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## Adult education and development

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For development has a purpose; that purpose is the liberation of Man. It is true that in the Third World we talk a great deal about economic development — about expanding the number of goods and services, and the capacity to produce them. But the goods are needed to serve men; services are required to make the lives of men more easeful as well as more fruitful. Political, social, and economic organization is needed to enlarge the freedom and dignity of men. Always we come back to Man — to Liberated Man — as the purpose of activity, the purpose of development.

But Man can only liberate himself or develop himself. He cannot be liberated or developed by another. For Man makes himself. It is his ability to act deliberately for a self-directed purpose, which distinguishes him from the other animals. The expansion of his own consciousness, and therefore of his private and himself, in environment, and the society, must therefore ultimately be what we mean by development.

So development is for Man, by Man, and of Man. The name is true of education. Its purpose is the liberation of Man from the narrow and sterile state of ignorance and dependency. Education for us means men's private and social freedom — to become that capital of themselves, that they know, and the environment in which they live. The same is true of education, or indeed of the man; through education, should therefore be

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But Man can only liberate himself or develop himself. He cannot be liberated or developed by another. For Man makes himself. It is his ability to act deliberately for a

self-determined purpose, which distinguishes him from the other animals. The expansion of his own consciousness, and therefore of his power over himself, his environment, and his society, must therefore ultimately be what we mean by development.

So development is for Man, by Man, and of Man. The same is true of education. Its purpose is the liberation of Man from the restraints and limitations of ignorance and dependency. Education has to increase men's physical and mental freedom — to increase their control over themselves, their own lives, and the environment in which they live. The ideas imparted by education, or released in the mind through education, should therefore be liberating ideas; the skills acquired by education should be liberating skills. Nothing else can properly be called education. Teaching which induces a slave mentality or a sense of impotence is not education at all; it is attack on the minds of men. This means that adult education has to be directed at helping men to develop themselves. It has to contribute to an enlargement of Man's ability in every way. In particular it has to help men to decide for themselves — in cooperation — what development is. It must help men to think clearly; it must enable them to examine the possible alternative courses of action; to make a choice between those alternatives in keeping with their own purposes; and it must equip them with the ability to translate their decisions into reality.

But doing things means cooperating with others, for in isolation Man is virtually helpless physically, and stultified mentally. Education for liberation is therefore also education for cooperation among men, because it is in cooperation with others that Man liberates himself from the constraints of nature, and also those imposed upon him by his fellowmen. Education is thus intensely personal in the sense that it has to be a personal experience; no one can have his consciousness developed by proxy. But it is also an activity of great social significance, because the Man whom education liberates is a man in society, and his society will be affected by the change which education creates in him. There is another aspect to this. A Man learns because he wants to do something. And once he has started along this road of developing his capacity he also learns because he wants to *be*; to be a more conscious and understanding person. Learning has not liberated a Man if all he learns to want is a certificate on his wall, and the reputation of being a »learned person«, a possessor of knowledge. For such a desire is merely another aspect of the disease of the acquisitive society — the accumulation of goods for the sake of accumulating them. The accumulation of knowledge, or worse still the accumulation of pieces of paper which represent a kind of legal tender for such knowledge, has nothing to do with development.

So if adult education is to contribute to development, it must be a part of life — integrated with life and inseparable from it. It is not something which can be put into a

box and taken out for certain periods of the day or week — or certain periods of a life. And it cannot be imposed: every learner is ultimately a volunteer, because, however much teaching he is given, only he can learn. Further, adult education is not something which can deal with just »agriculture«, or »health« or »literacy«, or »mechanical skill«, etc. All these separate branches of education are related to the total life a Man is living, and to the man he is and will become....

## Change and adult education

The first function of adult education is to inspire both a desire for change, and an understanding that change is possible. For a belief that poverty or suffering is »the will of God« and that Man's only task is to endure, is the most fundamental of all the enemies of freedom. Yet dissatisfaction with what *is* must be combined with a conviction that it can be changed: otherwise it is simply destructive. Men living in poverty or sickness or under tyranny or exploitation must be enabled to recognize both that the life they lead is miserable, and that they can change it by their own action, either individually or in cooperation with others.

