Non-Formal Education

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Non-Formal Education

Flexible Schooling or Participatory Education?

Alan Rogers

Comparative Education Research Centre
The University of Hong Kong

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Alan Rogers,
Universities of Nottingham & East Anglia, United Kingdom

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In this book, I have created a story. And I have chosen the language in which to clothe it. It is my own story. I do not expect you to agree with this story, but I hope that you will be able to understand it through the language I have chosen. And I hope that at the least it will challenge you to create your own story.

Roger Allen: Beyond My Pen, 2001

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List of Abbreviations

The following are the abbreviations which have been used most commonly in the text. The world of development and especially the world of the non-governmental organisations use abbreviations and acronyms extensively. Many are so well known that they have become words in their own rights and their initial meaning is sometimes lost (e.g. UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID etc); these have been omitted to ensure the list does not become too long. Others are so common as to be worthy of omission (e.g. EFA for Education for All or NGO for non-governmental organisation).

Abbreviations which have been used once with explanation or in one section only and which are explained in that section have also on the whole been omitted.

Abbreviations used in the references have also been omitted since these are explained in the bibliography (e.g. Coun Eur for Council of Europe).

Abbreviations within quotations have been given as originally written. Abbreviations which have themselves become the name of a programme (e.g. MOBRAL in Brazil, TOSTAN in Senegal or PROPEL in India) have also been omitted.

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACAPES	an NFE programme of primary schools in Senegal
ACCESS	Appropriate Cost-Effective Centres for Education within the School System (Action Aid programme in many countries)
ACCU	Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO, Tokyo
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AID	abbreviation for USAID adopted in USA
ANFE	Adult Non-formal Education
ANTEP	Association of Non-Traditional Education Programmes (the Philippines)
AUPEP	Adult Upper Primary Education Programme (Namibia)
BHN	Basic Human Needs
BLCC	Bunyad Literacy Community Council (Pakistan)
BNFE	Bureau of Non-formal Education (the Philippines)
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Council (usually known as BRAC)
BUNYAD	NGO in Pakistan
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education, umbrella NGO in Bangladesh
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, based in Thessaloniki, Greece

CERID	Centre for Educational Research, Innovation and Development, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
CESO	Centre for the Study of Education in Developing Countries, The Hague, Netherlands
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIE	Center for International Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts, USA
COL	Commonwealth of Learning, based in Vancouver, Canada
CONFINEA	International Conference on the Education of Adults, sponsored by UIE
COPE	Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education, programme in Uganda
DECS	Department of Education, Culture and Sports (the Philippines)
DNFE	Department or Directorate of NFE (various countries)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EMIS	Educational Management Information Service
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
FE	further education
GAT	General Agreement on (Tariffs and) Trade
GSS	an NGO in Bangladesh
HRD	Human Resource Development
ICED	International Center for Educational Development (USA)
ICT	information and communications technologies
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
IEC	International Extension College, Cambridge, UK
IIEP	UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, Paris
IIZ-DVV	German aid agency for adult education
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IRD	Integrated Rural Development
ISCED	International Standard Classification for Educational Data
MIS	Management Information Service
MOBRAL	a literacy programme in Brazil
MSU	Michigan State University, USA
NAMCOL	Namibia College of Open Learning
NFAE	Non-formal Adult Education
NFBE	Non-formal Basic Education
NFE A and E	Non-formal Accreditation and Equivalency Programme in the Philippines
NFPE	Non-formal Primary Education
NGO	non-governmental organisation
ODA	Overseas Development Administration (UK aid agency until replaced in 1997 by DFID)
PAR	participatory action research

PEER	Programme for Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction (UNESCO supported programme)
pers comm	personal communication
PRA	participatory rapid or rural appraisal
PROAP	Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO)
PROPEL	programme run by the Indian Institute for Education, Pune, India
PROTEC	programme run in South Africa
REC	Rural Education Centres (Swaziland)
SAP	Structural Adjustment Policies or Programme
SC(US)	Save the Children (USA)
SEAMEO	South East Asia Ministers of Education Organisation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
TOSTAN	an educational programme run in Senegal
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UIE	UNESCO Institute of Education, Hamburg, Germany
UNAM	University of Namibia
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VET	vocational education and training

Series Editor' s Foreword

The Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) at the University of Hong Kong is proud and privileged to present this book in its series CERC Studies in Comparative Education. Alan Rogers is a distinguished figure in the field of non-formal education, and brings to this volume more than three decades of experience. The book is a masterly account, which will be seen as a milestone in the literature. It is based on the one hand on an exhaustive review of the literature, and on the other hand on extensive practical experience in all parts of the world. It is a truly comparative work, which fits admirably into the series

Much of the thrust of Rogers' work is an analysis not only of the significance of non-formal education but also of the reasons for changing fashions in the development community. Confronting a major question at the outset, Rogers ask why the terminology of non-formal education, which was so much in vogue in the 1970s and 1980s, practically disappeared from the mainstream discourse in the 1990s and initial years of the present century. Much of the book is therefore about paradigms in the domain of development studies, and about the ways that fashions may gloss over substance.

Rogers begins the book by noting that the language of non-formal education is now back on the agenda, not only in less developed countries but also in industrialised nations. He adds that there is a new feel about the term – a very different tone from that of the 1970s and 1980s. Now, he suggests, the language sounds unsure of itself; and in some settings it is influenced by the discourse of lifelong learning. Rogers proceeds to analyse why the terminology faded away in the 1990s, and why it is being revived and in what form. The book contains fascinating analyse of discourse patterns in a wide array of contexts, together with analyses of practice on the ground in diverse settings.

In some respects, this book is historical. It shows changing tides and the evolution of ideas at local and global levels through detailed analysis of a huge literature. At the same time, the book is visionary. It sees beyond the changing fashions to desirable futures for education in a broad range of settings. Rogers is greatly to be applauded for this work, which CERC is delighted to publish in partnership with Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Mark Bray
Chair Professor of Comparative Education
Dean, Faculty of Education
The University of Hong Kong

1

Introduction

The Assembly recognises that formal educational systems alone cannot respond to the challenges of modern society and therefore welcomes its reinforcement by non-formal educational practices.

