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The Shifting Development Paradigm from Modernization to Decentralization: What are the implications for Adult Education?

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Abstract: This research explored emerging patterns of providership for nonformal education programs in Ghana, Senegal, and Burkina Faso where each country is in various stages of decentralization and democratization. The study found that, increasingly, multiple actors are responsible for nonformal education activities and that, unfortunately, though this could raise the profile of adult education it actually may further obscure its role.

Introduction

From the 1960s to the present, international development work has shifted its emphasis from an emphasis on modernization to a focus on activities which build on the decentralization of governments. The background and theoretical framework which follow trace this evolution and provide context for our research in West Africa.

Background and Theoretical Framework. During the 1960s, the dominant development paradigm globally was state-centered modernization characterized by national planning and high bureaucratization. This was a period of nation building throughout much of Africa. Government-sponsored nonformal education (NFE) was prevalent but typically housed in ministries of education, which overlaid it with bureaucracy, and formal schooling approaches. During the late 1970s through the 1980s, economic structural adjustment programs designed to ultimately improve economic conditions in Third World countries called for increased domestic savings and improved public-sector efficiency and resource allocation. Results included drastic cut backs on public sector employment and social services such as health, education, and welfare programs (Buvinic, M. & Yudelman, S., 1989). The gaps created by the rolling back of services previously provided by the state were filled by nongovernmental organizations focusing on community development style projects in small villages and outlying rural areas. Thus, nonformal education though clearly still occurring did not receive the visibility it received in the 1960s. In the 1980s, formal schooling was more heavily emphasized in Africa and globally education in general was viewed as less integral to economic development and social change (LaBelle and Ward, 1996).

In the 1990s, two forces influenced the re-emergence of NFE in West Africa: 1) a continued decline of resources on the states' part resulting from economic structural adjustment programs' deregulation and liberalization of economies culminating in state stagnation and 2) the winds of a democratization movement which have swept through much of Africa. In the current development paradigm of decentralization, the private-for-profit sector, civic associations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are viewed as well placed to act as the nuclei for national development efforts (Esman, 1991).

Nonformal education remains an important part of the development equation. The problems it sought to alleviate have not receded they have intensified. Budgetary constraints have further eroded the effectiveness of formal education and put it beyond the reach of an ever increasing number of people, especially the rural poor. Decentralization of the development responsibility to civic groups and local institutions heightens demand for skills that can best be provided through nonformal education.

Given this backdrop of international development and nonformal education we chose to explore the current provision of nonformal education in a context of democratization and decentralization.

Methodology

Our research was guided by the following research questions: Who are the current providers of nonformal education in Ghana, Senegal, and Burkina Faso and what roles are they playing? Are there current and emerging patterns of collaboration among the various public and private sector actors involved in the provision of nonformal education in these West African countries? Is the form of NFE process or functional?

The nature of the research--a collaborative effort between a research team at Florida State University and West African field research partners in the three countries--was exploratory and the project was designed as a series of case studies. The U.S. team initially designed an instrument for organizing data that laid out theoretical roles required in the provision of NFE; the instrument was revised based upon critique from each of our partners. Each partner was given fairly broad guidelines regarding the research purpose (exploration of patterns of NFE provision) and was requested to conduct unstructured interviews. Snowballing was used by our field researchers to uncover a variety of providers and innovative provider partnerships. Analytic induction (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981) was used to identify working typologies and hypotheses. Our methodological rationale was to achieve an emic posture in the project.

Service Provision, Patterns of Collaboration and Forms of NFE

NFE projects which require the integration of learning with provision of public services necessitate that multiple organizational roles be taken on. These types of projects are not only a matter of teaching/training but of providing the public service in question, administering, creating policy, financing, learning, and evaluating. When modernization was the guiding principle in development, the rule of thumb was that governments set policy and NGOs were relied upon to implement (Comings, 1996). Now government continues in the role of policy

making but increasingly the state recognizes the expertise some NGOs can bring to bear and, on their side, NGOs recognize the necessity for not only advocating policy change but designing policy as well. Resulting from this interweaving of roles within public service provision we find that NFE provision is then embedded in these projects. So when we speak of NFE providership we are naming those enterprises that are conceived as ultimately responsible for providing the public service in question.

