

BASIC EDUCATION AS THE FIRST STAGE OF LIFELONG EDUCATION: ASPECTS OF A WORKING CONCEPT FOR CURRICULUM INTEGRATION AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

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Present educational systems are inflexible due to their tendency to perpetuate the familiar. They escalate costs, promote institutionalization and have the notion of failure built into the system. Strategies for educational reform include such ideas as Basic Education, Lifelong Education and relating education to production.

In 1976 African Ministers of Education expressed belief that Basic Education defined in terms of minimum learning needs is the best means of providing mass education. Complementary systems must be integrated with traditional.

Key elements in a strategy oriented to basic needs are participation and integration. A learning-needs approach to curriculum planning should concentrate on e.g., health, food and literacy; implementation requires a new approach in teacher education, content of education and examinations. The further a school is from the capital city the less it can live up to planner's requirements. The "official" and the "actual" curriculum in any school need to be integrated. Local skills should develop as an outcome of participation.

Hypotheses concerned with a community's organizational infrastructure, its participation in planning, and its rural exodus require research and testing.

Les systèmes éducatifs actuels sont figés du fait de leur tendance à perpétuer une routine familière. Ils deviennent de plus en plus coûteux, incitent à l'institutionnalisation et insèrent une notion d'échec dans la structure même de l'éducation. La stratégie des réformes de l'éducation dans chaque pays doit porter sur l'éducation de base, sur l'éducation permanente et sur la relation de l'éducation à la production.

En 1976, les ministres africains de l'éducation ont exprimé leurs convictions que l'éducation de base – c'est-à-dire celle qui répond aux besoins minimum d'instruction – est le meilleur moyen d'assurer l'éducation des masses. Les systèmes complémentaires doivent être intégrés aux systèmes traditionnels.

Les points-clés d'une stratégie orientée sur les besoins minimum sont la participation et l'intégration. La planification d'un curriculum, pour être adaptée aux besoins essentiels, devrait se concentrer, par exemple, sur la santé, la nourriture et l'alphabétisation; la mise en œuvre exige une nouvelle approche de la formation de l'enseignant, des programmes différents et d'autres systèmes de sanction des études. Plus une école est éloignée de la capitale et moins elle peut se hausser au niveau des exigences posées par l'auteur du projet. Quelle que soit l'école, le curriculum officiel et le curriculum réel doivent être intégrés. La participation devrait aider au développement des ressources de l'endroit, des aptitudes humaines et de l'artisanat local.

Certaines hypothèses ayant pour objet l'organisation de l'infrastructure d'une

communauté, sa participation au planning et son exode rural, demandent à être soumises à des recherches et à des expériences plus approfondies.

Durch ihre Tendenz, am Gewohnten festzuhalten, sind die heutigen Bildungssysteme unbeweglich. Sie verursachen steigende Kosten, fördern Institutionalisierung und tragen die Vorstellung des Versagens in sich. Zu Strategien für Bildungsreform gehören Konzepte wie Elementarbildung, lebenslanges Lernen und produktionsbezogene Bildung.

Im Jahre 1976 sprachen afrikanische Bildungsminister ihre Ansicht aus, dass Elementarbildung – definiert als ein erforderliches Minimum an Lernen – die beste Lösung für Massenbildung darstellt. Komplementäre Systeme müssten mit den traditionellen integriert werden. Schlüsselemente in einer auf Elementarbedürfnisse abgestellten Strategie sind Teilnahme und Integration. Ein entsprechender Ansatz zur Curriculumplanung sollte sich zum Beispiel auf Gesundheit, Ernährung und Alphabetismus konzentrieren. Die Durchführung dieser Strategie erfordert eine Neu-Orientierung der Lehrerausbildung, Lerninhalte und Prüfungen. Je weiter eine Schule von der Hauptstadt entfernt ist, desto weniger kann sie den Anforderungen der Planer entsprechen. Daher müssen in jeder Schule das "offizielle" und das "tatsächliche" Curriculum integriert werden. Örtlich benötigte Fertigkeiten werden sich als Folge aktiver Teilnahme entwickeln.

Hypothesen zur organisatorischen Infrastruktur der Gemeinden, zu deren Beteiligung an der Planung und zur Abwanderung aus ländlichen Gegenden sollten durch Forschung und Tests überprüft werden.

"The most important thing is for us to stop being little missionaries' boys, professing other people's ideologies. We must ask ourselves whose philosophies we are teaching and in whose interest".