The Assembly recommends that governments and appropriate authorities of member states recognise non-formal education as a de facto partner in the lifelong process and make it accessible for all.

This is not the statement of some international agency dealing with so-called 'Third World countries' but of the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council; the date is not the 1970s or 1980s but December 1999 (Coun Eur 1999).

Non-formal Education (NFE) is back on the agenda on a world-wide scale, in both 'Western' and 'developing' societies.[1] In one of the most authoritative and comprehensive statements to date on lifelong learning, NFE occurs time and again (Aspin et al. 2001: 79, 117, 202, 208, 221 etc.). Speaking of lifelong education, one author states explicitly "this can become a matrix with formal and non-formal education" (Duke 2001: 510). Jarvis (2001b: 21) uses the term as meaning "any form of systematic learning conducted outside of a formal organisation". Courses on Nonformal Education have been introduced in the last few years in several universities in both the West and developing countries. The UNESCO Institute of Education recently ran an international seminar on 'Nonformal education: stock-taking and prospects' as well as regional meetings such as 'Non-formal Education in Morocco' (UIE 2001); and UNESCO issued a report on *Literacy and Nonformal Education in the*

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[1] I use the term 'developing countries' to indicate those countries which the UNDP has identified as low in human development indicators and which are in receipt of aid from the richer (mostly former imperialist) states – countries which collectively are often identified by such terms as 'South' or 'Third World'. I use the term 'the West' to refer to those richer countries which offer aid to developing countries and which hold themselves up as models of modern society. I hope that the reader will accept this usage on the grounds that there are no terms which are free from disadvantages and misunderstandings. The discourse involved is discussed below pp.13-17.

E9 Countries (UNESCO 2001b). In 1996, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) launched a major programme in non-formal education in at least 15 countries of sub-Saharan Africa, and many of these countries have established co-ordinating 'working groups on non-formal education' (ADEA-WG). Throughout the world, the practice of what is called non-formal education is increasing and widening in scope, often with donor support. For example in 2001 the World Bank ran an international 'Distance Learning Seminar: use of outsourcing in the implementation of Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Programs', the report of which opened with the words: "Increasing numb er of countries are preparing with partial finance from the World Bank non-formal basic education projects..." (World Bank 2001: 1), and in May 2003, the Bank was advised to extend its assistance to adult and non-formal education (World Bank 2003). In 2001, a conference was held in London under the title 'Non-formal Education in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone' (Musa 2001). The Africa Educational Trust states in its 2001 report, "AET supports non-formal literacy and vocational training programmes" (AET 2001).

The language of non-formal education then has been taken up again by policy-makers and practitioners, not only in the developing world but also among more economically advanced nations. But there is a new feel about this use of the term Non-formal Education, a very different tone from that of the 1970s and 1980s when the concept and language first emerged. The language sounds unsure of itself; and, influenced by the discourse of lifelong learning, it often uses the term 'non-formal learning' rather than non-formal education. However, the area of discussion is exactly the same. For example, a report on vocational education, *Making Learning Visible: the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Europe,* defines non-formal learning (carefully distinguished from accidental/informal learning as well as from formal learning) as "semi-structured", consisting of "*planned and explicit* approaches to learning introduced into work organisations and elsewhere, not recognised within the formal education and training system ... In Germany and Austria, the issue of non-formal learning is a new and unresolved one. Five years ago, it was hardly discussed. Today, a debate on the role of non-formal learning is gradually evolving" (Bjornavold 2000: 11, 56, 204, my italics). In 2000 the Commission of the European Union issued a Memorandum on Lifelong Learning and followed this up with a Communication 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality'. Both are founded on a comprehensive approach to all kinds of "purposeful learning activity, formal, ... nonformal ... and informal ..." (EU Memo 2000: 8; EU Comm. 2001). Since they both speak of non-formal learning as being "provided" and talk of "nonformal settings for learning", it is clear that the Commission is referring to what earlier writers called 'non-formal education'. And the policy is being implemented: the ALICE Project (2000) refers explicitly to NFE.

But the meaning of the term 'non-formal education' is much more opaque than it was twenty or thirty years ago. The 'great debate' on NFE, started in 1968 when Philip Coombs included a chapter entitled 'Non-Formal Education: to catch up, keep up and get ahead' in his seminal book *The World Educational Crisis: a systems approach,* dominated most educational discussions in the 1970s and early 1980s. This publi-

cation initiated a massive outburst of interest in NFE: "a debate has been raging about the role of nonformal education" (Ahmed 1982: 138). The description 'Non-formal Education' became for a time an imprimatur, and programmes bearing this title attracted substantial funding. Academic departments were founded on its currency, and their publications flooded from the presses. Most of the debate took place in the North America (there was rather less in Western Europe) and most of the programmes so labelled were located in developing countries (again, there was much less in the West). Research centres in NFE were established, many Ministries created Departments, Divisions or Directorates of NFE, and most educational evaluation reports contained sections devoted to NFE programmes. For nearly twenty years, the distinction between 'formal' and 'non-formal' education was the guiding light of educational planning, funding and evaluation in developing countries. It is possible that no other educational programme or ideology (not even 'popular education') had received such intensive discussion and such widespread support.

However, currently it is often not clear whether the term as used refers to learning programmes for adults or for children. Today's NFE in many contexts means alternative forms of primary schooling for out-of-school children – the street children of Nairobi, the girls excluded from schools in Pakistan, the drop-outs of Botswana – rather than less formal learning programmes for adults. Flexible modes of providing schooling for young people is now what many governments look to non-formal education to fulfil, especially in the light of growing populations, the escalating costs of education combined with more limited funding, the search for partnerships with civil society, and new educational targets set internationally. In some countries, the Departments or Directorates of Non-Formal Education set up in the 1970s to provide literacy training and basic education for adults are being pressed to meet the educational and training needs of young people. This is in part the result of global pressures on education. The Education for All (EFA) Programme launched in 1990 with a commitment to equalise the educational needs of young people and adults has come to concentrate on education for young student-learners, and pressure groups such as the Global Campaign for Education have led to an increased focus on primary education. 'Non-formal education' often means 'alternative primary or basic schooling for out-of-school youth'.

