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ABSTRACT

The achievement of development goals in education (as well as other fields) has not been particularly successful. Among the basic premises which implicitly define education and the association between education and development, the following three stand out as being particularly misguiding: (a) the view of education as a system, (b) the belief that the burgeoning demand for jobs and privileges for which education is prerequiaite can be met only by offering more education, and (c) the belief that educational planning and administration can provide solutions to problems of educational inequity, inefficiency, and irrelevance. These premises have been promoted by the popularity of educational planning, which has not provided satisfactory solutions to the ever-widening development dilemma. Because of this, educators are turning to the study of educational innovation--to a functional rather than structural view of education. Some of the most expressive, yet least understood innovations are those occurring at the grass-roots level. These innovations usually promote goals cutside the dominant system and seek a different form of education and society. The way in which development and education are viewed in grass-roots social change in Brazil is of particular interest. To the peasant or slum dweller, development is a concrete notion, not an abstract model. The term "education" in Brazil places the ultimate value upon human dignity, suggesting that development must be defined as an interaction between individuals and society. (PB)

EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Avoiding the Pitfalls: Scene from the Bottom

by

Jan R. Van Orman

In the broad sense, development problems are the paramount issue confronting social science today, but the conventional and dominant metaphors of social science have not proven adequate to permit man to deal effectively with these problems. I would like to start with this assumption, widening the context of development to encompass a broader process of social change, and accepting the now apparent proposition that our past conceptual approaches have not served us well.

Certainly when we speak of education, our experience with achieving development goals has been rather dismal. As we summarize the knowledge we have accumulated about education and development planning it becomes clear that we have learned more from error than from success. Education "scientists" have gone through the stages of first trying to employ the traditional system more efficiently, then of tinkering with the systems, and finally, coming to the point

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of searching for new approaches. That quest has led to a questioning of fundamental assumptions, and to reappraisal.

If we are going to better understand the nature of development and education, a number of basic premises widely taken for granted need to be placed aside. Three that have proven particularly misguiding, in my opinion, are as follows.

First is the view of education as a system; the "sectoral" notion that educational units--formal and non-formal--may be viewed as integrated parts of a production system, responsive to external inducements and strategies of change.

Second is the belief that the burgeoning demand for jobs and privileges for which education is prerequisite can be met only by offering more education.

Third is that education planning and administration can provide solutions to problems of educational inequity, inefficiency and irrelevance.

I mention these premises because they implicitly define education, and the association between education and development, in terms which cloud the real issues and interfere with our coming to an understanding of this process. System approaches lead to <u>structural</u> and <u>institutional</u> definitions of education derived from conceptual abstrations or from analyses of past history. Efforts to merely expand the educational system perpetuate the inadequacies of "traditional" education.

Educational planning strategies derived from economic "growth" models are useful only for projecting the present system into the future. But the past does not provide a good model for the future.

The three premises I refer to have been promoted, in large part, by the popularity over the last ten years or so of educational planning. But while this planning approach initially promised the solution of many social problems, it is now being held largely responsible for the consequences of the quantitative expansion of education systems ill-adapted both to the development requirements and the social aspirations in most countries.[1] It is only recently that some of the frustrating, paradoxical results of the planned education "system" have become visible; for example:

1. While millions of educated people are unemployed and under-utilized, millions of jobs are waiting because people with the right education cannot be found.

2. While schooling is viewed as the route to economic and social recognition, non-school factors like parental influence, nutrition and peer group experience are proving more important in predicting school performance than are school related factors.

3. Notwithstanding the phenomenal increase in educational expenditures, the number of illiterate people has increased and educational opportunity and rewards continue to

be unequally distributed; the excluded find themselves even more marginalized than before.

4. While educational systems are considered to provide a universal format for learning, it is becoming increasingly apparent that formal education is not nearly as relevant or beneficial to particular individuals, to minority groups, to the poor, or to those who live in rural areas--that is, to the majority of those enmeshed in the development dilemma.

Trying to understand education through a planning perspective has not provided satisfactory solutions to the ever-widening development dilemma.[2] With this failing, the popularity of educational planning seems to have reached a relative eclipse, and education scholars are turning increasingly[3] to the study of educational innovation.

Innovation includes efforts to reform education, to substitute alternative models and means for the old educational establishment, to "de-school." Innovation can be conservative or radical, but it is an approach which departs from a new base, taking a <u>functional</u> rather than a structural view of education. Innovative approaches shy away from place-bound, time-bound, culture-bound notions of education, speaking more of educational content and process than of systems and outputs. A popular expression of this approach equates education with learning,[4] and in many ways, an "innovative" approach would seem to offer far greater

potential for learning about the dynamic relationship between development and education.[5] If, however, this approach is to provide a fresh perspective from which to view education, then the experience of innovative efforts must be described and analyzed.