(Okot p'Bitek, Sunday Nation (Kenya), December 1977)

Politicians, educational planners and others concerned with education in the Third World countries are becoming increasingly and often painfully aware that investment in traditional education (as inherited from the former colonial masters) does not yield the anticipated immediate or even longer-term results. With the realization that poor developing countries are in no position financially and from their resources to furnish their rapidly growing populations with formal instruction, the quest is on for alternatives to traditional education.

World Trends

In 1968 Philip H. Coombs published his important book, *The World Educational Crisis* (Coombs, 1968). Now, ten years later, he has reviewed some of the major trends in world education since that date (Coombs,

1977). In his retrospective analysis, he still saw as the most fundamental cause for the inflexibility and inertia of present educational systems their overpowering tendency to cling to the familiar, and to perpetuate the inherited curriculum, teaching methods and all the other paraphernalia of the traditional system in the face of great changes in the composition, needs and life prospects of their expanding clientele. The crisis, in a nutshell, was a crisis of growing maladjustment between traditionbound educational systems and the rapidly changing world around them (p. 60).

Many others concerned with education nationally or internationally, but especially in countries of the Third World, also realized at the beginning of the 1970s that this situation demanded a complete rethinking of existing educational provision not in terms of expanding numbers, but in terms of a *qualitative* "educational revolution".

In this book, Coombs had been much concerned with the escalating costs of education. Other more radical critics, particularly concerned with the role of schools, voiced the crisis of confidence questioning the effectiveness of schools as vehicles of education (because of high costs and poor results) in such striking terms as *School is Dead* (Everett Reimer, 1971), *Crisis in the Classroom* (Charles E. Silberman, 1973), or *Deschooling Society* (Ivan Illich, 1973). Some of these critics argue that elements of the present system, in many countries, escalate the cost of schooling too much, and that education is often defined solely in terms of institutionalization, professionalization, and bureaucratization. At the same time, they claim, the institutions of education deny their services to the majorities they pretend to serve, and help to perpetuate the notion of "failure" by building it into the system. The radical school critics feel especially justified in their criticism since

- compensatory education programmes have not made disadvantaged minorities less disadvantaged (e.g. 'Headstart' in the USA);
- the myth of equality through schools, i.e. in the concept of democratization through schools systems, has proved to be largely unreal, especially when political and economic structures are left intact which inhibit democratization;
- the school, by providing a classification and labelling system (the less schooled are the less "developed", applicable both to countries and to individuals!) cannot *alone* create the conditions and provide the prerequisites for change and more equal societies.

Some of the present strategies suggested for educational reform, or revolution, include those advocated by Julius Nyerere, Illich, Freire, as

well as analysts from First World countries, but also international bodies concerned with education internationally, such as UNESCO and the World Bank. Some of the key elements in these various and often complementary strategies are outlined below.

The Tanzanian model, as developed by the State president, Mwalimu (Teacher) Nyerere, has as its main idea the development of community education through schools which both relate strongly to the actual needs of the community as a whole (and not only to part of the needs of a specific age group) as well as to the production process. The key phrase in this already ongoing experience is "Education for Self-Reliance"; some of the key ideas are the orientation towards the "development of the whole man", the transmission of traditional skills in society, rural regeneration and the encouragement of informal and nonformal learning (Nyerere, 1968).

Arising from a number of reports and investigations, but more particularly from a World Bank report in 1974 (IBRD, 1974; Phillips, 1974) the concept of Basic Education as the first stage in a process of Lifelong Education, has been much courted and discussed in the last five years. In the 1974 World Bank Report, we find an increasing emphasis and concern, nationally and internationally, towards the growing social, educational and economic gaps *within* societies, and the observable emergence and enrichment of the fortunate few. Two years earlier, in 1972, the International Commission on Education, convened by UNESCO, and better known, by the name of its chairman, as the Faure Commission, had published its widely acclaimed and accepted report, "Learning to Be" (Faure et al., 1972). The Faure report advocated lifelong education as the "master principle" of education. Some of its more important statements include the notions that schooling is just a part of education, a contributory part; that education, in view of current changes, can no longer afford to be time-bound, age, stage, and place bound, and that it is a natural process going on throughout life; that there are many paths to learning of which some may be more efficient or appropriate than others; also, that methods, material and delivery systems could and should be varied in accordance with the intended purposes and the means available.

Both these reports have to be seen against the realization that current school programmes are neither adequate nor appropriate to the real needs of the population, nor indeed attainable within current levels of financial, human and material resources in the face of increasing school populations, the needs and demands of the unschooled, and in particular

the needs of the rural populations of the Third World (cf. Sachsenmeier, 1977).

