A Note on Adult Learning Methods
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There is today a questioning of the relevance of the present educational system which is seen as being too “academic,” and concerned primarily with the formal schooling of those within the “school age.” Adults who have completed formal education or have dropped out of school are often left on their own in the search for new knowledge and skills. With the introduction of social and technological innovations which have created new needs and institutions, there are new demands for adult learning which formal schooling is not able to meet. That education and schooling are not synonymous is evident in the emergence of concepts such as “lifelong learning” and the view of education as the “deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values and skills.”¹ This broad view of education recognizes that learning occurs in many settings through many kinds of activities and that the family, the church, the workplace, the mass media, the library and other community institutions also play important roles in the education of both adults and children. This view might lead to a whole new approach to Philippine education.

THE EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH

The progressive concept of adult education is that it “points toward a continuing process of evaluating experiences . . . Experience is, first of all, doing something; second, doing something that makes a difference; third, knowing what difference it makes

Another writer describes it as a technique of learning for adults which makes education coterminus with life and hence elevates itself to the level of adventurous experiment. The academic bias among our educational leaders in the Philippines has hampered the movement toward this more comprehensive view of education which sees the integration of the formal and informal systems and the use of more appropriate learning methodologies. Appropriate methodologies of learning can be instrumental in developing human potential. Among the philosophers who have advanced progressive and radical concepts of learning are Paolo Freire, Ivan Illich, Julius Nyrere, and Edgar Faure.

Illich in his *Deschooling Society* and other articles has proposed the elimination of schools from society as the necessary condition for freeing people from their addiction to manipulative and oppressive institutions. His rejection of schooling is based not so much on its failure as an institution but on its central position in maintaining an overindustrialized and overconsumerized society. True learning, he says, is learning in which a person freely consents to participate. Most learning, he adds is not the result of teaching but rather is gathered incidentally as one participates in life. Nyrere in his keynote address to the International Conference on Adult Education and Development stated that the purpose of development and education is the liberation of Man. Adult education encompasses the whole of life and must build upon what already exists. "Learning to Be," a UNESCO publication of a study chaired by Faure avoided linking the aim of education to economic development. Rather, it states "the aim of education is to enable man to 'become himself.' In relation to employment and economic progress, education should be not so much to prepare young people and adults for a specific, lifetime vocation, as to 'optimize' mobility among the professions and afford a permanent stimulus to the desire to learn and to train oneself." Psychologists like Rogers, Maslow and Jourard have also come

3. Ibid., p. 160.
5. "Development is for Man," p. 29.
up with theories of learning, but they have been more concerned with the individual needs of adult learning and a humanistic approach to learning.  

**ELEMENTS OF PARTICIPATORY EDUCATION**

Among the theoretical considerations in participatory education for adults are: (1) the learning of social and human skills and (2) the analysis of major issues and problems. One of the most important considerations in any learning system is that it must deal with issues that affect a large majority. The analysis should show connections between micro issues such as rural structures and problems and the macro issues such as national and international policies and structures. And (3) the evaluation of ideologies of each participant on the basis of case studies and field visits. The process in such analysis is that of sharing, dialogue, group discussion, sympathetic criticism, self-criticism, to name a few. These methodologies are experiential in that they require dialogue, reflection and analysis. The Regional Change Agents Programme (RCAP) is built around such elements and involves participants in identifying their own training needs and planning and running their own programme.  

The "Freire Approach" is now being tried in educational experiments in Asia and Latin America. It has captured the imagination of educators in developing countries because of its emphasis on problems of the deprived sectors.

**EVALUATION OF EXISTING LEARNING STRATEGIES**

Most learning strategies are hierarchical or "top-down" in structure. The present training curriculum has also this same character-

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7. Carl Rogers emphasized self-initiated learning, with the encounter group as a mechanism for assisting individuals to grow and to develop (Darkenwald and Merriam, *Adult Education*, p. 81).

Maslow states that the goal of education is "self-actualization" or helping the person to become the best that he is able to become (Darkenwald and Merriam, p. 80).

Sidney Jourard postulates that one of our basic needs is to make ourselves known to others. Self-disclosure in a dynamic relationship is akin to a learning experience. (Darkenwald and Merriam, p. 83).

One of the outstanding pioneers in adult education is the late J. Roby Kidd, former director of the International Council of Adult Education based in Toronto, Canada.

istic so that it requires considerable restructuring towards a more flexible, self-paced and dynamic approach. "Synergy" which describes the continuing exchange through group discussion is an experiential methodology. Because of its formal and academic bias, the present educational system in the Philippines places considerable emphasis on cognitive learning. This means that content which is designed by a select group of educators based on their perception of needs rather than of the participants is emphasized over attitudes and skills. Thus, the lecture as a method is emphasized over other learner-centered or problem-solving methodologies.

