
KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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It is well-nigh impossible to speak in global terms about non-formal education because of differences in resources endowment, levels of wealth and growth, and national idiosyncracies and traditions. However, I hope that the experiences we shall share here will be of some benefit to participants in this conference in serving the countries from which they have come.

The Challenge Contemporary world opinion is that poverty is no longer necessary nor is it the inevitable lot of man. The scientific and technological achievements of our age reinforce the belief that it is possible to develop and sustain a poverty-free world. The key instrument for achieving this objective is the application of knowledge and skills to the resources at our disposal. However, there are limits to this optimistic opinion because known natural resources are finite, the rate at which we are consuming them is high, some of them are not renewable, and the population of the world is growing rapidly. To these physical limitations must be added human weaknesses and social and institutional constraints. I venture to suggest that life at all times has been a mixture of opportunities and risks not fully foreseen, as well as a challenge. The subject of this conference accepts the challenge and indicates that opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills should be available to all sections of every community to enable them to contribute effectively to the fight for a better life in a better world.

This conference has been asked to search for ways of drawing rural areas into the mainstream of education and also of bringing people often neglected into the mainstream of economic growth. The President of the World Bank has spelt out the nature of the social, economic and political implications of the challenge in the following words:

Some 800 million individuals continue to be trapped in absolute poverty; a condition of life so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality, and low life expectancy as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency. Absolute poverty on so massive a scale is already a cruel anachronism. But unless economic growth in the developing countries can be substantially accelerated, the now inevitable increases in population will mean that the numbers of the absolute poor will remain unacceptably high even at the end of the century.

For the theme of this conference we could hardly have chosen a better venue than India where non-formal education has been used and continues to be used as an instrument for political, social and economic change. A great leader of this country - Mahatma Gandhi - used non-formal education to arouse political and social awareness and to stimulate the liberation of subject peoples throughout the world. Today we are to examine aspects of non-formal education which concern national development; that is, we are to find out how we can mobilize all

our human resources for the task of social and economic transformation. This will require us to pay particular attention to the rural areas where the bulk of the population lives and where the need to improve the conditions of life is greatest. It might be apt here to quote Gandhi who said; "Freedom and progress are fundamentally related to self-government and the economic regeneration of the villages"

Political and
Social Awareness

Mentioning non-formal education as a means to stimulate political and social awareness might alarm some people; but it is a legitimate function of adult education to deal with the realities of life! In studying economics, adult classes have been concerned with the lot of the under-privileged, the conditions of life of the peasant, the struggles of trade unions, housing problems, factory conditions, and so on. In history, politics and world affairs, non-formal education tends to take a human interest in socially and politically oppressed people and their struggles to liberate themselves. From my own observation I know that, in the UK, workers' education classes dealing with the anti-colonial struggle are well-attended whether they be on India, the West Indies or Southern Africa. Even in dealing with literacy, technical and vocational subjects, adults recognise and value links between what they learn and their living experience. Apart from the precedents we know of, there is, surely, every justification for non-formal education not confining itself to vocational or material needs but seeking the broadening of minds and the understanding of life.

Increasingly, United Nations conferences on a variety of topics - such as the environment, population, international trade, food, technology, and human rights - are providing subject matter for national study and action. For instance, the estimates of the FAO Indicative World Plan for Agriculture Development, and the documents of the UN World Food Conference of 1974, point to a food shortage in the 1980s which will hit the under-developed countries very hard. In this respect what India has done in spite of natural disasters to reverse the downward trend and to sustain the growth of food supplies, should give countries similarly placed the necessary courage to act resolutely and quickly to help themselves. Scientists of India are forging and strengthening their links with agriculture, industry and economic and social development generally. The 63rd session of the Indian Science Congress drew up a programme of action which required every discipline to determine what and how it could contribute to integrated rural development. The massive effort in extension service which this programme envisages is best appreciated when one realizes that India has the world's third largest number of scientists, technologists and engineers.