What is this experience? Recent studies of educational innovation in "development" settings suggest these conclusions:[6]

1. Only a very limited number of the many innovation experiments have attracted public attention and been studied.

2. The majority of the existing studies of educational innovation are reported by international organizations (Unesco, International Bureau of Education, International Institute for Educational Planning, the World Bank, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, etc.).[7]

3. Reports of educational innovation do not represent geographic areas[8] or educational themes equally; the notion of "nonformal education," for example, dominates these studies.[9]

4. Descriptions of educational innovation follow no standard schema, making comparison of ideas and results (between programs, and with "traditional" methods and establishments) difficult; furthermore, few studies provide satisfactory data documentation, even fewer provide analyses of the data.

5. Finally, because innovations have occurred largely

without knowledge of other experience, these experiments tend to be localized and particularistic.

Part of the problem in learning about education from the experience of educational innovation is that the tools of social science are not well suited to describing particularistic activities. While most social science models have some descriptive usefulness, few serve to explain activity and almost none reliably predict. Therefore, if social scientists are to take advantage of the experience of educational innovation they must be similarly innovative in refining and selecting tools which are free to examine education and development as it is understood by those who experience these phenomena.

Nevertheless, development problems are of such a nature that social science has seldom found itself sufficiently independent of the policy-making establishment to accumulate substantial "disinterested" knowledge; it has always been vulnerable to the influences of its own ethnocentrisms and vested interests.[10] As scholars and practitioners give priority to the problems defined by governments and funding agencies, those questions naturally guide the focus of educational investigation and the choice of experiments.[11] Thus, reciprocity between the researcher and the practitioner have focused past attention on select areas and models of educational research.

Thus far educational innovation has been largely overlooked as a source of knowledge about education in development. But while planners and policy-makers have searched for explicative models of education and development, many educational innovations have proven quite successful. There is a great deal to be learned about the nature of education and development from these experiments and some of the most expressive, yet least understood are those fundamental innovations occuring at the grass-roots.

Grass-roots innovation is not widely known for a variety of reasons. Innovation which is initiated at the base-level is often undertaken independent of the wider authority structure. Grass-roots innovation usually promotes goals which are not those of the dominant system, it seeks a different form of education and society, and often appears radical and revolutionary.[12] Inherent in many grass-roots innovative attempts are more "pure" expressions of the true dynamic of change: conflict, value confrontation, ideological praxis and goals of resource redistribution. Grass-roots experiences have also been overlooked because their very purpose requires that they operate on the marginal fringe.

In my own experience witnessing grass-roots social change in Brazil,[13] I have been impressed with the way development and education are viewed. Development is not understood or discussed in the aggregate, nor in terms of

goals or projections. At the grass-roots, development is considered to be an active process which is only expressed, and can only be understood, when it becomes part of human experience. In other words, one discovers development dialogue at the grass-roots only after a social change dynamic has begun in a community--a process that touches upon peoples' lives and permits their participation with it. Once this occurs, once circumstance interrupts the rhythm of routine activities or the complacence of unquestioned values, people in an "undeveloped" setting express <u>determined optimism</u> that desired changes can be achieved; people believe their situation can be improved, they are not nearly so "fatalistic" as some say.

To the peasant or slum dweller development is a concrete notion, not an abstract model. From the grass-roots view, development is a personalized <u>response</u> to change events, it is the <u>meaning</u> social change has in the life of one being "developed," it is a dynamic and expanding learning experience, holistic and integrating. Thus, the definition of development seen from the grass-roots refers to a transactional process through which societal movement and human realization are made harmonious and congruent, it is an evolutionary process of social learning.[14] Development is the product when a changing external social world comes into contact with an individual's own world; its dynamic might best be described at the point

where these two worlds interface.

Also, because development-related experience must involve the individual, because it must give him some power over the change process, because it must allow participation with the change process, "consciousness-raising" approaches to promoting development are widely employed in grass-roots innovation in Latin America.[15]

I have also observed that education seems to be a nearly universal element of grass-roots development activity. Incipient social change efforts invariably include education programs as a fundamental aspect of organized change. But for the grass-roots practitioner, "education" has a special meaning, one which is better conveyed by the Brazilian use of the word.

"Educação" is not a technical word, it is a humanistic idea which includes qualities of courtesy and civility, and being literate, culturally sensitive, respectful and attentive. It is a reference more to man's character than to his knowledge, it conveys a respect for man and his culture. As a process, "educação" refers to the organic development of man's body and spirit, to an existential philosophy integrating reality (experience) with purpose (values). This view of education presents a perspective substantially different from the sectorally defined "education" of predictive development models. It places the ultimate value upon

the dignity of man, suggesting that change, i.e. development, must be defined as an interaction between individuals and society.