Most training methods are "top-down" and authoritarian which is reflective of the prevailing cultural value system. To move towards more democratic and participatory approaches would require a reexamination of the available resources as well as a deeper understanding of culture. The basic questions have to do with how to operate within existing values, even though seemingly antithetical towards participation, and then to evolve a more interactive learning system. Experiential methodologies, as shown in the cases described here, help in establishing rapport and better understanding among learners and interactors. Group dynamics, games, audiovisual presentations, simulations, and role playing are some examples.

According to a group of development planners, most training institutions have preference for either expensive or imported materials which run counter to criteria of self-reliance or appropriateness of technology. It was also felt that most traditional research methods such as the survey are nonparticipative. The Freire Approach, the Delphi technique, case study, and certain audiovisual media are shown to have great potential in promoting interaction between interviewer and respondent. Research and evaluation programs tend to be descriptive, empirical, and non-evaluative. Thus, the group recommends that they should be more applied, policy-oriented, and critical.

EXPERIENTIAL METHODOLOGIES

Freire, the Brazilian educator who is regarded as the "philosopher of the Third World" is best known for his concept of "conscientization" or awakening of political consciousness. According to him, traditional education equals "banking education" in which learners receive and store mental deposits. Knowledge is regarded as a gift bestowed on learners by the teacher. This type of education offends the freedom and autonomy of the learners. By deepening their awareness (conscientization), people can uncover reality and penetrate history in a critical manner. Getting to know reality calls for people's participation in the reality in which they live in order to make it more human. Knowing and transforming reality are the two fundamental elements of the conscientization process. This process involves the educator and the learner in a simultaneous experience of uncovering and acting on reality.10

The Freire Approach is characterized by dialogue, reflection, and critical thinking. For example, it assumes that a peasant, no matter how illiterate, has wisdom, and that given the appropriate motivation and faith, he will be able to make this wisdom surface so that he too can "name the world." Every man can therefore be a more dynamic participant rather than be a mere passive receiver, according to Freire.11 Thus, the Approach forces the trainor or facilitator to examine himself. If one has to conscientize, if one is to engage in dialogue, he himself must have the attributes of trust, love, humility, empathy, transparency, openness, or the willingness to learn from the other. The Approach therefore argues for deep involvement. Thus, a stimulus must be laden with emotion-evoking symbols so that it can move the individual to action.

Freire states that we must first identify the problem before we are able to analyze it. In the identification of a problem, your entry point must be a critical need. Let us take as example the need for food productivity. The facilitator comes in with the knowledge that the productivity in a particular barangay is only sixty cavans

instead of ninety-nine which the Masagana or national self-sufficiency program requires as a goal. So he raises questions to farmers such as: "Are you happy with this harvest?", "How many cavans did you want to harvest?", "How sufficient is this harvest for your family needs?", "Do you think you can increase your harvest next season?". The farmer then goes on to the analysis of his own problems — why he does not have a high yield, what the barriers are in achieving his goal, and so on. Through this process, the facilitator may be able to get to the root of the causes of poverty which are perhaps found in the inequitable social structures or delivery systems. He would then pose the problem of what could be done about it. For example, he asks: "How do you think you can increase next season’s harvest?", "Which of these can you do by yourself?", "Which one would need others’ help?". These are some of the questions aimed at eliciting action. Then he stimulates discussion of possible solutions like "What benefits do you see in increasing next season’s harvest?" "Which of these cannot be solved?" "What action will you now take to increase next season’s harvest?"

One can see from this experiential process that perhaps the problems go beyond mere productivity, and that these problems could be the consequences of exploitation by those who have more access to roads, transportation facilities, fertilizers, and other resources. The Approach is able to help us become nondirective and yet able to reach people and enable them to identify their problems. More important, the people themselves are able to discover solutions to their own problems.

"Fotomontaje," a method based on the conscientization process was developed by the "Grupo de Educacion Popular" in Peru. As an audiovisual technique, "fotomontaje" aims at helping participants grouped around a common interest to portray their own reality in order to form a background of their own reflection. Through the use of mounted photographs, slides, filmstrips, posters, banners, words, phrases, they are able to focus on the critical needs in sanitation, employment, housing, nutrition, transportation and are likewise able to let social contradictions emerge. Walls of buildings are often used as screens for the projections, thus becoming the neighborhood “newspapers.” The equipment used is fairly common: slide and/or filmstrip projectors, cassette tape recorders, cameras for slides and photos and material for
drawing posters and slides. As an *educational method*, "foto-montaje" involves participants in providing inputs for their own reflective discovery of reality and critical appraisal of the interdependence among sociopolitical causes of their deprived conditions. The critical discovery must be linked to organized action. The role of the coordinator is to promote the discovery of the message by the participants. As a *developmental method*, "foto-montaje" is a process where the goal is to foster the initiative for self development of critical consciousness and practical commitment to values related to social justice. The process continues through different group experiences — labor movements, mothers’ clubs or neighborhood associations. It builds awareness of the history of struggles, hopes, frustrations and potentialities to which each participant adds his own chapter. It becomes a search for class consciousness.\(^{12}\)