The language of NFE then is today a force in many educational policy statements, but the clarity behind the idea seems to have been lost. A once powerful concept has lost its way. This book seeks to examine this phenomenon. It raises the question why NFE had such great popularity and power for a short period, why it died and why it is being revived and in what form. It queries whether the language of NFE should be abandoned, whether its abolition would leave something of a vacuum, or whether anything of value would be lost, thrown out with the changed discourse. It asks whether there is or can be any unified concept underlying the wide range of programmes labelled 'non-formal education' today.

The structure of the book

This study of non-formal education, past and present, falls into four sections. Since "the genesis of social practices and discourses is ... of crucial importance for an understanding of them" (Cooke & Kothari 2001: 169, 172), a 'genealogy' of NFE is needed. The first part thus explores the cultural and educational contexts from which the debate arose and from which NFE took the shape it did. The second section describes the debate about NFE which took place in the 1970s and 1980s and the issues which arise from it. The third section looks at a wide range of programmes which today call themselves 'non-formal education', to try to assess what the term 'non-formal' has come to mean in the field. The final section addresses the disparity between the theory of NFE and the practice of NFE and seeks to discover if there is some unifying principle or whether the term should be abandoned as unmeaningful or unhelpful – whether the concept has any value as a tool of analysis and/or as a tool of planning. It proposes a possible new paradigm by which NFE today can be assessed.

For some people today, the term 'non-formal education' is passé. In a 1999 survey of changing international aid to education (King & Buchert 1999), the phrase is carefully eschewed in a way which would have been unthinkable twenty years previously. The main discourses around education talk about basic, continuing, recurrent or lifelong education or learning. USAID (2001) in its review of basic education in eleven countries of sub-Saharan Africa uses the language of decentralisation instead of NFE. The sound of the words 'non-formal education' echoes uncomfortably through some of the corridors of academic discussion and educational policy-making today, although others continue to use them for lack of a better alternative.

Indeed, in some parts of the world, the term 'non-formal education' is decidedly unpopular. I remember a senior figure in the Namibian Ministry responsible for Basic Education saying, "We don't use the term 'non-formal' here. It smacks of 'non-white' ". Such a comment reveals the assumption that the term 'formal' in educational discussions carries with it positive connotations, and that therefore 'non-formal' implies a more negative image. But there are others who feel exactly the reverse; that the concepts which lie behind the word 'formal' in education are the enemy, and that 'non-formal' is the celebration of liberation, throwing off the shackles of formality which have for so long prevented education from being education. They would argue that 'non-formal' is not just everything that is left over after the formal system has been created and resourced. Rather – precisely because it is non-formal – it is the freedom from everything that is not within a very restricted (and restrictive) set of walls. These people would see 'non-formal' as much closer to 'non-violent' with its connotations of revolution than to 'non-white' with its images of oppression.

Nevertheless, a concept which was born within the world of development assistance has now become relevant within a wider arena, in particular in Western contexts. Among the many characteristics of the discourse of lifelong learning are two features which relate directly to our discussions. First, the discourse of lifelong learning renders the distinctions between the traditional divisions of education

(primary, secondary and tertiary/higher) less important, it "presupposes an integrated, holistic and seamless approach to the whole of education" (Aspin et al. 2001: xliii). The concept implies the essential unity of learning in different areas and at different stages of life (Bjornavold 2000). Secondly, lifelong learning sets out to identify the wide range of learning opportunities throughout life, especially those outside the existing spheres of school and college – opportunities in the workplace, in voluntary movements, in religious activities, in the commercial world etc.. It is in the course of this reshaping of the educational landscape – first unifying and then sub-dividing the world of planned learning opportunities – that the use of the term 'non-formal' has been revived within the lifelong learning discourse by agencies such as OECD and the European Union. NFE today then springs from a different root from the 1970s. The reintegration of the whole field of education brought about by the discourse of lifelong learning has at the same time led to a search for terminology which covers "alternative educational programmes", especially for marginalised, excluded and/or subordinated populations.

Why this book was written

It is this changing landscape that has caused me to write this book. It comes out of the interaction between two kinds of activities in which I have been engaged over the last thirty or so years. On the one hand, since 1985 I have been helping international post-graduate students to learn about non-formal education, a subject which they seem to appreciate highly and regard as important for their own understanding of the theory and practice of education. In the course of this teaching, I discovered that there is no textbook on NFE for students apart from the seminal works of Coombs and Ahmed in the 1970s.[2] Several reports by the IIEP contain significant material but these are usually dated, short and closely context-dependent, so that the broader concepts have not been addressed. The series of studies which Michigan State University at East Lansing and the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (USA) produced in the 1970s and 1980s have ceased. The subject still ranks among the topics to be included in international encyclopaedias of education, but these articles primarily restate old orthodoxies. An occasional paper in an academic journal or seminar report has also appeared. But there has been nothing substantial to disperse the conceptual fog. I have therefore been pressed by a number of colleagues, staff and students to write something to fill what both they and I see as a real gap. This book is intended as a contribution to the literature on adult, non-formal, lifelong education. It has arisen directly from my teaching and has been written in large part for students, although I hope that others will also find it useful.

More importantly, this book springs from my concern with programmes of non-formal education in developing countries. Since the early 1970s, I have been privileged to work in many different NFE activities – developing project proposals, training facilitators, creating teaching-learning materials, conducting evaluations and research.

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[2] I regret that information about the first full study of NFE to appear since the 1970s, D. Poizat, *L'éducation nonformelle* published by L'Harmattan, collection Education comparée, 2003, reached me too late to be used in the preparation of this book.