It is at this point that the grass-roots definitions of education and development converge, sharing a common ground for viewing man in the process of change.

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These are tentative thoughts, but thoughts which provide a starting point for taking a fresh look at education and development, seen from the bottom.

NOTES

1. This conclusion is being reached by more and more analysts. One critique which proposes alternative strategies for continuing to work within the present structure is John Simmons, Education, Poverty, and Development, Bank Staff Working Paper No. 188, Washington, D.C.: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, February 1974.

2. The shortcomings of education planning result from their narrow focus as much as from methodological limitations, i.e. almost exclusive attention to formal schooling, a predominant concern with quantitative expansion, confinement to global plans that offer little guidance for practical implementation, and failure to respond to realistic indivual and societal needs. (Philip H. Coombs, "How Shall We Plan Nonformal Education?" in Cole S. Brembeck and Timothy J. Thompson (eds.), New Strategies for Educational Development, Lexington, Mass: Heath, 1973.)

3. Michel Debeauvais, "The Popularity of the Idea of Innovation: A Tentative Interpretation of the Texts," Prospects, Vol. IV, No. 4, Winter 1974, pp. 494-502.

4. From the title of the landmark study of education in today's and tomorrow's world: Learning to Be (Paris: Unesco, 1972). For an application of this idea see Philip H. Coombs and Manzoor Ahmed, New Paths to Learning: For Rural Children and Youth, West Haven, Conn.: International Council for Educational Development, 1973. Pp. 9-24.

5. An interesting comment on this relationship is Nicholas Bodart, "Development--A Constraint or a Framework for Education?", Prospects, Vol. IV, No. 4, Winter 1974, pp. 483-493.

6. Debeauvais, "The Popularity of the Idea of Innovation," p. 499.

7. This is an indication of the prominent role of international organizations in disseminating such information, a role which also becomes important in placing popular definitions on education and emphasizing certain educational "values."

8. In a recent study of about a hundred texts describing educational innovation published by international organizations, 76 per cent of the cases reported concerned developing countries, and only 0.1 per cent of those were in Latin America (Africa represented 65 per cent of the cases, Asia 11 per cent). There is very little general knowledge of innovative educational experiments, particularly in Latin

America. (Debeauvais, "The Popularity of the Idea of Innovation," p. 495.)

9. Nonformal education has been popularized by large research financing from such organizations as US-AID, the World Bank and Unesco, demonstrating the influence of (quasi-)government interests and financing agencies in defining educational concepts and "guiding" research knowledge.

10. The problem with popular definitions is that they have been too strongly influenced by biased perspectives and vested interests, they have seldom evolved from a "pure," natural expression of reality (in the anthropological sense). Concerning these influences in education, see, for example, notes 7 and 9 above. For one comment on these influences in development see C. A. O. van Niewenhuijze (ed.), Development: The Western View, The Hague: Mouton, 1972.

11. This raises both ethical and practical questions. The intervention into the "science of education" has, in large part, been motivated by policy-makers' desire to overcome pressing social problems, i.e. relate training to "modern sector" job requirements, reduce educational expenditures, respond to the social demand for schooling. In this way "development" paradigms and their assumptions have had a strong influence in defining education. A. M. Huberman refers to these as "deficit motives." (Understanding Change in Education, IBE, Paris: Unesco, 1973.)

12. Within the context of change, innovation is by definition assumed to be desirable. On the other hand, the tendencies of institutions to resist change are well known. Because of this, the concept of innovation is frequently co-opted to the point where it becomes a "protean" of change rather than an autonomous activity acting upon change. It is a word subject to a great range of definitions and interpretations. One type of innovation which can transform the mode of behavior is innovation occuring as the result of self-initiative at the grass-roots. This form of innovation is relatively spontaneous, contrary to the "interventionist" model of planned change, yet is a "non-revolutionary" type of change.

13. While grass-roots initiatives can be found occuring "at the base" within institutions and even within governments, I refer here primarily to rural, non-directive, community development activities which promote human participation.

14. For a logical exposition of this definition of development see Edgar S. Dunn, Jr., Economic and Social Development: A Process of Social Learning, Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1971.

15. In Brazil the concept of "conscientization" was popularized by Paulo Freire (Educação como Pratica da Liberdade, Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1967) and has since expanded throughout Latin America. For a reference to this literature see Stanley M. Grabowski (ed.), Paulo Freire: A Revolutionary Dilemma for the Adult Educator, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education, Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University, November 1972.

16. A deeper analysis of the meaning of "educação" in Brazil is needed. Historic class distinctions may place certain opposite connotations on the use of the word among many of the "uneducated" people.