Coombs, in his 1977 retrospective, reviews most of the developments relative to shortages and pressures for expansion, efficiency and productivity, the financial squeeze, the relationship between education and employment; his review only accentuates the concerns of the authors discussed earlier. As to one of the positive aspects, Coombs notes

The brightest and most promising aspect of the current picture, in my view, is the broader and more realistic perception of education that has gained currency in the last ten years and permeated the world educational community. The concept of education as *learning* and not simply as schooling, and the view of learning as a lifelong process that not only can but must take place through many different channels and in a great variety of environments—some highly institutionalized but most of them less formal—have gained wide acceptance in recent years and have set educators and others to thinking in fresh directions. This is a very hopeful fact... there is encouraging evidence that these current ideas—actually very old ones in a new context—are beginning to be translated into action and will have a more enduring impact. Compared to most educational fashions of the past they are much more fundamental and much more radical, in the true sense of that term (p. 63).

Trends in Africa

Realizing the scope of problems in educational development and more specifically in the African context, the Conference of African Ministers of Education (UNESCO 1976) spelled out a number of important considerations and recommendations. We shall be especially concerned with recommendation No. 14. Since this recommendation has since exerted considerable influence on education policies in African countries, and has also had its effect on the activities of international and national aid agencies, it seems only appropriate to mention here some of its major aspects.

These relate to the belief that many African countries may not be able to introduce universal primary education in the foreseeable future, that drop-out rates in primary education are high, that adult education has the ability to cope with disadvantaged groups, that education should be for the masses, that basic education should be the first stage of life-long education, and might contribute towards the solution of the problems of disadvantaged groups, and that true development has to take account of cultural and scientific aspects and the active mobilization of all the people.

The Conference of Ministers of Education provided a number of useful guidelines, especially important among which in the present context was the belief expressed by the conference that "basic education is the best means of providing mass education."

In order to lend support to the concept of basic education, the conference of African Ministers of Education urged the African Member States not only clearly to define their basic education policies, but also

- to consider school education and non-formal education activities as complementary elements in an overall national effort to ensure each member of the society equal educational opportunities;
- to structure basic educational programmes in such a way as to allow for mobility between the school systems and non-formal educational activities;
- to consider the establishment of national councils or boards for non-formal education and to establish structures within their Ministries of Education for the purpose of promoting non-formal education as an integral part of national education as a whole;
- to set up governmental machinery to co-ordinate all forms of education and instruction which contribute to the development of basic education for all;
- to mobilize all available resources for the development of non-formal education activities;
- to make a determined effort to promote studies leading to the preparation and formulation of diversified strategies and policies thereby rendering it possible to optimize the efficiency and economic viability of the educational system in its quantitative and qualitative aspects;
- to commit themselves resolutely to the eradication of illiteracy among the masses of the people so as to make it easier for them to receive training and further training in their national languages in order that they may be able to participate more effectively in development and in raising their own standard of living, taking for this purpose the necessary measures to mobilize all available resources in development agencies, etc.
- to provide those adults who have received a basic formal education with facilities for continuing education in all the fields of activity which will enable them to play a more effective part in national development programmes;
- to mobilize the mass media so as to make them play a greater part in the raising of the cultural level of the nation.

In this recommendation, the conference has clearly indicated some of the more apparent difficulties deriving from an approach to education inherited from the former colonial powers, especially the fact that primary education cannot be provided for all. Complementary systems have to be sought for, and integrated with the traditional, formal delivery systems.

Basic Education: Towards a Definition

Basic Education is the label attached to one of the alternatives to traditional education. The term has been used with various connotations, e.g. as synonymous with pre-school education in Jamaica, or as denoting the compulsory school cycle, e.g. in Zambia, or as synonymous with a shorter than traditional cycle of education (Ethiopia) or as an alternative system separated from conventional primary school, or as an approach especially designed for rural areas (India), or as is the case in Tanzania, as a system for the acquisition of basic skills for both young and old, both in and out of school, etc.

However, it is important to stress that basic education is not a stringent concept but rather a set of interrelated ideas. Some of these are:

- community orientation of education;
- integration of formal, non-formal and informal learning recognized as part of a lifelong learning process with schooling just a contributory part of education;
- stress on the necessity for learners to acquire practical skills, including those of “learning how to learn”;
- involvement of all kinds of clientele, including children, adolescents and adults, in various kinds of formal as well as non-formal activities;
- and finally, overcoming of the subject-orientation of traditional syllabi and curricula.