Most of this work has been in south Asia but it has extended to Africa with something of a toehold in Latin America. What I discovered here is the gap between the theories of NFE which the agencies employed and the practice of NFE. It seems to me that most NFE programmes today are in danger from two things – either they lack a clear conceptual framework, or they live with a major distance between what they claim to do in the name of NFE and what they in fact do in the field.

Theory and practice

In this analysis, I have been heavily influenced by the arguments of Argyris and Schon (1976; see also Long & Long 1992). They pointed out the difference between what they call 'espoused theory' and 'theory in use'. Espoused theory is what we *say* we are doing, often with complete faith in our ability to fulfil these aims and ambitions. Theory in use is what in fact underpins the actions which we take, what we actually *do*. There is frequently a considerable gap between these two theories. We may say that our programmes are built on a particular ideal – for example, liberation and justice, or participation, or that we aim at certain specific outcomes – at greater equality, greater inclusiveness, empowerment of the participants, for example. Yet our activities may reveal that in fact we are often trying to defend the *status quo*, the dominance of educationalists, for example, and that we are frightened of the true liberation of those who participate in our programmes and even more of those who do not. What we do may on occasions contradict what we say or even what we believe we are doing.

This is particularly true in the case of NFE. The use of the term 'non-formal' in educational contexts has become increasingly unfocused. Some agencies apply the term to programmes which others would not call 'non-formal', and they may find it hard to describe exactly what they mean by the term. The cause of this gap seems to me to be the vacuum which exists in reconceptualising NFE more than 25 years after the basic work had been completed on defining the term and developing educational programmes based on the implications of those definitions. For the discourses which surround NFE have changed substantially over the intervening period, and despite the amount of ink spilt over the meaning and implications of the term, there is no source to which those who are responsible for the development and/or implementation of programmes in the field can turn to help them to clarify their own minds.

A discussion which seeks to unravel the various strands of the tapestry which has been and now is non-formal education will thus be of value – to students who have no textbook; to planners, administrators and policy makers who create programmes which they call non-formal, not quite sure whether what they mean by 'non-formal' is what others would recognise as being 'non-formal'; to practitioners who try to develop on the ground approaches which they believe will fit their own understanding of 'non-formal' education; to evaluators and researchers as they assess programmes against some kind of criteria of non-formality; and to all of us working in educational and training programmes, to see whether, when we promote what is called 'nonformal education', we are in fact implementing clearly identified educational principles.

Policy and practice: I believe that it is important for us to do this. For the effectiveness of all that we do depends on the clarity with which we hold the logic frame of our chosen task. We will achieve more if we are clear about what it is that we are trying to do and the context within which we are working. Commitment alone will not be enough, if we are vague about our aims and strategies. It is arguable that if we provide educational programmes which we call 'non-formal', we shall diminish our effectiveness to the extent that we are unclear about what we mean by the term.

This book then is offered as a contribution not just to academic analysis but to the clarification of policy and practice in the field of non-formal education. It is in part concerned with different and frequently clashing discourses, with discourses created within one socio-cultural context and transferred into another. But it is also concerned with the practice of NFE, with the creation of policies and the implementation of non-formal programmes in the field.

A non-formal book?

And here we run into a problem – how a book dealing with non-formal education can itself be 'non-formal'. Without turning the book into an interactive training manual or study guide as in distance learning programmes, it is not easy to develop true interaction between myself (the author) and the reader/user. My hope is that everyone who picks up this book will not just read it but will use it in their own way – picking and choosing, approaching the sections in any order according to their immediate interests and concerns. It can of course be read straight through in the order in which it is set out – an order that has arisen from several years of teaching the subject. But it may not meet your needs at the moment, in which case I hope you find the index adequate for your purpose.

Defining non-formal education

There is however one area of interactivity which may be suggested at the start. Everyone reading this will have some idea of what they mean by 'non-formal education'. It might be best to begin with that idea, however vague it may be. I normally ask the participants in my courses to set down in writing what they believe NFE is, so as to focus their mind before we start. I suggest that there are at least two ways in which this can be done:

a) they can choose two or three *examples of educational or training programmes* which they know well and which they would say (at least to themselves) are 'non-formal'. They can then draw from these case studies what appear to be the essential characteristics, the common principles of NFE;

b) or secondly they may wish to start by drawing up their own *definition of non-formality in education* and see if they can find some programmes

which fit that definition, which display the essential characteristics and principles of NFE.

This is not as easy as it looks, but you will probably find it worth a try, despite the time you will need to spend on it.

Such an exercise reveals that there is a great deal of uncertainty about the meaning of non-formal education, both in theory and practice. So let me admit right from the start that this book does not aim at increasing certainty by passing on my own views to the readers/users (although my own views will be expressed, sometimes quite strongly). Rather, it is meant to raise many questions, to challenge you to explore for yourself some of the literature on NFE and associated subjects, to evaluate some of the programmes which you know which may or may not call themselves non-formal – to help you to clear your own mind, to come to your own conclusions about what NFE means in your own context. To adapt the manifesto of another recent book on education, this book is intended to be "a series of explorations with critical intent", without attempting to "force one synthesis":

> We do not believe it desirable to do this at the moment... We are more concerned to keep educational theory alive and well. We are prepared to live with the uncertainties, equivocations, and live controversies which necessarily characterize any healthy discipline. We do not believe that the practice of education can be well served in the long run by the intellectual inertia of anti-theoreticism. It strikes us as ... ironic... that we should find ourselves invited ... to stop thinking imaginatively and innovatively about education – to stop thinking about the very institution whose job it is to sustain and reproduce a thinking society. (Blake et al. 1998: 19)

The aim of this book is to encourage all of us to think more deeply about what we mean when we term any programme 'non-formal', either in policy documents or in the field.

