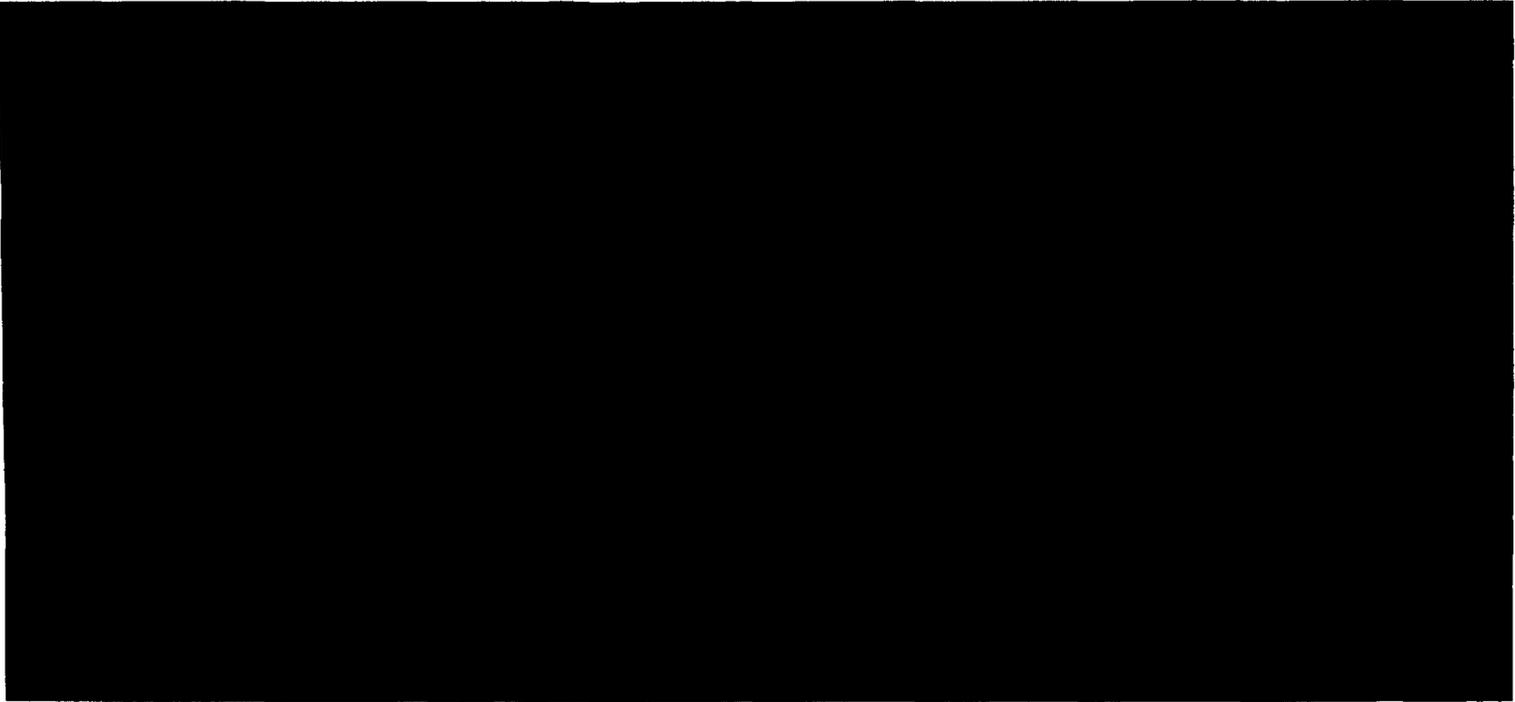


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Highlights from the
Rethinking the Learning Community Workshop



Prepared for the
Social Sector Policy Analysis Project
operated by the
Academy for Educational Development
for the
U.S. Agency for International Development
Bureau for Research and Development
Office of Education

**Highlights from the
Rethinking the Learning Community Workshop**

for the

Social Sector Policy Analysis Project

operated by

**The Academy for Educational Development
for AID/R&D/ED**

March 25, 1993
Academy for Educational Development
1255 23rd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