Providership Roles. In Ghana, specifically, the Presbyterian Church seemed unique as a service provider because of its entrenchment in Ghana's primary health care system and because it was at the top of the hierarchical chain of administrative advisement on matters of major health education activities and programs. Otherwise, in Ghana, service provision was spread in equal measure across the state, NGOs, beneficiaries, and donors. In Ghana, private-for-profits were most visible in the teaching role (three out of five projects). Because the Sankofa project had a train-the-trainer component, private-for-profits (PFPs) and beneficiaries were both "teachers." It was only in the primary health care sector that the state was responsible for continuing education

courses. In the Family Life Education project Planned Parenthood was responsible for instruction.

In the two francophone countries (Senegal and Burkina Faso), providership was evenly split between the state and NGOs (each providing services in three out of six projects). In Ghana, the state was still funding most of the NFE activity while in Senegal and Burkina Faso funding was primarily from donors (e.g. French, Swiss, Germans, Austrians) and international NGOs (e.g. Bread for the World, Brothers of Man, Club 2/3). In Senegal and Burkina, teaching fell predominantly to NGOs and consultants.

Patterns of Collaboration. Collaboration was conceived as a network or web of multiple actors much as Esman (1991) had projected the provision of public services in the developing world. However, across the range of NFE projects observed we found varying levels of interaction among these actors based on levels of intensity with regard to intended time frame for the relationship, and structure of the relationship (Winer, 1994). To demonstrate these criteria, we can contrast two projects: the Training of Young Farmers (TYF) in Burkina Faso, and the Community Ownership and Management of Water Project (COMWP) in Ghana. TYF although it evidences multiple actors such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the state-run literacy program, and an inter-African NGO and the time frame for the relationship appears to be on-going, the structure is not new. Most organizational roles required to mount an NFE activity are held by the state. The NGO implements the program, beneficiaries are responsible for training but all other responsibilities e.g. financing, material/technical support, mobilizing participants fall to the state. In contrast, let us examine the COMWP. Ghana has devolved responsibility for rural water delivery to the residents via the National Strategy and Policy for Community Water and Sanitation Programs. The policy establishes a new structure and durable relationship between the state and the beneficiaries. New village level organizations (WATSAN Committees) are established. These committees now supply materials and technical expertise, providing the actual water service, and co-financing along with the state. Private-for-profits provided training. The state's role is minimal and will decline as the WATSAN Committees are trained and more able to take on full implementation.

There are several points worth mentioning here, first, most projects were arranged more on the order of webs of providers with various actors performing different roles--for the most part NGOs provided instruction, material/technical resources, and mobilized participants which is much as it has been. The state served in a greater variety of roles in Ghana than in Senegal and Burkina Faso where NGOs appeared more prominently in provider roles. Only two projects could be said to have met the criteria of true collaborations: the rural water program in Ghana and the "bottom-up" Literacy Program in Burkina Faso. The COMWP has been described; the structure of the Burkina literacy program was established by the beneficiaries. It was a program started by some literate farmers in 1989 in three provinces of eastern Burkina Faso. The state provides texts paid for by the grassroots NGO--L'Association de TINTUA. Beneficiaries construct the centers and through increasing levels of literacy attainment become the instructors.

Process versus Functional Forms of Nonformal Education. Only two parties involved in the observed nonformal education projects could be classified as process-oriented. Both were nongovernmental organizations. One was international--SNV, a Danish NGO--and the other was indigenous interAfrican--L'Inades/Formation. In both these NGOs, means were stressed as much as ends; furthermore, their activities focused more heavily on developing capacity for self-determination through increased levels of beneficiary autonomy in decision-making. The remainder of the projects were functional in that their activities were tied directly to providing skills for agriculture or water provision, for example.