The collection of material for this book has taken many years, particularly during a number of visits to different countries. I am grateful to the many persons who suffered my interviews or who sent me material relating to their programmes. While at the University of Reading, I enjoyed many discussions with staff and especially students under the watchful eye of Keith Watson. Various colleagues such as Anna Robinson-Pant, Brian Street and Diana Coben contributed to make this book richer. I was fortunate to spend six months at the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts, an early centre of innovation in NFE, and although the staff I hoped to work with were not present during this stay, the kindnesses I received, the interaction with the students, and the resources available enabled me to get most of the framework of the book completed. The writing has taken longer than I planned because of the pressure of other activities, mainly at the University of Nottingham. I must thank all of these for their help, especially the students in the seminar group at

Amherst who challenged every statement I made and refused to answer for me the questions I posed. But the faults remain mine.

Part I

The Context

> *... certain ideas burst upon the intellectual landscape with tremendous force. They resolve so many fundamental questions at once that they seem to promise that they will resolve all fundamental problems, clarify all obscure issues.* (Geertz 1993)

In this first Part, I argue that the concept of NFE arose during a time of two major sets of changes.

The first were occurring **within the field of development**:

a) a move away from an elitist modernisation-and-growth approach to development to one based on mass integrated rural development and social change; and
b) a move away from a deficit (needs-based) paradigm of development to a paradigm based on disadvantage, an understanding that development consisted as much of changing the structures of society as of providing inputs.

The second set of changes (closely related to these changes in development approaches) were taking place in regard to new analyses of **education in developing countries**, with calls for and programmes of reform to enable education to achieve developmental goals more effectively.

It is out of this context that the discourse of non-formal education was created. This section examines first the developmental changes and secondly the educational reform agenda at that time.

2

The Development Context: The Call for Reorientation

> *In the early 1970s, international development agencies announced a concerted effort to address the plight of the 'poorest of the poor' in less developed countries. These agencies chose the term nonformal education to refer to local-level programs for the adult poor.* (LaBelle & Ward 1994: 4141)

The debate about non-formal education debate arose at the end of the 1960s and persisted during the 1970s within the context of discussions on education in developing countries. There was very little discussion at that time about NFE per se in relation to more industrialised societies. It is important to appreciate this context of development, including the changes which have taken place in the understandings, and to a lesser extent in the practice, of development over the intervening years for any understanding of what NFE meant at the time.

DEVELOPMENT AS DISCOURSE

'Development', in the sense of "the idea that deliberate action can be undertaken to change society in chosen directions considered desirable" (Youngman 2000: 240), has been operating on a global scale since the late 1940s. Recent examinations have suggested that the field of activity known as 'development' is in fact a construct of Western aid agencies; what can be seen as members of a well-funded aid industry created the concept of development (Mitchell 1991). They defined the societies which they termed as 'under-developed', they formed 'the Third World' (Crush 1995; Escobar 1995; see King & Buchert 1999: 183-184) through a dichotomy of 'them' and 'us', of 'modern' and 'traditional' (Leach & Little 1999: 295-296), implicitly setting such countries in juxtaposition with what was seen as a typified Western way of life (Cooke & Kothari 2001: 12, 170). More recently they have divided this 'Third World' into two categories, distinguishing the so-called 'highly indebted poor countries' (HIPC) from the rest.

This is not of course the language of the 'developing societies' themselves, although in their desire for aid assistance, they have often come to use and sometimes

even internalise the discourses of the West. And the discourses which the Western agencies (both government and NGO) have employed have helped to create the activities they approve of and engage in, including non-formal education (Robinson-Pant 2001). We therefore need to look at the discourses within the development field at this time in order to understand non-formal education (de Beer 1993: 343-363).

Discourses and Development

Discourse is not of course the same as language.

> A discourse is a collection of statements (involving knowledge or validity claims) generated at a variety of times and places, in both speech and writing, ... which hangs together according to certain principles as a unitary collection of statements. A great variety of discourses can be generated within any one language. And moreover, a single discourse can include statements in a variety of different languages. (Think of scientific discourse). (Blake et al. 1998: 14)

But a discourse is more than this. "A ' discourse' is not just a set of words, it is a set of rules about what you can and cannot say and about what" (Apthorpe & Gasper 1996: 4).[1] "Discourse not only includes language, but also what is represented through language" (Grillo & Stirrat 1997: 13). Discourses are "power-knowledge configurations, systems of ideas and practices that form the objects of which they speak. Discourses are not about objects but rather constitute them ' and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention' " (Hall 1999: 134 citing Foucault 1972: 49).

One of the most detailed analyses of discourse has come from the writings of James Gee.

> A Discourse is composed of ways of talking, listening, reading, writing, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and using tools and objects, in particular settings and at specific times, so as to display or to recognize a particular social identity... The Discourse creates social positions (or perspectives) from which people are ' invited' ... to speak, listen, act, read and write, think, feel, believe and value in certain characteristic, historically recognizable ways, in combination with their own individual style and creativity.
>
> There are innumerable Discourses in modern societies: different sorts of street gangs, elementary schools and classrooms, academic disciplines, police, birdwatchers, ethnic groups, genders ... and so on. Each is composed of some set of related social practices and social identities (or ' positions'). Each Discourse contracts complex relations of

[1] I owe this and other references to Dr Anna Robinson-Pant. I am greatly indebted to her in what follows, both through her paper presented at the Uppingham Seminar 2000 and through several exchanges on this and other matters.

> complicity, tension and opposition with other Discourses ... Discourses create, produce and reproduce opportunities for people to be and recognize certain kinds of people. (Gee 1996: 10)

Few people actively make a choice or decide to use this or that discourse. It is more a question of identifying when a discourse (as part of communicative practices) fits a particular situation at a point of time and with a particular set of people. For a discourse is an act of people: "Discourses are composed of people, of objects (like books), and of characteristic ways of talking, acting, interacting, thinking, believing, and valuing, and sometimes characteristic ways of writing, reading, and/or interpreting ... Discourses are out in the world, like books, maps and cities" (Gee 1992: 20).

