
The book reports on a study concerned with nonformal programs of education designed to increase the skills and productivity of farmers, artisans, craftsmen, and small entrepreneurs in developing nations. The study was initiated in 1971 by the World Bank and was carried out by the International Council for Educational Development. It's addressed to planners and policy makers who are concerned with improving conditions of life in the vast rural poverty areas of the world.

Author Coombs, vice chairman of the ICED, says in the introduction: "It is clearer now than perhaps it was a decade or so ago that only through concerted efforts to develop rural as well as urban areas can the people of the world's poorest nations take the first steps beyond sheer subsistence."

Experiences of a diversified sample of noninformal education programs were examined to help answer these questions:

1. How can nonformal education promote rural development?
2. Can it help fill the great gaps left by formal schools and help schools transform themselves?
3. Can poor countries afford a sizeable expansion of nonformal education?
4. How can nonformal education best be planned and evaluated?
5. How can such operational issues as organization, staffing, facilities, and educational technologies best be dealt with?
6. What are the next steps developing nations might take?
7. In what manner can external agencies help?

Three basic conclusions were reached:

1. Nonformal education—of the right kind in the right places, properly tied to complementary efforts
(greater integration with other programs—is an
indispensable and potent instrument of rural
development).

2. Even the poorest country—given a favorable political
climate and determination by its leaders and people
to build a better future—should be able to mobilize
the resources and human energies for a considerable
expansion of nonformal education in rural areas.

3. Developing countries can forge ahead more quickly
in nonformal education if given critical types of help
from the outside. There's no shortage of ways for
external agencies to assist strategically. But to do so, with
the greatest effect, they will be required to alter consid-
erably their past policies, doctrines, and modes of operation.

According to the authors, experience has shown that the
kind of education required to transform rural societies into a
more tolerable, satisfying, and hopeful place to live isn't the
kind provided by today's urban-oriented educational system.
Such a system has served mainly as a transmission belt for
moving talent to the cities. Obviously, new approaches are
needed.

The authors recognize certain weaknesses in the study.
However, anyone interested in rural development and nonformal
education should find the report useful. Those of us working
on rural development in this country can readily see many
similarities between our experiences and those reported in this
study. Such macro concepts as education and rural development
are well defined.

Much of the information derived from the study, because
it deals with concepts, can be applied beyond the bounds of
developing nations. Extension Service personnel will find numerous
references critical of Extension efforts. Open-minded assessment
of these criticisms could lead, hopefully, to improvements in
extension program development in the U.S. as well as in other
nations.

Two physical features detract from the report: (1) a
typeface and size that makes for difficulty in reading and
(2) numerous typographical and grammatical errors. Never-
theless, the ideas contained in the book make it worth reading
for anyone concerned with the development of rural areas.

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