Workshop on Rethinking the Learning Community

AGENDA

- 09:00-10:15 Welcome: Stephen Moseley, President, AED
Introductory Remarks: Frank Method
Video and Jigsaw Activity introduced by Beau Fly Jones
- 10:15-11:10 Topic: Designs for Cognitive Instruction: Beau Fly Jones
- 11:10-11:30 Break
- 11:30-11:50 Panel Discussion
- 11:50-12:30 General Discussion: Mildred Morton, Facilitator
- 12:30-01:15 Lunch
- 01:15-02:15 Topic: Rethinking the Learning Community: John Abbott
Panel Discussion
- 02:15-03:15 General Discussion
- 03:15-03:30 Break
- 03:30-05:00 Mapping Activities
What is important?
What are the implications for A.I.D.?
Next steps?

Some Reflections on the Workshop on Rethinking the Learning Community

by Frank Method

The workshop will begin to assess the changing nature of the learning community, the changing roles of school-based educators in serving that community and the changing roles of agencies such as A.I.D. in supporting education reform initiatives. Particular attention will be given to issues of how school-based education can best prepare learners (a) for changes in the workplace resulting from new information technologies, economic restructuring and the globalization of industries; and (b) for effective participation as citizens within democratic societies.

Because these issues are so large, multi-faceted, and open-ended, we can hope in this workshop only to begin the process of dialogue among some of the people in our agency and among our contractors who are most interested in education.

Importance of the Issues: Most A.I.D.-assisted education reform in recent years has been based on an education model which is now being challenged internationally for its relevance, quality, sustainability and financial feasibility, both in poor countries still struggling to achieve basic primary schooling for most children and in relatively advanced, middle-income countries which need to respond to diversifying economies with increasing demands for workers able to function in information-intensive environments and in environments of rapid technologic change. In many of these same countries, again both relatively poor and relatively advanced countries, other social and political changes are resulting in more open and democratic social environments, in environments which require new assumptions about what skills and knowledge the typical citizen must have to participate fully and effectively.

These challenges are not necessarily a criticism or repudiation of the work with which A.I.D. has been associated over the last three decades. Indeed, many of the criticisms and new advocacies grow out of analytic and policy dialogue work which A.I.D. has supported and many of the changes toward economic and political restructuring, leading to more open markets, democratic governments and environments respecting individual rights are the result of advocacy efforts which A.I.D. has led. Further, it remains true that for many countries (and parts of most countries) the basic education agenda remains incomplete and much remains to be done to ensure an essential minimum of basic education opportunity for all.

Three factors make it timely to begin a serious exploration of the conceptual and operational models underlying international cooperation on education:

--As a result of the World Conference on Education for All and the follow up initiatives, there are new opportunities for international cooperation, including collaboration on curriculum and materials development, education measurement, research and staff training/exchange. Cooperation is now possible at the level of

individual schools or community systems as well as at the national level and new possibilities exist for cooperation involving non-government organizations, the private sector and education initiatives outside the school systems.

--As a result of geopolitical changes (most importantly, the end of the Cold War period), of changes in economic and trade relationships (e.g. the North American Free Trade Agreement--NAFTA, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation--APEC) and of technologic changes in information and telecommunications technologies, there are new possibilities for international collaboration and cooperation on education reform, for the exchange of media and materials, and for joint research and development on all aspects of education, in the private sector as well as in public education.

--As a result of education reform initiatives in the U.S. and in other countries over the past decade, a number of new understandings about the nature of learning, the environment for learning and the strategic options for accelerating, facilitating and sustaining learning are beginning to change the working consensus about the priorities for education reform. These changes can be discussed under such rubrics as "rethinking learning", "rethinking the workplace" and "rethinking the learning environment."

EDUCATION AND EMERGING DEMOCRACIES

SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP

Beau Fly Jones and John Abbott

ABC's Special Report: Common Miracles

- There has been a revolution in research on assumptions about intelligence and classroom instruction.

Whereas we used to think that intelligence was unidimensional and fixed, research on the brain reveals that its physical structure and capability respond to stimuli in the environment. An environment rich in learning opportunities and experiences will yield more brain growth and capability than an impoverished environment.

We also believe that there are multiple intelligences that are valued by society including spacial, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal--in addition to the verbal and mathematical skills taught in schools.