And a discourse creates a community of people:

> ... any Discourse is defined in terms of who is and who is not a member, and sometimes in terms of who are 'higher' and 'lower', more 'central' and 'less central' members ... any Discourse is ultimately defined in relationship to and, often, in opposition to, other Discourses in the society ... If we define 'ideology' as beliefs about the appropriate distribution of social goods, such as power, prestige, status, distinction, or wealth, then Discourses are always and everywhere ideological. Each Discourse necessitates that members, at least while they are playing roles within the Discourse, act as if they hold particular beliefs and values about what counts as the 'right sort' of person, and the 'right' way to be in the world, and thus too, what counts as the 'wrong' sort and the 'wrong' way... (Gee 1992: 142; see also Gee 1999)

A discourse however not only creates new models of the world; it also determines the range of activities which the members of the discourse community approve of. The point of a discourse is not just to alter the way we look at the world but to alter the world. "A discourse (e.g. of development) identifies appropriate and legitimate ways of practising development as well as speaking and thinking about it" (Grillo & Stirrat 1997: 13). A discourse "is not the expression of thought; it is a practice, with conditions, rules and historical transformations. To analyze development as a discourse is 'to show that to speak is to do something – something other than to express what one thinks; ... to show that to add a statement to a pre-existing series of statements is to perform a complicated and costly gesture' " (Escobar 1995: 216, citing Foucault 1972: 209). "The discourse of development is not merely an 'ideology' that has little to do with the 'real world' ... The development discourse has crystallized in practices that contribute to regulating the everyday goings and comings of people in the Third World. How is its power exercised in the daily social and economic life of countries and communities? How does it produce its effect on the way people think and act, on how life is felt and lived?" (ibid: 104). "Discourses are ... multi-layered, verbal and non-verbal, they are rule-bound, the rules being either manifest or latent, they determine actions and also manifest them, they are embedded in forms of life (cultures), of which they are simultaneously co-constituent" (Wodak 1996: 17).

Because of this, a discourse contains within itself diverse and even conflicting viewpoints. An example sometimes cited is that of the discourse of criminology: "It is possible [within that discourse] both to affirm and deny a connection between crime and mental pathology. What is shared by both those who affirm and deny this are the concepts of crime and pathology and, moreover, access to research and argument both supportive and conflicting but couched in similar terms and referring to shared criteria for judgment of the evidence" (Blake et al. 1998: 14). Any discourse can in fact become a site of contest between different perspectives. And discourses change over time and under stress. The members of a discourse community are not "trapped within some coherent but unpliable metaphysical framework" (Blake et al. 1998: 14-15); they are active creators of that discourse.

Discourses of Development: The analysis of development in the light of discourse was elaborated most effectively in a collection of essays edited by Jonathan Crush (1995) and in the writings of Arturo Escobar (1995), drawing on the works in socio-linguistics of writers and philosophers such as Foucault (1972). They see development as a construct imposed on or 'sold to' developing countries by Western agencies so that the inhabitants of such countries come to define themselves in the terms of this discourse (as 'under-developed', for example).

> ... development discourse is embedded in the ethnocentric and destructive colonial (and post-colonial) discourses designed to perpetuate colonial hierarchies rather than to change them. It has defined Third World peoples as the 'other', embodying all the negative characteristics (primitive, backward and so forth) supposedly no longer found in 'modern', Westernized societies. This representation of Third World realities has provided the rationale for development experts' belief in modernization and the superiority of the values and institutions of the North. (Parpart 1995a: 253)

> Development 'discourse', then, is more than a new way of labelling the ideologies behind the various trends in development policy ... it is a 'regime of representation' that 'constructs the world' (Crush) and 'constructs the objects of development.' It is the framework which enables us to see and helps us to assign value to those things that we have seen. (Robinson Pant 2000)

Thus the definitions of 'developing countries' and of 'development' themselves created a grouping of nations and states who had nothing else in common. But at the same time, the definition created a sense of common identity among these disparate states. Discourses carry with them a set of values. Those who look at development in terms of discourse then will "deal neither with development as technical performance nor with development as class conflict, but with development as a particular cast of mind. For development is much more than a socio-economic endeavour, it is a perception which models reality" (Sachs 1992: 1).

There are of course many discourses, even within a field such as development or education. But these tend to fall into what may be called families of discourses. For example, within the development field, there is a family of discourses based on ideologies of modernisation, "...a modernist regime of knowledge and disciplinary power" (Crush 1995: xiii).

And in one sense discourses are transferable: the language of one discourse may be used within quite different kinds of programme.[2] For example, the Freirean discourse of conscientisation and empowerment is often used to try to justify activities which are directive, with pre-set agency-determined goals and which cannot lead to liberation. Youngman points out that the language of what he calls the populist model of development "was co-opted by the aid providers" such as the World Bank (Youngman 2000: 105). This is one possible interpretation of the many programmes of so-called 'non-formal' education which display all the same characteristics as formal education.

Voice and discourse: A discourse then is an expression of power. The concept of 'voice' expresses this – for 'voice' represents those whose interests are being served through any particular discourse (Aronowitz & Giroux 1991). It is not always clear who constructs discourses, whose 'voice' is being heard. Nor are the reasons for the construction of discourses such as those surrounding development always clear: they seem to relate to issues of control, hegemony, very similar to colonial issues of order and stability.

Dominant discourses are often taken up by subaltern groups, so that the real voice is not always heard. When talking about development, they frequently speak in terms which are primarily in the interests of dominant groups. Equally, there are many cases of a changed discourse but continued practice, where existing activities remain untouched but are clothed in a different language. Argyris and Schon's concepts of espoused theory and theory in practice are especially valid here (see above p.6).

FRAMEWORKS AND DISCOURSES OF DEVELOPMENT

Since the 1950s, I would suggest, three main paradigms may be discerned in discussions about development, three frames of reference which have influenced the planning and implementation of development programmes. Each of these has its own family of discourses. We can define these as the paradigms of **deficit,** of **disadvantage** and of **difference**. All three continue today; but the dominance of the deficit construct which was challenged in the 1970s by the construct of disadvantage, is now being challenged by the construct of difference in 'an alternative development' (Sachs 1992; Burkey 1993; Rahman 1993; see Corbridge 1995; Hettne 1995).

