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Program of Studies in Non-Formal Education

REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION INFORMATION CENTER,
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY AND PROJECTIONS FOR 1977

In Cooperation with the Technical Assistance
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Mary C. Rainey
Director
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REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION INFORMATION CENTER,
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY AND PROJECTIONS FOR 1977

PART ONE: DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

The Non-formal Education Information Center is engaged in a series of activities in order to contribute to the building of a systematic knowledge base in NFE. Its clients are researchers, planners, program developers and practitioners located throughout the world. Building on resources developed prior to its establishment in August 1974, the Center has generated a series of services which have stimulated information exchanges. These activities can be viewed as falling in two categories; network building and the stimulating of network interaction.

NETWORK BUILDING

Starting with 200 names and addresses of persons invited to attend the Spring 1974 NFE conference at Michigan State University campus, the Center utilized a series of techniques to identify individuals and institutions interested in participating in information exchanges. Lists of participants at conferences related to NFE were collected and each was invited by letter and accompanying brochure to enter into reciprocal exchanges of information. Interaction at conferences was utilized: for example a display table was set up at the Comparative and International Education Society Meetings, order forms distributed and research discussed. A cooperative effort with staff in AID missions was conducted in which all education officers nominated persons in their host countries likely to utilize NFE publications. Each of these individuals were then written and invited to join the NFE information exchange network. Announcements of services were carried in newsletters; NFE publications were noted in acquisitions lists mailed out by a number of development libraries and clearinghouses. Referrals were received from network members. As a result the original list of 200 grew in the first 16 months of the center's existence to 1152 and during the last six months by a third again to 1519.

Description of the network: In an analysis of this network made several months ago.

we found that the largest percentage of persons exchanging documents in Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and Africa work in the ministries and departments of government at local and regional levels as well as in national and international agencies. Of 127 persons employed in host national governments in this network, 85 are either in unspecified divisions of the ministry of education or in the department of adult education. Twenty are in ministries which serve primarily rural areas, such as departments of agriculture, community development, interior, integrated rural development, etc. In developing areas, slightly less than two-thirds (64%) of the personnel in the NFE government network are located in national ministries. In the United States, Canada, Europe and Japan, the largest percentage of personnel are located in universities and research institutes. (See the April issue of the NFE Exchange for a breakdown of NFE Network members by Organizational Affiliation and Region.)

STIMULATION OF NETWORK INTERACTION

Activities carried out to stimulate network interaction include the following:

- a) the distribution of the NFE Information Center brochure listing current publications and services available through the Center.
- b) the distribution of publications: An analysis of distribution patterns made several months ago shows a total of 15,609 publications mailed. Requests received since, plus the publication of two new items, the Case/Neihoff monograph, Educational Alternatives in National Development: Suggestions for Policy Makers and three issues of the newsletter The NFE Exchange, have brought that figure to over 20,000.
- c) organization of a central depository for reports, statistical surveys, studies, program descriptions sent from the field.
- d) the issuing of topical acquisitions lists which itemize all entries related to a particular subject. Currently available are TALS on 1) The economics of NFE; 2) Bibliographies on NFE; 3) NFE for Out-of-School Youth and 4) NFE to Enhance the Role of Women and Families. These lists are not to be viewed as bibliographies as they do not claim to be complete representations of the field. Rather they are seen as vehicles to stimulate others to add to the list for sharing with all network members and thus the knowledge building base of NFE. These lists are now automatically sent to over

100 plus institutes, centers and libraries in our network.

e) maintenance of a reference library on NFE: The cornerstone of our information services is our reference library currently comprised of 2394 entries. The total number of references has increased during the last six months by approximately 17 percent. Of the total, 91 percent of these items were contributed in exchange for publications issued by the Program of Studies in NFE.

An investment was made in the cross-indexing of these materials, a time consuming process which keeps busy from 2 - 4 work study students, 1-2 secretaries, a quarter time graduate assistant and myself but which in the long run has paid off by enabling us to have a response capacity to answer requests for identification of different types of programs, resource specialists and subject matter.