- Communities across America are struggling to move from a model that stresses teaching to models more aligned with cognitive research that stresses learning, thinking, and doing.

This movement demonstrates that all students can use cognitive and metacognitive strategies to function at higher levels of learning, thinking, and doing.

- As we change our instruction, we also must change our measures of success to include criterion-referenced tests that hold teachers and students accountable to specific standards, performance-based measures for talents and intelligences not measured by objective tests, and real-world tasks that allow students to demonstrate their learning to authentic audiences.

Jeff Howard tape: The Efficacy Institute, Boston

- The reality for most inner city kids (all this new research and community effort notwithstanding) is a grim picture of fragmented low-quality instruction with a testing system that creates failure and despair.
- Japan and Korea have much larger class sizes but good teaching and testing that allows the vast majority of students to attain the highest standards of achievement. Why do we tolerate the limitations of the American system?

General Discussion

- There was consistent support for the multiple intelligences concept and paradigm shifts: we are shifting from teaching to learning, building student self-confidence and self-awareness in learning how to learn.

- Other issues were: 1) who public education was for (elite vs. everyone), and 2) what we teach different groups (tendencies to teach lower class children facts while we teach middle class children thinking skills). Generally, there was acknowledgement of the need to educate all children.
- There was an acknowledgement that we need standards, but concern about how to change schools to meet the new standards.

Designs in Cognitive Instruction: Beau Fly Jones

- The traditional model of instruction derived from the Factory or Assembly-line metaphor no longer fits the needs of the workplace or the responsibilities of citizens in complex, multicultural democracies.
- Increasingly, constructivist approaches are replacing that model with new visions of learning, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

These approaches have in common 1) that learning involves linking new information to prior knowledge, and 2) that self-regulated learning is a goal for all students. However, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are defined very differently among the various approaches.

Cognitive Strategy Instruction emphasizes teaching students explicit cognitive and metacognitive strategies as an end in itself.

The **Dual Agenda** teaches representational and metacognitive strategies as a means to learn concepts and content so that students can develop mental models of what they learn. Assessments emphasize communication skills and performance on authentic tasks.

Situated Cognition immerses students in rich learning environments to engage in real-world tasks with performance-based assessments (also known as the "Apprenticeship approach").

- Each of these methods has been demonstrated to be effective with students at risk.
- All three types of constructivist instruction require some changes in the teacher and student roles, compared to the Factory Model which casts the teacher as information giver and the student as a passive recipient.

In the Cognitive Strategy approach, the teacher provides information about strategies, but scaffolds the instruction to progress from teacher-directed learning to independent learning. The teacher teaches students to plan and monitor their own learning as well as to transfer the strategy to new contexts.

In the Dual Agenda approach, the teacher provides procedural information about specific strategies, but the teacher-student relationship is collaborative and content is usually

driven by questions and problems. The teacher encourages students to set goals, formulate questions, identify problems, engage in student-to-student and student-to-teacher discussions, evaluate each others' work, develop strategies for self-assessment, and sometimes play the role of the teacher.

In the Situated Cognition approach, the teacher seeks to guide students to develop concepts and principles about the content by working through diverse real-world problems. The contexts and difficulty of the problems increase as students gain mastery. The teacher may provide explicit instruction regarding content or skills but only when needed or requested by students. Thus, learning is inquiry driven and occurs mainly in functional contexts.

- Another difference among the approaches concerns where learning takes place. Cognitive Strategy instruction almost always takes place in the classroom. The Dual Agenda usually takes place in classrooms but may involve some field trips and excursions. Situated Cognition seeks to simulate real world environments in school (e.g., by constructing a rocket and testing it) and/or to provide experiences for students beyond schools by accessing data bases and community-based activities.
- All three approaches may use performance based assessments and portfolios.

Panel Discussion: Noel McGinn, Elena Lenskaya, and Bob Morgan

- While there was some reticence about the term, constructivism, panelists generally agreed that 1) the traditional model is too narrow; 2) all kids can learn; 3) learning involves constructing meaning; and 4) we need new teacher training and new instructional materials, approaches, packages, and assessments to implement these ideas. We also need new incentives.
- There was some discussion about what learning is important. There was some agreement that we need to teach content and strategies as long as a given strategy was appropriate to the content and it was not taught at the expense of content.
- It is clear that the new learning does not require schools as we know them.
- We need to address and respect multicultural interests.