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[2] Aid agencies often use the language of partnership to obscure their relative power relations with local bodies, as B L Hall 1986 has pointed out.

It may be helpful to set out these three paradigms and their associated approaches to development in diagrammatic form to help to establish what I see as their relationship, before examining each of them in more detail.

Table 2.1:
Different sets of development discourses, their interaction and their implications for education

DEFICIT	DISADVANTAGE	DIFFERENCE
1. Approach of a) modernisation and growth (higher and elite education) b) Human Resource Development (vocational education)		
2. Approach of Basic Human Needs (mass education for both young and adults; literacy campaigns)	1. Approach of Dependency (compensatory education; popular education; NFE)	
3. Approach of Post-welfare Development a) SAP (UPE and continuing education) b) poverty eradication (livelihoods education)	2. Approach of Social Transformation; exclusion/inclusion (UBE)	1. Approach of Participatory or Alternative Development (decentralised/diversified education)

While there is some connection between these different sets of discourses and the passing of time, it may not be helpful to see one as succeeding an earlier discourse, even incrementally, for earlier discourses do not die out with the emergence of another contradictory discourse. The deficit paradigm is alive and well today, although it is multi-faceted and contested. It may instead be more helpful to see them as three strands which are woven into a plait, with one or another emerging more prominently at a particular time or in a particular context.

A study of these changing paradigms will help us to locate and account for the emergence of non-formal education and the language in which it was clothed at the time.

The Framework of Deficit

The framework of deficit or 'deprivation' is still the paramount paradigm for most development today. "Hundreds of millions of people living in the South suffer from hunger, malnutrition, and preventable disease, and are illiterate or lack education and modern skills" (*South Commission* 1990: 23). The argument is that "countries are undeveloped because of their internal characteristics, such as the lack of educated and skilled people" (Youngman 2000: 56), not from any external factors.

In this paradigm (e.g. McClelland 1961; Lerner 1958; Schumpeter 1961), the ' problem of under-development' is constructed as a deficit on the part of the ' less developed countries'. These ' backward' countries are thought to ' lack' various elements which the ' more developed' areas of the world possess and which lead to economic growth – things like capital, infrastructure, communication systems, power supplies, technical know-how etc.. ' Traditional patterns' are seen in opposition to modernity and entirely negatively. Their "traditional value systems, social structures, technology, and behaviors ... are not conducive to the achievement of development goals ... The assumptions underlying the deprivation-development thesis suggest that progress is achieved by spreading modernism to backward areas through the application of technology and capital" (LaBelle 1976a: 329). It is the self-imposed task of the more ' developed' countries to help these selected countries to acquire what they lack – partly out of self-interest, and partly out of a sense of guilt for the exploitation which had characterised the relations between the West and the colonised countries and which still characterises these relationships in many new forms.

This framework uses the language of ' needs' to identify the deficits; and such needs tend to be assessed (i.e. created) by outsiders, with all the cultural problems and dangers of the misidentification of needs in culturally inappropriate terms. Thus ' needs assessments' precede and justify development interventions which are often described in terms of ' inputs' leading to specified ' outcomes'. There is an attainable goal for development, a model of which can be seen in Western industrialised democracies. It is argued that once the identified deficits had been met, all will be well; the ' backward countries' will ' take off' and become self-sufficient growth areas within a global economy. Much of the inputs needed will come from outside of the developing societies. Indeed, behind much of this deficit frame of reference lies an assumption that the people in developing countries cannot by themselves get out of the hole in which they have become trapped. They ' need' help (aid).

Five main sets of approaches to development can be seen in this strand (see table above).

Modernisation and growth: Development in the deficit paradigm was at first seen largely in terms of economic growth. Modernisation (especially the industrialisation of agriculture and production) was (and for many still is) the key aim of development; the means to the creation of a modern economic sector (Foubert 1983). The problem was seen as one of low productivity despite abundant labour. Less developed countries were to be encouraged and helped to leap across the successive stepping stones to a modern industrialised economy in a similar but accelerated process to that which the Western societies had undergone in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in this process, helped to avoid the pitfalls which such leaps had entailed.

Needs-based development then was seen as linear, a universally valid sequence from a pre-capitalist society through a proto-capitalist stage (if necessary) to a modern capitalist system, a progression to be followed closely in all cases (Rostow 1960; Moore 1964; see Webster 1990, 1995). Developing societies were encouraged to ' catch up' with their Western colleagues. At first, aid agencies concentrated on resource

exploitation, but later they encouraged industrialisation within the developing countries themselves, both for home consumption and for export. The industrialisation process might consist of ' trickle down' (E M Rogers 1976), promoting major national economic sectors in the expectation that the benefits of a growing supply-led economy would diffuse themselves downwards and outwards throughout the whole of society, especially the poor. Or it might consist of bottom-up development, promoting more integrated local and/or regional economic development which in turn would encourage demand and thus build up further economic development. In both cases, the formal employment sector was seen to be the key to development and therefore the object of development programmes; and growth was seen to be unlimited.

Human Resource Development: A second strand within the deficit approach to development spoke of needs as including modern techniques of production. This approach saw the poorer populations of developing countries as the problem. They needed to change, to overcome their resistance to change, to embrace scientific attitudes and new ways of living and working (Harbison 1965). The major cause of under-development was felt to be the complex of traditional attitudes and practices of the poor; what was needed was the acculturation of the working population, their inclusion within a formal economic sector (Inkeles & Smith 1974). Thus farmers were encouraged to adopt modern production techniques and large scale cropping for the market (especially for export). The development of factories in both urban and rural areas became a hallmark of this kind of development. To accomplish these ends, Human Resource Development became a key component of development programmes (Rogers et al. 1981). Education and training were important parts of this process of developing human potential: "It is simply not possible to have the fruits of modern agriculture and the abundance of modern industry without making large investments in human beings" (Schultz 1961: 322). Development came to be seen as "a process of enabling people to accomplish things that they could not do before – that is, to learn and apply information, attitudes, values and skills previously unavailable to them. Learning is not usually enough by itself. Most aspects of development require capital investment and technical process. But capital and technology are inert without human knowledge and effort. In this sense, learning is central to development" (Wallman 1979: 353). People were often spoken of as if they were tools, to be honed to fit their required economic functions.