While serving the NFE network worldwide, it should also be noted that the reference library backstops faculty and graduate students preparing to do field work, the teaching of NFE seminars in specialized areas as well as the conducting of studies by research teams.

f) the dissemination of information through the NFE Exchange: Other than personal letters the NFE Exchange is the Center's most direct vehicle of communication with network members. It is mailed automatically to persons who have received any NFE publication as well as those who have specifically requested it. A primary purpose of the NFE Exchange is to stimulate interaction between members to become information resources for each other rather than relying on one point in the network as a center. To operationalize this principle, the first three issues of the network newsletter have contained a series of features including in every case where appropriate the names and addresses of contacts. These features include:

- 1) an introduction acquainting network members with the resources represented in and available through each other's institutions,
- 2) a reference review describing studies, monographs, books and/or chapters within books judged to be of particular value on a selected topic,
- 3) personal notes describing activities of individual members and allowing for readers

to make direct in-put.

- 4) a description of a center or institute of special note. Thus far descriptions include information on publications, training programs and consulting services available.
- 5) announcements of forthcoming meetings and
- 6) network publications including newsletters, journals, acquisitions lists etc.

PART TWO: EVALUATION OF SERVICES

The usefulness of the services offered by the NFE Information Center and directions and priorities for future work can be drawn from an analysis of the types of requests and reactions received from network members. The following discussion is based on a content analysis of the correspondence of the information center over its twenty-two month existence.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION ON SPECIFIC TOPICS

Requests for information on specific topics have been received by the information center since its inception. Our files show a group of forty letters of request asking for information on 53 topics during the period from August 1974 to the present. (Other letters combining this type of request with other questions are not counted in this group.) These 40 selected inquires required responses beyond the sending of published materials; efforts consisted of library searches, identification of materials by specialists drawn from across campus and sending of letters to publishers asking that items be forwarded to colleagues abroad.

TABLE ____ REQUESTS* RECEIVED BY THE NFE INFORMATION CENTER
 BY SUBJECT MATTER AND BY SPONSORSHIP OF
 QUESTIONER
SUBJECT MATTER

<u>SPONSOR</u>	Plan, Train Manage	Evaluate	Programmed Instruction	General Information	Bibliography	Surveying	NFE for Families and Women	NFE for Youth	NFE for Adults	Health NFE	Economics of NFE	Literacy	Rural NFE	Mass media and Communication	NFE in Latin America	TOTALS
Government	4		1	4	1		6	1		1		1	1	3	1	19
NGOs		3				1	1		1		1			3	1	6
Universities, Schools		1		3	1		2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1		14
Individuals									1							1
TOTALS	4	4	1	7	2	1	9	3	4	3	2	2	2	7	2	

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* Analysis is based on letters containing only requests for information on special topics. It does not include letters containing several types of requests.

Table ____ suggests that the most urgent areas in which network members want information are NFE for Families and Women (9), general information and information on use of mass media and communications in general (7 each). Response to these requests has been slow because of lack of time of NFE personnel who can judge the quality of references. To short cut response time, the topical acquisitions lists were prepared on subjects where the center could identify from its collection a number of quality references. An unsuccessful attempt to obtain volunteer help was made. It is suggested that this service be augmented by the provision of an additional quarter time graduate assistant. Support of this activity would help consolidate first information of greatest need to practioners.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAM OF STUDIES IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

While letters of this type are received in great number by the Director of the Institute of which the information center is a part as well as faculty who have designed courses in non-formal education, the NFE Information Center has 17 general inquires in its files asking for information on the Program of Studies in Non-formal Education. All letters were received in 1975 and the first part of this year. They can be categorized in four groups; those asking for information on short term courses and seminars; those wishing to apply for degree programs in non-formal education; those requesting descriptions of curriculum offered by the university in NFE to consider in designing programs at other universities and those inquiring whether there are graduate students interested in doing research overseas with their institutions.