General Discussion: Jones' Presentation

- Most of the discussion of this period took the emphasis on learning as given, focusing instead on issues of how to implement the new ideas.

Several comments showed that most AID-supported projects involved systemic reform of the delivery systems, but only a few supported pedagogic reforms consistent with the new emphasis on learning (e.g., African Primary Science program (1965-77); Namibia; Zimbabwe; El Salvador)

It was generally acknowledged that new programs must respect and build on/use the cultural environment, goals, and resources of the recipient country (e.g., students writing their own textbooks)

Technology can be used as an expert coach.

- There was some discussion of national goals and standards, especially how to integrate new knowledge of content to the national reforms in other countries.

Rethinking the Learning Community: John Abbott

Young people need both social and intellectual development; it is foolish to attempt to raise general standards of education by simply focusing on an activity within school (which to a child is generally a 'contrived environment' however good this may be) without capitalizing on the child's personal experience on learning outside school. Recent research in cognition and associated subjects show the critical importance of the young learner being able to relate new understandings to his/her current knowledge; to learning being related to the learner's 'need to know'; and for learning to be structured in ways which have traditionally been practiced...i.e. to move from the general to the specific, not the other way around, and for it to be practiced in a social, collaborative context.

For this to happen two changes are essential. First, the community (in its narrowest context all those who have contact in any way with children) has to accept its corporate and individual responsibility to provide 'rich learning opportunities' in myriad ways outside of school; but it invests both time and resources in helping children to learn from their environment, and prepare them to be fully operating members of the community. Second, pedagogic practice within schools needs to be restructured around constructivist principles and all teachers should come to recognize and celebrate the importance of informal personal learning.

The unit of delivery for this has to be bigger than just a single grade-related school; hence the community...a place where people feel a sense of identity and personal responsibility.

The creation of such communities requires the mobilization of key community figures, and progressively the build-up of adults, other than teachers, to act with the professional skills normally associated with the teaching profession. It requires experimenting with new structures for delivery, and a re-appointment of normal statutory funding resources.

Such developments need to be seen in terms of something bigger than just 'educational restructuring'. Western societies are probably caught in the midst of a massive paradigm shift in learning, working, and social structures which is every bit as profound as the industrial revolution of the mid 19th century. Changes in schooling are intrinsically linked with many other changes in life styles. It is in the community's interest to understand these, and shape schools and other social structures in ways which will increase man's capability and imagination...rather than restrict them.

Panel Discussion: Noel McGinn, Elena Lenskaya, and Bob Morgan

- There was considerable discussion as to how to define the boundaries of schooling, if the unit of change really is the community and it may include local, national, and international constituents. Some of the questions were:

Is the learning community anywhere where learning takes place? Which community members does it include?

We can't be responsible for changing communities as well as schools, so what can we change?

How can schools add this responsibility to the list of things they already must do?

- What resources are needed for change? Who is responsible for school change (in this new concept of community)? We need an alliance of educators and others as well as technology to produce real change.
- How do we organize learning experiences to allow for problem solving (real-world problems) with adults?

General Discussion: Abbott's Presentation

- While there was general consensus that involving the community was critical to reform, much of the discussion returned to the questions raised by panelists. Major concerns were:

that some communities have more resources and parent involvement than others; we might add to the underclass

that we do not have a clear definition of what community means

that some communities could choose not to educate the children as did a community in Michigan (some asked, why did this happen and what could be done? others asked whether the community was correct, choosing to close the school rather than provide an education that they considered inadequate).

- There was some consensus that in terms of education in the US, we should not "tinker around the edges" any more; we need comprehensive, systemic change--a paradigm shift. At the same time, there was doubt that we could achieve this due to lack of human and financial resources. There was also some question as to whether we had yet pushed the limits of conventional approaches in other countries.
- A related question was why the large scale reforms of the 60's were lost. Some explanations:
because the reforms were piecemeal/around the edges, not comprehensive systemic change.

because they were mandated from the top, implemented by people in universities, and did not involve communities.