Strengthening
the Weak

Mobilization of the masses of any given country means making sure that every citizen is equipped to make an effective contribution to national development. This is why non-formal education focuses on the under-schooled and those who have never had any opportunity for schooling and training. In a modern society such ill-equipped persons are "marginal men" like shoe-shine and messenger boys, porters and beggars who engage in blind-alley occupations. As the computer, automation, robotics, and other labour-saving devices spread, there is a danger that dead-end occupations may increase so that more and more under-schooled and untrained persons become economic and social misfits who run the risk of being tools of the underworld or becoming members of it. In their own interest they need to acquire skills and in the interest of the community they need to be more productive. Already, one problem of under-development is enforced idleness; with so many tasks to be performed there are so few people

equipped to perform them! There is a correlation between the quality of a population in terms of skills and ability to produce, and the prosperity of that population. This is why current indices of economic progress include the percentage of literacy and the percentage of children of school age in school. In traditional societies the young followed their parents in the trades and activities of their village, acquiring skills and gaining familiarity with the folkways of their rural community. This system of growing up placed an emphasis on conserving tried skills and values; it suited a society which changed slowly - almost imperceptibly. But the communities and the target groups at which non-formal education aims today are already overtaken by social and technological change. The gap between them and those who have access to modern skills keeps widening. Developing countries are made up of several subsocieties at different stages of modernization - rural/urban, illiterate/educated, masses/elite, and so on. These differentiations cause conflicts of interest, and place some sections of a society at a disadvantage to others. This is not to suggest that traditional systems do not have their own serious economic and social contradictions. Non-formal education, by fostering informed opinion, strengthens the weak and vulnerable elements in the struggle for survival.

With increased facilities for travel, many young persons leave home without any skills or sense of values, and, in the shanty towns in which they find themselves, fall easy prey to unscrupulous town dwellers, becoming the thugs of political groups - the mob which agitators manipulate and the petty criminals who degrade society. By providing vocational training through departments of social welfare, church-sponsored organizations and voluntary bodies, it is possible to equip young persons with skills to permit them to be gainfully employed by the building, motor-mechanical, electrical and other trades.

In the past, when young parents did not migrate en masse to the urban, mining and industrial centres, the village community held together. Parents farmed, and grandparents took care of children. But this rural system has broken down because the grandparents these days have in many cases to farm and fend for themselves and have not the time to devote to children. Here I think we find our first area of requirement for non-formal education, the pre-school child. In some urban areas day-care centres are taking over the role formerly played by grandparents. However, the number of day-care centres is not enough, and governments face the problem of either diverting funds from the normal schooling system to support day-care centres or continuing to expand the primary schooling system. But the demand for normal schooling at all levels has been increasing to such an extent - some developing countries are already spending 30% or more of their national budget on formal education - that there is social and political resistance to any diversion of funds to non-formal education.

Out-Of-School Youth

Governments committed to universal primary education programmes for the age-group 6-14 years have found it difficult to keep to their targets. The figures released by international organizations show that for the whole world - allowing for population increase - there may be fewer children in school in 1985 than out of school. Opportunities for secondary and higher education are even more restricted and so there will be many who cannot be provided for by the formal education facilities. For these, non-formal education offers alternative opportunities such as mass literacy programmes; functional literacy schemes; evening schools; community education programmes; rural reconstruction projects; on-the

job training by public and private enterprise; teaching through radio and television; and correspondence courses.

Universal
Basic
Education

Because of the financial constraints and resistance to change, a study prepared for UNESCO has suggested that universal basic education in a variety of forms should be the top priority for educational policies in the 1970s. In my view, this suggestion is not a practical one. The assurance of universal basic education sounds democratic and equitable because it will meet the minimum learning needs of everybody. But the idea is fraught with contradictions. If basic education facilities are run parallel to the normal school system they will create a dual education scheme which will tend to institutionalize social and professional differences. If they are run in place of the universal primary school system there is no greater likelihood of sufficient funds being forthcoming to finance universal basic education than there have been for universal primary schooling. Within the framework of existing political, social and economic structures any attempt to change formal education will have to be the result of a deliberate decision - an act of political will.