TABLE — REQUESTS RECEIVED BY THE NFE INFORMATION CENTER FOR INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAM OF STUDIES IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION BY TYPE OF CURRICULUM SAUGHT AND BY YEAR REQUEST WAS MADE

<u>TYPE OF CURRICULUM</u>	<u>YEAR</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>
	1975	1976 (first six months only)	
Short Term Courses or Seminars	1	2	3
Degree Programs in NFE	6	3	9
Descriptions of Curriculum offerings by the university in NFE	2	2	4
Requests for graduate students to conduct research	1		
TOTAL	10	7	17

These letters indicate that requests currently received inquiring with respect to training in NFE at Michigan State University ask most frequently for admission in formal degree programs as compared to enrolling in seminars, short courses or workshops. The four requests received from individuals seeking to design and start university sponsored programs in NFE reflect a similar bias toward training specialists in degree programs.

Given the expression of need and the lack of conceptualization of training programs for specialists in NFE, the topic may be a beneficial area to explore in an international forum. A range of representation could be invited from diverse institutions. Training programs might be designed differently depending on the relative strengths of the resources of sponsoring agencies (i.e. land grant universities vs literacy training centers vs cross-cultural training institutes.) The NFE Information Center could assist by identifying different types of centers and pulling together background information on training programs from its files.

NETWORKING INQUIRIES

A third type of question received by the information center are inquiries with respect to networking, that is requests dealing with exchanges between information contacts or centers for the purpose of increasing network membership and activity. Twenty-nine letters were identified dealing with such requests. They can be divided into four groups.

The first deals with requests to exchange mailing lists. Agencies involved are UNICEF, The Academy for Educational Development, the Information Center for Instructional Technology and the International Bureau of Education, Geneva.

A second group ask for descriptions of the NFE Information Center services and publications for inclusion in directories, newsletters, development journals and information clearinghouses.

A third group of correspondence, a sample of which is placed in our folder, are requests to persons in agencies in the field to nominate in-country contacts who might utilize the NFE Information Center services and publications and disseminate this information to a wider audience in local languages. Among groups cooperating in this network effort are

US/AID Missions, the African Adult Education Association and the Research and Cultural Studies section of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (USA).

A final group of networking requests ask for advice on the establishment of new information centers and services. Questions include how to identify information needs and place information in the hands of practitioners, where and how to obtain funding and whether to use microfiche. General questions are also posed as to what steps to take in establishing information, advisory and documentation services with a development education focus.

We are now far enough along to be able to identify some of the major centers of information relevant to non-formal education in developing societies. The first three issues of the NFE Exchange in its features on Centers of Special Interest and the NFE Network Publications are aimed at disseminating this information. This effort could be sped by bringing together a core group in a how-to working session on strengthening the NFE information network. Topics for sessions could include subject matter classification systems, methods of better serving practitioners and the construction of newsletters to identify network members as resources for each other.

A second recommendation is that the NFE Information Center receive specific support to either broaden the content of the NFE Exchange to discuss networking problems or that a separate news sheet with this focus be created and distributed to the over 100 centers, libraries and institutes in the network.

REACTION TO PUBLICATIONS

A fourth area of correspondence received by the center is reaction to publications. The publication program has evoked both general comment and specific responses.

Comments received with respect to the entire series of NFE publications range from general praise and interest to the stimulating of proposals for research and training. Of note is the use of the series in summarizing the "state of the art" in non-formal education; letters indicate this activity has occurred in special seminars called for that purpose, by professors in classes and by administrative directors responsible for research and training centers often at the national level of government.

Other letters react to specific publications with respect to their usefulness in stimulating research and planning on a particular topic or because the reader wanted us to know how excited s/he was made by the manuscript.

A conclusion which one can make after reading a sample of these letters is that the publications program 1) is perceived as providing a systematic knowledge base in NFE and 2) is stimulating both research and program development.

REACTION TO SPECIALIZED INFORMATION SERVICES

Responses have also been received with respect to materials issued as part of the specialized services of the information center.

