhabitants, and even subdistricts have populations ranging up to 50,000 – but it is difficult anywhere and particularly so for Penmas. Strong cultural and historical factors oppose such reforms. Decision making has long been highly centralized. Civil servants are thoroughly imbued with a sense of deference to their superiors in the administrative hierarchy. Penmas has struggled with some success to achieve an acceptable compromise between traditional hierarchies and the
needs of nonformal education programs to promote and be responsible to demands resulting from participation at local levels. Continued efforts must not get too far ahead of the level of tolerance for participation in the general political structure of Indonesia.

The philosophy of Penmas calls for problem definition and initiative for learning to take place at the lowest level of the hierarchy — the learning groups. Learning groups are to be guided by facilitators who, perhaps significantly, are volunteers and therefore not directly answerable to Penmas. If learning groups are effective and 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 toward 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 since they are the least-trained, lowest-paid, and lowest-status members of Penmas.

The remarkable degree of success of Penmas in the first phase is analyzed in an unusual evaluation document produced by the research section of the Ministry of Education in Jakarta. (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture 1981). The report documents the extent of success in materials development and in the ongoing in-service training of Peniliks. The learning booklets have been tested, revised, and printed in large numbers; current plans call for millions of copies to be distributed. Large numbers of supplementary learning materials have been developed at several of the provincial centers as well. Problems remain in the level of the materials and their adaptation to local circumstances; one particular problem in some settings is unfamiliarity with Bahasa Indonesia, the national language.

Great progress has been made in training design and in the refinement of participatory training techniques for training of Peniliks. Virtually all have received several intensive training courses, and all are scheduled for regular workshops every six months. Challenges remain in providing Peniliks with the skills needed adequately to recruit, orient, and supervise the facilitators and tutors. Peniliks also have trouble organizing learning activities for the most needy members of villages. They need greater incentive and support themselves to maintain their motivation in the face of a very demanding set of tasks. Reliance on volunteer assistants requires strong political support from government officials and a general acceptance of the importance of Penmas goals. Many of these challenges remain unresolved.
Penmas is now engaged in planning the second phase of the reform effort. In this task, trade-offs must be made between the politically essential demand to expand the new programming to the other provinces of Indonesia and the pragmatic need to consolidate the reforms already begun in the initial provinces and improve effectiveness at the lowest levels of the organization. The process of decentralization is still at an early stage and will require continued long-term effort to become effective at the district and subdistrict level. If effectiveness at these lower levels is lacking, participation will remain largely nominal, with solutions and programs coming down from the provincial level to the learners. The ultimate success of the reform will depend on the creation of a structure that allows enough freedom and flexibility at the level of the learning group and the Penilik.

THE CHALLENGE OF PARTICIPATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN NONFORMAL EDUCATION

The analysis in the opening section of this chapter highlighted the clear limits of the capability of nonformal education by itself to have any substantial impact on the structure of society. Most nonformal education projects are small in size and have little power to make changes in the social or economic position of learners. While nonformal 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 nonformal 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 nonformal 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 while 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 at 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 discussed in this chapter hinder further spread of the movement. The reform of Penmas at the earliest stage also took place at the lowest level, focusing on 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 nonformal 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.

The structural reforms of both the PEA and Penmas are at the heart of participatory process at the local level. In essence, participation is a demand for the sharing of power. Administrative procedure and organizational structure reflect the allocation of power and protect those who have it. Increased participation requires pedagogies, materials, and people in tune with participatory philosophies. But these alone are not sufficient. Participation in nonformal education programs is only possible when the overall organizational structure also supports local participation and has procedures for integrating the results of participation into ongoing programming.

Participation is central to the basic philosophy of nonformal education; both ideas are relatively new on the educational scene. While there has been widespread acceptance of the legitimacy of nonformal education in theory, there still exists only limited experience in the development and administration of national-level nonformal education programs. The experience of the 1970s has been instructive, particularly in revealing some of the limits of nonformal education. The 1980s will bring a better understanding of what can in fact be accomplished by nonformal education systems, and the extent to which responsible participation by learners can be an integral part of that process.