The societies which developing countries seek to build are not to be characterized by dull, low-level uniformity. They require leadership strength at all levels. Indeed, the mistake which the Belgian administration made in the Congo - now Zaire - was to presume that with universal primary education a nation state could evolve gradually. When it was suggested that such an evolution might take some 30 years, the administering authorities were horrified by the short space of time allowed for such a radical transformation of social and economic conditions. In the end it took less than ten years! The developing countries are not isolated communities. They are affected by what happens around them, and the target groups for non-formal education make up the bulk of the citizenry of many states who feel the stress and strain of backwardness.

The Pre-School
Child

As a result of the exodus of young parents from the rural areas, the need for non-formal education for the pre-school child is shifting to new growth centres. Government welfare departments set up or encourage the setting up of child-welfare-cum kindergarten centres near markets where mothers leave their children during busy trading periods. Day-care centres are also provided by some progressive employers and parents' associations. The advantages of these child-care activities include access to clinics, regular satisfaction of nutritional needs, promotion of hygienic habits, facilities for group games, and familiarization with toys as a prelude to the use of mechanical gadgets and processes in modern life. Such institutions however should be open to inspection to ensure that proper standards are maintained.

The School-Age
Child

Proceeding age-wise, the next group that should be exposed to the benefits of non-formal education is that of the school-age child deprived of school. Though most developing countries have universal primary education on paper, the realities of the situation make it difficult for some of them to have even a 25% enrolment. This means that about 75% of young persons entering the labour force annually lack the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to make them productive citizens of their communities. The problems of this group could be best tackled by the provision of pre-vocational and apprenticeship training. Labour unions could well take an interest in the preparation of prospective members of their trades and ensure that trade tests are carried out at the end of their training period. Initiatives could be taken by counselling officers.

Youths outside the school system, roughly between the ages of 13 and 18, form the next group to be considered in relation to non-formal education. A distinction should in theory exist between urban and rural groups, but in practice youths of these ages hardly stay in the villages and are mainly to be found in the urban, mining and industrial centres. They should be made literate and taught such trades as carpentry, masonry, metal-working, blacksmithery, the repair of motors and machines, and modern agricultural techniques. Again, the question arises concerning the sponsorship and financing of these aspects of non-formal education. The problems of youth outside the school system affect primary and middle-school leavers as well. The idea of terminal points within the schooling system does not appear to be fully accepted or understood. Pupils from primary schools on taking the school-leaving examination expect to enter secondary schools or teacher training institutions, and, if they are not selected, consider themselves failures. From secondary institutions they expect to enter university, and again, if they do not gain entrance, they feel they have failed. This is a considerable source of wastage because the training of these young people equips them for many jobs and they should in fact be considered in the same light as university students who fail to obtain their degrees. Too much money - private as well as public - has been invested in these students for them to be discarded by a system which has no bridge between formal qualifications and real job requirements.

Because of the literary nature of the school curricula in most developing countries, young people lack useful skills like book-keeping, shorthand, office procedure and other requirements for secretarial and clerical work. As part of a process of vocationalizing formal education, school leavers as well as drop-outs should have access to on-the-job training in the practical skills needed in industry and modern life. Chambers of Commerce and industry could in conjunction with Ministries of Commerce and Labour make facilities available to supplement the skills of school leavers and other youths.

Some countries like Ghana, Kenya and Botswana have attempted to provide special training and opportunities for gainful employment to unemployed young people. Brigades have been established for builders, for agricultural workers on state farms and for construction workers on roads, drainage and well-digging. The intention was that after the members of these brigades had acquired skills and experience they could enter the labour market or be self-employed. The result of the brigades scheme has been rather disappointing in that most of them have continued as para-statal organizations and their members have remained permanent wage-employees.

Rural areas are at a disadvantage in their relations with town dwellers. They seem unable to protect themselves against retail sellers, produce buyers, landlords and money lenders. When essential commodities are scarce, rural dwellers pay higher prices than townspeople, sometimes even for items produced in the rural areas themselves. The collection and marketing system works to the advantage of the middleman rather than the consumer or the small farmer. It is recognized that bulk purchasing by groups which can keep full records and control distribution can help to bring down prices in the rural areas. In some countries co-operative and savings societies have helped to bring about improvement to farming methods, marketing produce, and providing access to credit.