Since it was a time of financial well-being for the country as a whole, we lacked the political will for sustained change.

because the nation did not really need a highly trained, well-educated labor force.

- Systemic change is very difficult, especially at the secondary level, and very expensive.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

- In looking back over the presentations and discussion for the day, several people tried to sum up where there was consensus:

Inquiry approach is do-able.

The potential for apprenticeship models is substantial.

Teacher training is vital to implement these new approaches.

Technology can help in training teachers and raise the consciousness of the general public (as in social marketing), not just through television but also radio and other technologies.

We can learn from schools and communities in other places.

We need more interaction with the global community/world schools.

- Planning for such changes will take place in a different context.

We need different types of inputs/data.

We will need leadership and legitimate authority.

- The decision points for the new paradigm are very different from the Factory model.

The vision of learning is driven by national goals and standards that reflect the new paradigm, changing needs in the workplace and democracy, and new learning communities.

The new paradigm expands the boundaries for curriculum, instruction, and assessment beyond the physical structures of the school through technology and new involvement of students in the community and community in the school.

Political will and a focus on teacher training are important variables.

- We need new ways to share new ideas broadly and quickly to teachers and other stakeholders.

We need an educational digest magazine.

We could use technology to bring education news to the community of educators.

(Factory Model)



National Standardized Tests

Local Standardized Tests

(Basic Skills, Not Thinking Skills)

(Formal, Not Informal Learning)