The topical acquisitions lists have stimulated persons to expand these lists. See the letter files for a sample letter reacting to the TALS.

A flow of correspondence has started suggesting items for inclusion in the NFE Exchange and is, as anticipated, providing feedback which is shaping future features. Other letters reflect an excitement upon receiving the newsletter and recognizing oneself as part of the network as well as indications of usefulness in suggesting new information and international sources to write.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

Three additional types of requests have been received, but because of their more delicate nature, correspondence reflecting these areas is not represented in this review. Letters from job applicants have been received and where possible matched with letters requesting resource people. In other instances agencies of possible employment have been identified. Finally a number of manuscripts have been reviewed and recommended with respect to publication.

PART THREE: PROJECTIONS FOR 1977

The NFE Information Center in building on the existing publication and network resources of the Program of Studies in Non-formal Education has obtained recognition and response from an increasing number of participants. To carry on services currently identified as useful by network members it needs continued support. These services include:

- 1) provision of a depository for exchange materials
- 2) maintenance of a cross-indexed reference library and the purchasing of publications to obtain a balanced collection
- 3) reprinting and distribution of publications
- 4) identification of references on special topics for network members
- 5) publication and distribution of the NFE Exchange every two months
- 6) provision of review and referral services
- 7) backstopping of research and program development on campus

Additional assistance is needed to strengthen and consolidate these services, in particular:

- 1) to provide a more rapid response to questions on special topics
- 2) to diffuse this information by, for example, more frequently issuing and updating topical acquisitions lists
- 3) to strengthen through meetings and/or written communication, the networking roles of information centers working in NFE
- 4) to continue to build as well as identify resources within the NFE network.

Non-Formal Education Information Center

A Report of Activities, July 6-October 31, 1976
Joan M. Claffey, Director

The following have been undertaken by the NFE Information Center:

- a. Services in connection with the conference and workshop "Non-Formal Education and the Rural Poor," held at Michigan State University September 26-October 3, 1976 (see attachments):
 - preparation of conference exhibit of some 200 representative print materials on non-formal education (on the themes of NFE/Rural Development-Theory and Issues, NFE/Agriculture, Health and Family Planning, Women and Development, Out-of-School Youth, Literacy, Communication and Media; including case studies highlighting efforts within various countries and continents)
 - acquisition and distribution of 60 donated materials to conference participants
 - facilitation in ordering or obtaining particular non-formal education materials by conference participants
 - maintenance of conference exhibit with support staff
 - distribution of conference papers
- b. Distribution of 1740 MSU/NFE publications to persons in the NFE network
- c. Acquisition of non-formal education items
 - approximately 230 items contributed on an exchange basis
 - approximately 20 items purchased
- d. 400 persons added to the NFE Information Network Exchange, currently at 1900 persons, 48% of whom are outside the United States
- e. Largely in response to in-coming correspondence, approximately 375 letters were written and sent to NFE network members outside of the U.S., and approximately 500 letters were sent to network persons within the U.S.
- f. Preparation of an annotated bibliography of 59 journals and newsletters, dealing with Non-Formal Education and Rural Development, which are currently part of the NFE reference collection. This will be disseminated to all network members through the next NFE Exchange newsletter.
- g. Maintenance of a NFE reference collection of 2650 entries, 92% of which have been received on-exchange, by donors.

- h. Dissemination of information and advisement of persons concerning special topics/needs in non-formal education--by letter and during visitations of persons to the NFE Information Center. Whereas these kinds of special requests numbered 40-50 during the first twenty-two months of the NFE Information Center's existence, we have received 20 such dissemination requests in the last four months--from U.S. governmental personnel, individuals "in-the-field" overseas and domestically, and individuals with non-governmental organizations. Each of these inquiries have required extensive efforts beyond the sending of published materials; e.g., topical searches in our NFE materials collection, compilation of special listings of organizations, NFE centers, etc., requesting of materials from publishers or authors in behalf of network members overseas.