Basic Human Needs: In a major reaction to this economistic approach, worried about the increasing disparities (especially in wealth) which the modernisation approach to development was leading to and which the emerging disadvantage paradigm was revealing (see below), and responding to concerns expressed by many ' developing countries' (King & Buchert 1999: 100), the deficit discourse changed course. There thus arose in the West from the late 1960s a concern with a more mass poverty (and rural) oriented approach to development rather than the elitist modernisation approach (Seers 1969; Myrdal 1971; Russell & Nicholson 1981).

At the time, this was seen to represent a major turning point in development approaches, responding to criticisms being made by the disadvantage construct. The World Bank Education Sector paper of 1974, recirculated in 1975 under the title *The Assault on World Poverty: problems of rural development, education and health* (World Bank 1975) with its poverty-focus led the way. "Questions of employment, environment, social equality and above all participation in development by the less privileged now share with simple 'growth' in the definition of objectives, and hence the model, of development toward which the effort of all parties is to be directed" (World Bank 1974: 10). Integrated rural development became a key theme. "Development ... was re-defined as progress towards reduction of poverty, illiteracy, disease, malnutrition and social inequality" (Mickelwaite et al. 1979; see Ayers 1983).

Such 'welfarism' laid emphasis on various social indicators of under-development. In an even stronger deficit discourse, ILO and other international development agencies created the Basic Human Needs school of development. There is no point, it was argued, in encouraging and enabling men and women to engage in new production techniques if their health and nutrition needs are not met. Stress was laid on improving 'the quality of life' of the poor, especially the 'poorest of the poor', as the main goal of development: "a process of change that enables people to take charge of their own destinies and realise their full potential. It requires building up in the people the confidence, skills, assets and freedom necessary to achieve this goal" (J Clarke 1991 cited in Touwen 1996). Without this social democratic form of development (sometimes called 'welfare capitalism', Youngman 2000: 70), economic growth would not be possible. Poverty-focused growth was the aim of much development assistance at this time. Indeed, the purpose of aiming at economic growth was to meet the country's social needs: instead of economic growth being an end in itself, now economic growth has become a means to the improvement of the quality of life of 'the people' (UNDP 1990; see Leach & Little 1999: 10-11).

Post-welfare/neo-liberal development: The fourth member of this family of needs-based approaches to development within the deficit paradigm is the more recent neo-liberal approach. It is inspired by the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) of Western governments imposing conditionalities on aid-receiving countries (despite much rhetoric about 'partnerships'), with their insistence on the shrinking role of governments, multi-party democracy and the responsibilities of civil societies in the provision of development inputs and by the movement for debt relief. Just as the Human Resource Development approach, in response to the pressures of the new paradigm of disadvantage, changed into Basic Human Needs, so the Basic Human Needs adapted into a new and very Western monetarist approach to development. Market forces are the predominant consideration rather than state intervention (Leach & Little 1999: 203). 'Global capitalism with a human face' leads to a changed role of government as facilitator rather than as provider of services, with emphasis on free markets, privatisation and partnership with civil society, and the creation of safety nets for the most vulnerable.

The language that is being used here derives in part from the older discourses of modernisation and Human Resource Management and in part from the newer discourses of disadvantage (see below pp.23-26). Thus for example, this discourse speaks of grass-roots, people-centred development. "In Latin American societies, collective protests and local movements ... have become institutionalized, ... [they] make up a Third Sector different from the state and the market. Structurally these organizations are mediators between the state and the demands of the masses, between international movements and organizations and local needs ... The national NGOs ... are becoming a new actor in the social scene. Their work is becoming ever more important at times when the predominance of neo-liberal policies is increasingly limiting state action on social policies" (Jelin 1996 cited in Jung & King 1999: 15-16). Through decentralisation and capacity building of local organisations, each community must accept responsibility for its own development.

But it is rarely as disinterested as this. The post-welfare approach seeks to encourage community participation in the form of cost- and resource-sharing; but the goals are still being set by the aid agencies and their partner governments. Civil society is to be encouraged to help the state to meet the state' s targets. Participation is designed to reduce opposition to centrally planned programmes (Cooke & Kothari 2001). NGOs have been co-opted into the development programme of the inter-national and national agencies, causing at least one African writer to express his doubts: "NGOs are one of the instruments for the continued conquest and occupation of the South. They join in the marginalisation of Third World governments and indigenous NGOs and leadership ... This way, the North' s latest conquest would be complete ... all of this is usually done in the name of empowering the grass roots" (Wangoola 1995: 68).

But the thinking behind all of this is economistic: a new monetarism, stressing both the essential call for sustainable development (Carley & Christie 1992; Carew-Reid et al. 1994; Fitzgerald 1997) and also the responsibilities of civil society, the role of the market, the promotion and facilitation of demand, the increase of competition and the consequent importance of the private sector in meeting needs. On the one hand is the major change from a view that resource exploitation and economic growth could be unlimited to a realisation that resources are limited and need conservation. On the other hand, responsibility for sustainable development is thrown onto 'the people' through decentralisation (Shepherd 1998). This approach emphasises the importance of capacity building, and uses the language of comparative advantage as the basis of economic growth. Several writers have termed this discourse 'neo-liberal' (Colclough & Manor 1991; Youngman 2000; Schuurman 1993), but since this approach "sees inequality as a source of individual incentive ... rejecting the concern of welfare capitalism with the issue of equity secured through state intervention" (Youngman 2000: 70), the term would seem to be less than satisfactory. While this approach does stress such 'liberal' values as (ostensibly) 'free markets' (they are in fact anything but free), the responsibility of the individual, the importance of personal choices, and the privatisation of state services for the achievement of what remain its essential goals, modernism and economic growth, nevertheless it is at the same time working for further