Women and
Girls

Too often formal education has taken the role of women for granted as being confined to the farm and the home. Mass education and community development have given more coverage to girls and women than the formal school system has ever done. In fact, it has brought girls and women into the very centre of integrated rural development programmes. The UNECA has established a special programme entitled "Women in Development", and a number of African governments have modelled portions of their national development plans on it. The thinking behind this has been summed up by a Catholic missionary who has worked in Ghana for over 30 years:

All civilization stems from leisure

Women should have the time and the energy to devote to bringing up their children; in an ideal world, too, their daughters should receive as much education as their sons so that in time they will be able to impart this knowledge to their own children.

No society has flourished without a degree of female emancipation.

Nowadays women's tasks are more clearly defined - family health, food and nutrition, and home management - these being key elements in integrated rural development, and it is possible for special classes to be arranged to supplement whatever training and experience they get at home.

In West Africa women traders are actively engaged in marketing, commerce and home industries. Because there were few facilities for vocational training, the centres established by Social Welfare and Community Departments caught on not only in Ghana but in many other parts of Africa in offering courses in catering, food processing, secretaryship and accountancy. Apart from courses and vocational training centres especially designed for women and girls, all adult and extra-mural classes are also open to them as well as political and social organizations. In West Africa, too, market women participate effectively in elections and other political activities. A degree of basic education has become essential for them so that they may be able to exercise their vote knowledgeably, fill in their tax returns, keep their books and bank accounts and keep in touch with the world at large.

Extension
Services

The U.S. Land-grant Colleges were established as power-houses of knowledge to equip, stimulate and encourage prospective farmers, and to undertake research and spread its results among farming communities. The colleges sometimes referred to as the Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges (A & M) provided training in the ancillary mechanical aspects of agriculture - construction, carpentry, foundry work, repair and maintenance of machines and motors. In developing countries, however, the farming community often has no means of providing such supporting services. As a result, produce does not reach the market easily and the price differential between the farm and the market is very wide.

The extension service departments of the Land-grant Colleges performed a teaching and supervisory role. Perhaps one of the most striking examples of success was at Tuskegee where under the leadership of Booker T. Washington liberated slaves were taught to start a new life of prosperity outside slavery. The "A & M" approach included whole families by providing home and farm extension services. The farms aimed at maximum output and the homes were expected to ensure that nothing was wasted. Fruit and vegetables were preserved; empty food and flour bags were made into sheets, curtains and clothing; barrels and empty wooden crates were made into furniture; and empty bottles and jars were used for storing preserved

foods. Household feeding and nutrition were taught as well as home management and environmental sanitation.

The U.S. Service system, as at present organized, seems too elaborate and costly to be copied by developing countries who do not have the financial resources or personnel to provide full geographical coverage. But is it necessary to have only professionals with university degrees as extension workers? Turkey, for instance, under Kemal Ataturk used non-commissioned officers being resettled from the army as agricultural extension and community group leaders. The most reasonable approach is for each country to determine the level and kinds of skills required and to engage the necessary personnel for the work to be done. The danger here is that excessive political pressure may be brought to bear to over-staff the service with untrainable persons.

National and International Examples

It seems to me that non-formal education for development is essentially an ideological or evangelical effort to create a responsive mass movement, and this calls for skill as well as commitment and dedication. The Scandinavian Adult Education built around the folk high schools took on an evangelical form with the organizers and participants attaching considerable importance to the "spoken word". It is claimed that changes in agriculture, living conditions in rural areas generally and the welfare state in Sweden, Denmark and Norway have their origins in this kind of non-formal education. In the 1940s UNESCO organized seminars and training courses in the Scandinavian countries to observe and discuss features of the folk high school systems which could be adopted in different developing countries.

In Japan non-formal education, especially in agriculture and industry, was part of a national movement to build a strong and prosperous nation. Experienced farmers, described as "veteran farmers" toured districts to share the secrets of their success with their neighbours. Farmers' associations met regularly to discuss agricultural problems and to visit demonstration farms to observe what industrious and successful individuals could achieve. I hope this conference will have an opportunity to learn about farm support services in India, to visit projects, and observe aspects of the Science and Integrated Rural Development Programme, the contribution of non-formal education to agricultural recovery and the spurt in industrial development of the last few years. The lessons learned and the experience shared will enable us to adopt and adapt successful practices in our various countries.

