

NON FORMAL EDUCATION

Non-Formal Education(NFE) is any organized educational activity that takes place outside the formal educational system. Usually it is flexible, learner centered, contextualized and uses a participatory approach.

There are several definitions for NFE that sometimes overlap or contradict with each other. These differences stem from the area of focus each thought to emphasize in the definition.

Rogers (2005) classified definitions into the following categories:

- A system: a collection of organizations and programs different from the formal education system
- A Process : with different teaching-learning relationships than those in formal education, a less hierarchical format.
- A concept, a subject worthy of study and writing about
- A practice, a professional activity undertaken by people separate from formal education professionals
- A set of educational activities distinguished from formal education by having different goals or purposes or even separated from formal schooling by being socially purposeful, usually seen as a part of the radical social transformation movement

NFE FIELDS AND FORMS

NFE programs span across a wide range of fields, as highlighted in Sheffield (1972) and Rogers (2005):

Pre-vocational training, on-the-job training, cultural and political development, community development, agricultural extension, vocational/technical training, motivation and consciousness raising, trades-training centres, management training, moral or political re-education, literacy programs, and alternative schools.

As Rogers (2005) explains NFE takes many forms from:

- The small-scale individual or small group educational activities to large scale national programs
- Highly contextualized to standardized programs
- Adult to children's education
- Temporary learning programs introductory to formal schooling to a permanent alternative to formal schooling
- Literacy and basic education to post-initial, vocational and advanced continuing professional development
- State programs to those offered by commercial agencies
- Separate educational activities to practical exercises inside schools.

NFE CRITERIA

In spite of the different definitions, NFE programs have a number of criteria that are shared across most definitions:

Learner centered as learners play an active role in their learning and program is customized to their circumstances

Flexible curriculum that can be changed. Degree of flexibility would differ from one program to the other

Human relationships are more informal depending more on reciprocal learning

Focus on practical skills and knowledge

Target disadvantaged groups as youth, women, poor, and marginalized groups

Creative use of educational resources

Community participation

Decentralized and more flexible organization and management

NONFORMULA EDUCATION DESIGN

Given the great variety in NFE context, form , participants and educators need to adjust their design based on these elements. A literacy course for out of school children would be different from a vocational training for youth and different from crops enhancement workshops for farmers. However there are some guiding principles that would help educators to design a successful NFE experience.

Democratic and nondirective styles (Etlng, 1993)

Focus on participants needs

Curriculum changed based on participants feedback

Questioning especially open-ended ones

Two of the main models adopted heavily in NFE programs are the experiential learning Model(Carlson & Maxa, 1998) and Knowles Adult Learning principles:

Adults are internally motivated and self-directed

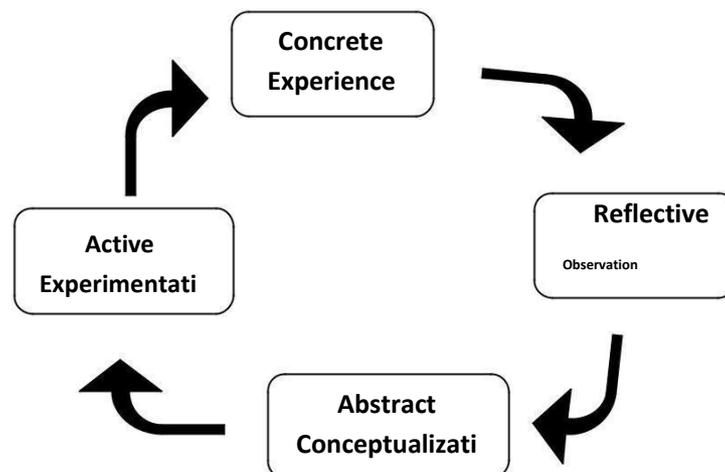
Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences

Adults are goal oriented

Adults are relevancy oriented

Adults are practical

Adult learners like to be respected



NFE AND INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Major developments in ICT are increasing the potential of NFE for example through its ability to:

Train and qualify practitioners online which will save costs and help practitioners reach remote usually isolated areas

Facilitate the process of networking among organizations

Conquer physical and spatial constraints, providing unprecedented educational opportunities to people of all socioeconomic levels around the globe

FUTURE OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

The Formal Education is changing in ways that are blurring the differences between Formal and Non-formal Education such as adopting constructivism and socio-cultural approaches, becoming more learner-centered, using participatory innovative approaches. Also with the technological advances that are affecting both Formal and Non-formal Education, there is a growing need to a new paradigm unifying the two fields for better development of both.

Rogers (2005) attempts to offer a new paradigm for classifying the educational practices according to the level of contextualization where the education context and practice depends on the level of learner's participation. He offers to place any of the educational practice in a continuum. He places non-formal education practices under either:

1. **Flexible Schooling:** where logistical issues such as timing, location are decided by the learning group, while the curriculum and teaching-learning materials, the length of the learning program, the form and timing of the evaluation process are all matters reserved to the providing agency
2. **Participatory Education:** where the issues of the control of the education goals, content, methodology and evaluation – are in control by the learning group and the educator or providing agency is “to accompany” the process with critical interventions.