Learning Needs

In the context of the basic education debate, the concept by Coombs and others of “minimum learning needs” appears to be highly relevant for the following reasons:

It is more and more accepted that education is not an independent phenomenon, or an end in itself, but that it has an important supporting role to play in national development in Third World countries, and more especially in the transformation of the rural areas.

Pertinent questions arise: What is national/rural development? What are its implications, social, political, economic, cultural, personal? How could education play its role more effectively? Are there problems concerning the relevance of education to the needs/demands/aspirations of rural areas?

The conclusion to be drawn from such questions is, among others,

that if education is based on well defined learning needs, it is likely to be more effective. Need, in this context, implies a discrepancy between existing competencies and what is necessary for new development. Further to the important statement in this debate that education is an essential ingredient, and an important partner in the overall development process, some preliminary observations can be made:

- Learning needs may be local, regional, national or universal.
- Newly required competencies, i.e. skills for “self help”, give rise to new national learning needs as has occurred in Tanzania for example.
- *National* learning needs are often formulated and laid down but there exists a certain difficulty in assessing and taking into account *local* and *regional* learning needs.

Participation has to be one of the key elements in an educational strategy oriented towards basic needs, not only on the part of officials, but also of the community and of individuals. There are two other important structural principles in this concept.

The first is *decentralization*. When talking about decentralization we have in mind in particular decentralization or differentiation as an answer to local needs. It appears from current evidence that national curriculum development centres can do great harm if they do not take into account local differences. But what are our concrete experiences?

Our insight into the deficiencies and the lack of coordination in certain projects makes us also stress the second principle, that of *integration*, both *horizontal* and *vertical*. Vertical integration in this sense means communication and dialogue among local, regional and national levels. Horizontal integration means that there has to be, within the overall process of development, an integration with agricultural development, with self-help with the political party, the welfare department, the health department etc. How do we achieve this? Who initiates it? Do we have any examples of integration in case studies?

Case Studies

In 1977 an international conference to discuss “learning needs in rural areas” was organised in Berlin (West) by the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in collaboration with the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) and involving the active co-operation of African local case study teams as well as of the African Curriculum Organization. It has attempted to contribute to a clearer

understanding of how to identify and fulfil learning needs.

The framework for the four case studies involved had been set at a meeting in Nairobi in 1976. The case studies dealt with innovative projects in three East African Countries, namely Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Two of the projects are located at school level, two are specifically non-formal. The project case studies have been reported in some detail in German, by Dr. Josef Müller (1977) of the German Foundation for International Development, Bonn; a comprehensive research report is currently being written by Dr. R.H. Dave of the International Institute for Educational Planning, Paris.

Other aims of the IIEP/DSE/ACO project were finding ways of identifying those strategic points of particular importance to educational planners, curriculum developers and researchers which have to be taken into account when attempting to create more needs-oriented educational structures, systems, procedures and techniques.

Since a detailed description of the case studies is obtainable elsewhere (a limited number of copies is also obtainable from DSE), the present author will only present some major findings in the areas of planning and curriculum development, as well as some major implications for research.

A new Approach to Curriculum Development

The learning needs approach has also many implications for curriculum development, too. Some of these implications and conclusions are:

- Curriculum planners should concentrate their attention on basic needs, e.g. health, food, functional literacy, attitude change towards work and development.
- They should emphasize strongly the necessity to integrate formal and non-formal education in curriculum development.
- A lifelong and lifewide strategy and structure should be found taking into account the process of identification of needs, the control of curriculum and its evaluation at national, regional and local levels and the assignment of responsibilities and limitations (including financial responsibility!) to each level. At the same time, such a structure should facilitate coordination both horizontally and vertically, and should be sufficiently flexible to respond to changes at central, regional, and local levels.
- In the implementation strategy for curricula, there is a need to include planning of a new approach to teacher education, as well as a new de-

definition of the role and function of the teacher.

- The planning of the content of education as well as the methods used in the teaching/learning process should allow for a number of alternative patterns.
- Examination systems for formal education need to reflect identified learning needs. This implies both more cohesion in the design of public exams, and some measure of decentralization, so that local curricula may be assessed locally.

Curriculum Integration

Curriculum Integration has to occur on a number of levels. Above all, there is an obvious need to remedy the discrepancy between what one author, Hugh Hawes (1978) has called the “official curriculum” and the “actual curriculum in schools”. It appears— and this coincides with the present author’s impressions and experiences—that the remoter a school is from the capital city, the more difficult its material conditions become, and the less able is it to fulfil what central planners and administrators expect of it.