An experiment initiated by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations in rice cultivation in the Philippines has led to the establishment of International Agricultural Research Centres in other parts of the world. These centres are concerned primarily with tropical food crops - until recently a neglected area of study. The International Institute for Tropical Agriculture in West Africa has a vigorous programme for improvement in yield and quality of food crops of the humid tropics. Other centres are the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics with headquarters in India; the International Centre for Maize and Wheat Improvement with headquarters in Mexico; and the International Livestock Centre for Africa, with headquarters in Ethiopia.

Apart from these research institutes the UN World Food Conference established the International Fund for Agricultural Development in Rome, and a World Bank Committee co-ordinates their activities. Already some developing countries, including India, have contributed research results to the international centres. Thus a network for a world-wide agricul-

tural extension service is coming into being and is already supporting non-formal educational efforts in developing countries.

A type of non-formal education which has been expanding as communication improves is correspondence courses. Perhaps this conference would find it worth-while to examine the arguments for and against the widespread use of correspondence courses. It seems to me a comparatively inexpensive and yet effective arrangement for non-formal education even though it follows the school system of awarding credits and certificates. External degree facilities have made it possible for determined students to secure university education. Commercial and technical institutions have also made it possible for vocational and technical courses to be taken in various countries. As the technical and professional communities in Commonwealth countries grow, such courses can be given locally, as for example in East Africa where a beginning has been made.

Literacy

Since the 1940s there has been intense international concern to eliminate illiteracy from the world. Leading the anti-illiteracy campaign has been UNESCO whose General Conference passed a resolution "considering the illiteracy of almost a thousand million of the world's inhabitants to be a disgrace to all mankind" and inviting the Secretary-General to provide "... for a considerable acceleration of the campaign against literacy, possibly contemplating a UNESCO Literacy Decade". UNESCO launched a large-scale Experimental World Literacy Programme aimed at one million adults, but its results were disappointing and the experiments have been considerably de-emphasised.

Doubts have gradually arisen about the claims for literacy as a key to modern knowledge and a tool for breaking the isolation and backwardness of rural communities. Literacy campaigns were found to be subject to a dramatically high proportion of drop-outs, and even successful completers of literacy courses often relapsed into illiteracy - perhaps because of the unavailability of sufficient reading material relevant to their needs and interests. It is now agreed that literacy is not essential to the goals of adult education, for example in extension services, vocational training, co-operatives and trade unionism. A re-appraisal of the claims of literacy has been made and as a result UNESCO's emphasis has been shifted from literacy to what is called "basic education" - an attempt to provide a functional, flexible and low-cost education for those whom the formal system cannot reach or has already by-passed. Basic education is expected to satisfy minimum learning needs for individuals as a threshold level for participants in economic, social and political activities.

The change of emphasis has removed one of the psychological and real barriers adults encounter in trying to "adopt modern behaviour and attitudes". Adults without illiteracy inhibitions tend to learn and to put what they learn into action much faster than young persons. They draw on their experience to watch for and avoid pitfalls. The substance of "basic education" can be communicated to, and inculcated in, adults faster and more effectively orally and in their own language - a feature noted by the International Commission on the Development of Education in its suggestion that education by radio had great possibilities. The new approach has called attention to drama, poetry, music and dance not only as subjects but as media for non-formal education.

The media offer opportunities for international co-operation in the provision of non-formal education. Films and radio

scripts for different age-groups and different communities can be exchanged. There is the Open University in the UK; Mexico uses the radio for language teaching and elementary education; out-of-school courses are offered by Radio Santa Maria in the Dominican Republic; several African countries have successfully broadcast radio farm forums. Already, television is taking into homes in developing countries a wealth of information which makes modern life one of continuous learning. These innovations illustrate the role and scope of non-formal education. We need to take full advantage of every available means for satisfying the expanding learning needs of our growing populations and rapidly changing societies.