Curriculum/Textbooks



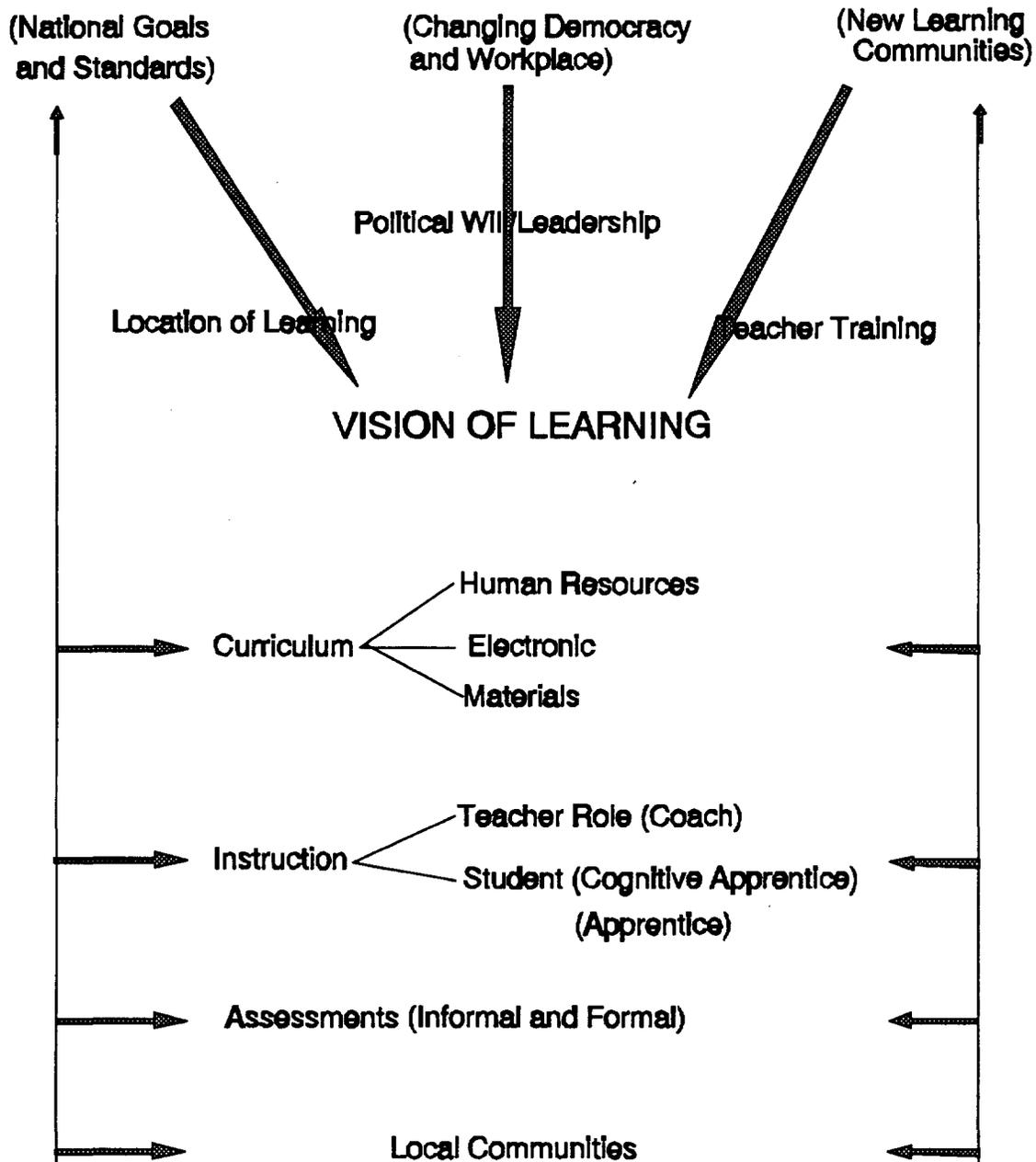
Classroom Instruction

(Teacher-Directed)



Parent-Teacher's Organization

New Decision Points



Points added during discussion:

- Political Will/Leadership
- Location of Learning
- Teacher Training

Transcription of Rethinking the Learning Community Workshop

10:00 Idea Sharing following ABC videotape "Common Miracles" excerpts

- Growing Brain - dendrites
- Emphasis on learning, thinking, doing
- How to relate to standards that are requirements?
- New strategies are building self-confidence. Will it carry through to secondary school?
- Are we educating an elite or everyone?
- Different kinds of smartness and how they are used
- Teaching lower-class children knowledge
- Teaching middle-class children thinking skills
- Tracking - total welfare might be better if all children educated better
- Examine the logic behind current approaches
- Need to shift the social paradigm so all intelligences are respected
- Standards are needed - but need to determine how to get there
- Child needs to understand own skill/approach to learning
- Using multiple intelligences as a means or an end
- Helping kids understand how they learn and teachers to learn to use new ways

11:45 Panel Discussion following Jones Presentation

McGinn

1. What Learning is important?
Content varies with methods (a difficult question to answer now)
2. What is the experiential base?
Which are the sources?
3. Where?
Learning does not require schools

All methods rely on expert teachers

All require additional resources

All require new packaging

therefore we need to think about learning by future teachers

Lenskaya

- Developing countries is a tricky term - all countries are developing
- What kind of performance do we want from our children? How to assess?
- Need to be clear on values to be emphasized (difficult because multicultures)
- Expert teachers - How do teachers learn? What incentives do they have for retraining?
- Primary stages of education get less qualified teachers
- Major learning occurs before school

Morgan

Experimental Psychologists agree:

- Learning --> brain growth
- Curriculum too narrowly defined
- Multiple intelligences exist
- Measurement of learning is ineffective
- All kids can learn a lot more

But...

- Cognitive strategies can be learning outcomes - but not at the expense of other learning
- Individualized instruction
- Most learning is hierarchical
- Instructional materials need to be organized differently
- The key is the teacher (can't create such rich learning environment in most of the world)
- Inquiry learning is only one approach. Some things must be learned in other ways
- What is constructivism?
- We need research to assess these techniques (don't know enough)
- We have to define the outcomes expected by state and community and then prioritize

12:15 - General Discussion

- Aim - to integrate content and how it is conveyed in developing national reform
- 1989 - National goals for education in U.S.
Now - National debate on what students should know and be able to do
What standards?
Systemic reform - examples exist in AID projects
- Not what you have, but how you use what you have
Great potential in Third World classrooms (**added later:** Such as students writing own textbooks) (How approach textbooks) (**added later:** If a student has to analyze a book [as in videotape] to see what it aims to teach him, does this really mean the book is bad? Maybe this analysis proactive, critical thinking?)
- Universal experience - across countries
- Have to use the cultural environment to promote learning
- Technology can be an expert coach to the learner
- Third World countries have resources to implement these ideas
- African Primary Science Program - deserves review (25 years ago)
- The Great Debate - broad goals exist but specifics of how and what are different
We don't have all the answers but we share and continue to seek ways to reach consensus
- Zimbabwe - consensus in response to war --> how to change schools with what you have.
They did the impossible.