A review of the curriculum will also have to look critically at some of the more unquestioned remnants of colonial times, such as

- the three month term
- the six or seven year cycle of formal schooling
- the age five or six entry
- the forty minute period
- not forgetting the school cap!

The question of the language of instruction will have to be dealt with more functionally, too.

However, already now there are some observable trends towards an *integration of subject areas*, including:

- Cautious and sensible attempts to introduce a greater measure of integration of programmes at low primary level, which have led to most English speaking countries having some useful and successful project in cooperative teaching at this level.
- The design of materials based on one subject discipline but specifically planned to feed across the curriculum, e.g. the lower primary booklets produced by the Science Education Programme for Africa (SEPA) are a prototype for developing basic scientific and mathematical skills

across subject boundaries. Various units, such as Construction, Water, Dry Sand and others are being used and adapted widely in Language, Social Studies, Science and Mathematics Syllabi.

- The formal integration of subjects hitherto taught separately into new programmes with new names; e.g. *Science syllabi* may include materials from the former subjects General Science, Nature Study, Rural Science, and Health Education; whereas *Social Study* might subsume History, Geography, and Civics.
- Development of a restricted number of units of study based on themes across the curriculum; e.g. the 6 week unit on Transport in Lesotho, or the School Garden unit in Botswana.

How planning can help

In view of the sometimes disappointing results of the case studies presented at the meeting, certain implications of the learning needs approach for planning, curriculum development and research as well as the implementation of development projects were formulated. If active participation of local people is desired (and the experience of the case studies presented showed that without this the projects were doomed to failure), a number of conditions have to be fulfilled:

- Planning should follow an evolutionary model which, within an open process, lets the details evolve with experience and provides increasing opportunities for participants to exert more control.
- To be effective, participants must have the necessary tools especially access to information.
- Planners must learn to shift from a role of planning for others to one of helping others plan for themselves;
- Planners need to develop a decentralized structure with different planning processes for different levels in the structure.
- Planning should create a potential for future development through the creation of programme planning, implementation and evaluation skills in the local citizens as an outcome of participation. Planning models for innovative pilot projects must provide the flexibility and tolerance for experimentation, and above all, sufficient time for the emergence of workable procedures.

Future Research

Thoughts on research and research cooperation are necessarily preliminary, since some of the prerequisites for relevant undertaking may not be obtainable, e.g. expertise, manpower and finance. For some of the suggestions, the present author is indebted to Prof. E.A. Yoloye, of the University of Ibadan.

In general, the case studies of the ACO/IIEP/DSE project and others have generated some hypotheses which need to be tested by more systematic research; for example:

- That the effectiveness of projects involving integration of school with community, formal with non-formal education, etc. is positively related to the existence of appropriate organizational infrastructure within the community.
- The effectiveness of participatory implementation of an educational project is positively related to the degree of participatory planning of the project.
- Integration of school with community reduces the tendency towards the rural exodus of school leavers and increases the tendency to take up occupations in rural areas.
- Effectiveness of participatory planning and participatory implementation of projects is related to specific characteristics of the participants, e.g. social positions in the community and level of education.

Exploratory Studies may include

- Research into alternative techniques of attitude development through the curriculum.
- Tracer studies of graduates of rural education/development projects with a view to feeding information back to curriculum developers.

Strategies for Research

It is also important to consider possible strategies for research. Designing research studies to cover the identified areas requires considerable planning. It has repeatedly been suggested at the ACO/IIEP/DSE meeting that this be a cooperative effort involving research institutions in Africa as well as outside Africa. An important suggestion for German-African collaboration has recently been put forward by Prof. D. Goldschmid of the Max-Planck-Institute for Educational Research, Berlin (1977). Three broad steps are needed for such cooperation:

- Identification and collection of existing literature related to the area of research. Such review of literature may help in suggesting models for research.
Identification and collection of literature should be done by the various cooperating research institutions.
- A research planning conference is needed so that participating researchers can work out specific research designs and data collection procedures.
- Execution of research which will include data collection, analysis and reporting. This step would probably necessitate one or two conferences for joint analysis and overall consideration of the research findings.

Outlook

Basic Education cannot only be looked at from within, so to speak, but the role of education itself in the development of Third World countries has to be defined anew, and much more realistically. From our discussion of the concept of Basic Education, it has become quite clear that education can no longer be seen as a value per se for the advancement of elites, but that it has to play a supportive role in the advancement and multi-sided development of the masses in Third World countries.

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