A *dialectical* approach focusing on *contradictions* tried by Barndt\(^ {13}\) recognized the political nature of all action, that in order to stand for one thing, you must stand opposed to others. In her study of Peruvian society, she revealed internal and external contradictions such as those found in her photographic examples. One is a picture, where in the foreground, a bronzed indigenous farmer reminds us of the recent land reform which has reclaimed land for rural peasants, affirming their agricultural origins and skills. Standing directly behind such a symbol is the Sheraton Hotel, a subsidiary of the multinational ITT corporation. In our own country which purportedly supports self-reliance and nationalistic goals, we likewise often see symbols of western and urban influences even in remote communities — posters and billboards advertising western goods beyond the reach of most barangay dwellers in small "sari-sari" stores. Exposure to contradictions in the social reality is essential but this should be followed up by programs which would integrate reflection and action.

Barndt undertook one year of field study in Peru to explore the dynamics of the "conscientization" process and learned that the process takes its own form within a particular social context. That is, one does not transplant the Freire Approach; by confront-


ing the particular problems of society, one discovers appropriate working methods. She has in her 392-page photo-novel produced a very unique doctoral dissertation as she presented the problems of Peruvian society through pictures and transcriptions, verbal reflections of selected men and women in the rural areas. Using an historical approach, she noted the connections between social history with existing structures and people’s psychological and cultural orientations.

For example, one of the transcriptions is a reflection of a migrant woman from a subsistence economy. The woman is encouraged to reflect on contradictions between city and rural life, on money, the symbol of exchange which to her has also become a symbol of inequality; of the constant battle for land, and through dialogue, she is able to connect persons with structures and see that much of the responsibility for what is happening to her and her family is due to failure of leadership and her earlier teachers who taught her the wrong things. More important is her discovery that she and other women in her group know more about the community because they live in it and that therefore they can do something about their own problems.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Although the following are research techniques, they are also effective adult learning methods as they are experiential and as they encourage the participation of the community. Respondents are actively involved in the research process through a process of dialogue and interaction.

The “anthropocentric” approach requires the interpretation of reality in terms of human values and human experience. It is qualitative and humanistic. The participants are asked to interpret their own case histories and to describe some of the human values to which they subscribe. For example, in assessing literacy, dialogue helps to capture the complexities and dynamics of social reality. The people likewise actively participate in the research process whereas the conventional methods treat those who are researched upon as mere sources of information. The dialogue helps to mobilize the human potential, stimulates a greater degree of self-awareness and generates interest and motivation. The design and purposes of this research are based on expectations that
the community directly benefit from the results of the research as well as from the process itself.14

A research methodology which is also applicable to training and adult education is called the “CLISS” or the Community Level Information Statistics Systems. This method designed by Montemayor15 seeks to generate as much available information about a village. The village is viewed as a social system where the people are involved in the gathering of data. They are given the opportunity to describe and evaluate their own social reality according to their own perceptions and cultural orientations. It is of the village in that the information the system seeks to generate is about the village. It is for the village in that the information about it is used to promote its own well being. It is by the village in that villagers play the principal role as agents in developing and operating the system. Data on qualitative aspects such as ecological balance or deterioration are sought. The database also includes the description of the present social order and that of the new social order that the people may seek to achieve. Information on basic social institutions (family, kinship, religion, economy, etc.) and linkages as well as systems of reciprocity, dependency, power structure and rewards is sought. As a cultural system, database of the village includes people’s symbolic systems, value preferences, hopes and fears and what they feel strongly about — their ethos and ethics. According to the author, CLISS, which entails people’s participation in knowing facts about themselves and their incumbent social, economic and political order, will open their eyes to the need of playing the role of partner rather than patient in development. Thus a sense of responsibility and creativeness is cultivated within the members of the community.

The Delhi Method16 is a procedure for structuring a communication process among a large group of individuals. A major premise is that in order to “treat adequately” any issue, a large number of “expert” judgments is required. What distinguishes the Delphi

Method from an ordinary polling procedure is the feedback of the information gathered from the group and the opportunity of the individuals to modify or refine their judgments based upon their reaction to the collective views of the group. The method is often used in forecasting where participants are presented options for a preferred future. They therefore become participants in the planning of desired changes in society.

In summary, the challenge in adult education is not only that of restructuring methodologies of learning but also that of restructuring people's attitudes. The first one is much easier than the second. The acceptance by those of us who are engaged in learning systems that we ourselves should change before we are able to change others is however a positive step in the restructuring of adult education. Future developments in this direction would necessitate a hard look at our present educational goals, our structures, and the orientation of our educational leaders. It would mean the acceptance that the present "formal structure" does not satisfy the demands of society and adult learners.