2:15 Panel Discussion Following John Abbott's Presentation

McGinn

- In what settings outside the school does learning take place?
(The ecology of the learning environment)

Lenskaya

- Tracking is not like real life
- Working with others, problem solving, etc. are important for real life
- Technology must be used for learning

Morgan

- J. Gardner The Learning Society
- E. Faure Learning to Be
- Improving public education requires resources
- Need alliance of educators and others to get real change
- What can we change?
- Sustainability is an issue

Method

- What do ordinary adults say to kids? Kids want to know
- Teams
- Who is learning? Individual? Team? Community?
- Not a matter of working more - it's working and thinking differently

Abbott

- Can't move in small steps - enormous energy needed to change
- Need international cooperation and networking to join intellectual and how-to skills

2:35 - General Discussion

- Unit for change may be the community (not the nation)
- Why were the reforms of the 60's lost?
Perhaps because the reforms were piecemeal - not comprehensive systemic change
(David Cohen - established system is strong so change only occurs at margins)
- What is community?
(parents, industrialists, geographic location)
- Risk in increasing role of community and reducing role of school - might increase inequity
- How to get from the learning individual to the learning community

- Industry spends a lot on training
Secondary schools a problem
U.S. is too expensive - big role for highly trained people
Concept of community is critical
- Parent involvement - difficult in inner city
- Michigan - community closed education system after votes of support failed
How can we help that community?
- What kind of society do we want? A large underclass?
Education for what?
We are social beings.
Model of big cities because people must work together is changing

2:55

- Learning is important for everyone
- Michigan may be operating from the old model
60's - not the same motivation for change because there were lots of jobs
- Symbolic analysts - internationalists quietly seceding from national community
But security may be tenuous too
- How can technologies help us make choices in resource allocation?
- Democratic pluralism
- Gender issue
- Current model (schools) has reached its limits

3:50 - General Discussion and Next Steps

- Inquiry approach is do-able
- Lots of work needed in teacher training
- Technology can help in training teachers
- Preschool and parental education are important parts of learning community
- Teachers can validate child's informal learning
- Need to find ways to use limited resources
- We tend to universalize issues but universals may not be the answer.
Universals affect expectations.
- What indicators of progress should we use under new approaches?
(This needs further discussion.)
- Are we looking for a new paradigm?
Or for diversification of present systems?

4:00

- Are we pushing the limits of the conventional schooling approach?
Perhaps we have in the U.S., but perhaps not in developing countries.
- Let's be creative about incentives to encourage people to improve their performance
(within the education system)

- Context of planning is changing. Data used in past for decision making is no longer adequate
- Need to move from abstract to real change requires leadership and legitimate authority e.g. What is the role of the school administrator?
- Economists' view of education --> frustration about lack of correlation between input and output.
Issue is more complicated than just saying we have taken the issue as far as it can go. You can't just improve part of a complex system.
- AOTs - Adults Other than Teachers
Potential for introducing apprenticeship models is substantial
- In education, we need more interaction within the global community
We need an educational digest magazine to share ideas broadly and quickly to teachers.
- a Reader's Digest - can get ideas in a few minutes.
Need media consultants to translate information

4:20

- We need to think more broadly.
How can technology bring information to the community of educators?
- In the U.S., Education Digest, but has no international content
- Who is the learner?
It is the individual and the group
- Are resources limited?
This is not an either/or question.
If we broaden our scope, resources are not limited.
- Technology can be used to raise the consciousness of people at large.
- International Cons. Forum on education for all - looking for collaboration and dialogue between educators and media - to enlist media assistance with education. What is their vested interest? What role can media play?
- Remember simple technologies - not just TV and computers
- How to link today's discussion to work in progress?
- We need to think in terms of "world schools" - linking into the global community
- We in the U.S. can learn from schools and communities in other places
- Social marketing is essential

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