Findings

Many of the services which we tend to think of as public services--water distribution, literacy, primary health care, vocational preparation--in our sample were provided not by the state alone but by networks of actors inclusive of NGOs, beneficiaries, the church, and private-for-profits. Decentralization efforts in all three countries, whether de facto or purposeful, seem to have given rise to increased nonformal education activity. In some cases, e.g. Ghana, training was an afterthought as was stated in the *WATSANNEWS*: "The project had to develop training programs not specified in the project document but judged to be necessary from the experience of project implementation" (1995, p. 14). In Ghana, private-for-profits (PFPs) were more prominent. In Senegal and Burkina Faso, we found NGOs at the forefront of NFE projects as we had anticipated. Also of note were the number of *indigenous* and *pan-African* NGOs represented in all three countries. Ghanaian PFPs appear to be dynamic in the role of instructional planning and delivery in Ghana and perhaps foreshadow a major shift to privatization and entrepreneurship in the NFE sector there. For example, EMPRETEC is a Ghanaian PFP entirely devoted to training entrepreneurs. We found beneficiaries not only involved as learners but also as financiers and as mobilizers; however, they were surprisingly seldom involved in program evaluation. Furthermore, we found only a moderate level of overall program monitoring by any of the entities involved. We found very few instances of actors other than beneficiaries in the role of learner; interestingly, ~~though~~ these instances were not limited to process-oriented NGO projects. The COMWP in Ghana was one of those in which the state agents participated as learners. Finally, we observed that ministries of agriculture, labor, and health were more prevalent in partnered programs than ministries of education.

Implications

Programmatic Implications. If collaborative provision of NFE is a trend, what is the role of adult educators? When public service provision is linked so closely with and is so reliant upon NFE program development and implementation but these functions are divided among several parties, who has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that all programmatic functions are addressed? For example, in our study beneficiaries were not found represented in the evaluation of programs which is an important component of capacity-building. Also, the paucity of process-oriented NFE programs is troubling especially in this critical era of government decentralization. Civic responsibilities increasingly delegated to the citizenry rely on an informed and capable public which are the types of capacities that process-oriented programs seek to develop.

The isolation of the Ministry of Education from a number of the projects in our study is symptomatic of two problems. The first is the divide between the development community at large and the educational system, and the second is the territoriality of government ministries (Coles, 1988). The former problem speaks to the need for African educators (both AE and non-AE) and development specialists to come together around mutual concerns, to begin to appreciate how the alleviation of poverty is linked to learning and educational interests. The latter concern regarding the obstacles in structuring departments of NFE so that they reflect its true interdisciplinary nature has been at issue within the IIEP for years (1983). It appears that no suitable arrangement or framework for the effective incorporation of NFE has been found. In most configurations, the shortcomings continue to be a lack of program coherence a lack of a relationship with the formal system.

Policy Implications. The emergence of indigenous private-for-profits in the NFE arena, on the one-hand, hold immense potential for sustaining NFE programs initiated in multiple sectors--i.e. indigenous PFPs are local and know the context well. But at the policy level private-for-profit interests are to an extent self-serving when compared to the interests of nonprofit organizations (NGOs) that have tended to stress macro-policy reform (formal policy changes) for social change. However, the policy interests of NGOs have been sector specific--e.g. agriculture, water, human rights, health care. The overall interests in policy structures to support nonformal education have been neglected. Whether private-for-profits will take up NFE policy issues will depend on the extent to which they conceptualize their work as requiring policy supports. If PFPs do not recognize themselves as part and parcel of the loosely organized field of nonformal education then the likelihood is poor.

In 1997, Giere noted that Africa as a whole was spending less than one per cent of its education budget on adult education (p. 29). At the same time she also queries how a seamless system of adult education can be created and how quality in AE can be assured? She, as do others, cites the increasing influence of civil society (much as we have seen in West Africa) on the provision of NFE in developing countries. However, the presence of multiple actors in the NFE arena taxes even further evolving policy making systems such as those found in West African countries. These are policy makers who have moved from authoritarian approaches (in the case of Ghana specifically) to decentralization of services within the short span of twenty years. Moreover, given the structural obstacles faced by nonformal education within governments, as outlined above, one returns to the question: Who will advocate for nonformal education in its highest and best use as an interdisciplinary activity that can promote social change?

The increased involvement of indigenous NGOs situates them well to support the extensive number of micro-policy changes (Korten, 1987) which encompass revised institutional roles and relationships necessary to accommodate the current decentralization activities in West Africa. However, given the lack of NGO centralization in many of these countries how will micro-policy become a consistent part of their agenda?

Implications for the Future of Adult Education. In America, adult education oriented towards social action has been overtaken by market-driven human resource development activities. Does the increase of private-for-profit adult education providers point toward a similar trend in Ghana? One can only survey the factors that seem to contribute to such a phenomenon. The continued emphasis on private sectorization and market-driven approaches in the developing world will play a major role in the outcome as will opposing forces of process-driven NFE organizations that center their efforts on individual and community self-determination.

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