The same thing is true of what I would call the second stage of adult education. That is, helping people to work out what kind of change they want, and how to create it. For example: It is not enough that the people in a village should come to recognize that something can be done about their endemic malaria, that it is not an evil which has to be endured. They also have to learn that malaria can be treated with drugs, or prevented by controlling mosquitos, or that malaria can be dealt with by a combination of curative and preventive action. And all this must be followed up with action. Thus we have a whole series of educational activities all of which involve a learning process — an expansion of consciousness. The combination of them all is required if the development — of men and the environment — is to be life-enhancing. And all of them can be assisted by the activities of an educator.

## The scope of adult education

Adult education thus incorporates anything that enlarges men's understanding, activates them, helps them to make their own decisions, and to implement those decisions for themselves. It includes training, but is much more than training. It includes

what is generally called »agitation« but it is much more than that. It includes organization and mobilization, but it goes beyond them to make them purposeful.

Thinking of adult education from the point of view of the educators, therefore, one can say that they are of two types, each of whom needs the other. The first are what one might call the »generalists«. They are the political activists and educators — whether or not they are members of, and organized by, a political party or whether they are Community Development workers or religious teachers.

Such people are not politically neutral; by the nature of what they are doing they cannot be. For what they are doing will affect how men look at the society in which they live, and how they seek to use it or change it. Making the people of a village aware that their malaria can be avoided, for example, will cause them to make demands upon the larger community in which they live. At least they will demand drugs, or insect spray, or teachers; they will no longer be passive beings who simply accept the life they know. And if people who have been aroused cannot get the change they want, or a substitute for it which is acceptable to them, they will become discontented — if not hostile — towards whatever authority they regard as responsible for the failure. Adult education is thus a highly political activity. Politicians are sometimes more aware of this fact than educators, and therefore they do not always welcome real adult education.

The work of these »generalists« is fundamental to adult education, it is after their work has been done — that is after a demand has been generated and a problem identified — that what might be called the »specialists« can become effective. If you go into a village and explain how to spray stagnant water and with what, you may be listened to with politeness; but your effort has been wasted and nothing will happen after you have left unless the villagers first understand what the spraying will do, and why it is important. Of course, it is possible for the »health educator« to give this explanation himself; he should certainly be capable of doing so, and prepared to do so. But his specialised knowledge can be more effective — and can be spread among a larger number of villages — if the people already have discussed and absorbed the reasons for anti-mosquito spraying and developed a desire to learn how to do it for themselves.

It is at the level of this »specialist« adult education that the division into health, agriculture, child care, management, literacy, and other kinds of education, can make sense. But none of these branches can be self-contained; their work must be coordinated and linked. The work of the agricultural specialist must be linked with that of the nutritionist and that of the people who train villagers to be more effective in selling or buying; and he may himself find the need to call upon — or lead the villagers

towards — the person who can teach literacy. Adult education in fact must be like a spider's web, the different strands of which knit together, each strengthening the other, and each connected to the others to make a coherent whole....

## The methods of adult education

... A mother does not »give« walking or talking to her child; walking and talking are not things which she »has« and of which she gives a portion to the child. Rather, the mother helps the child to develop its own potential ability to walk and talk. And the adult educator is in the same position. He is not giving to another something which he possesses. He is helping the learner to develop his own potential and his own capacity. What all this means in practice is that the adult educator must involve the learners in their own education, and in practice, from the very beginning. Only activities which involve them in doing something for themselves will provide an on-going sense of achievement and mean that some new piece of knowledge is actually grasped — that it has become something of »theirs«. It doesn't matter what form this involvement takes; it may be a contribution to a discussion, reading out loud, or writing, or making a furrow of the required depth and width. What is important is that the adult learner should be learning by doing, just as — to go back to my earlier example — a child learns to walk by walking.

There is a second very fundamental determinant of adult education method. It is that every adult knows something about the subject he is interested in, even if he is not aware that he knows it. He may indeed know something which his teacher does not know. For example, the villagers will know what time of the year malaria is worse and what group of people — by age or residence or work place — are most badly affected. It is on the basis of this knowledge that greater understanding must be built, and be seen to be built. For by drawing out the things the learner already knows and showing their relevance to the new thing which has to be learnt, the teacher has done three things. He has built up the self-confidence of the man who wants to learn by showing him that he is capable of contributing. He has demonstrated the relevance of experience and observation as a method of learning when combined with thought and analysis. And he has shown what I might call the »mutuality« of learning; that is, that by sharing our knowledge we extend the totality of our understanding and our control over our lives.

For this is very important. The teacher of adults is a leader, a guide along a path which all will travel together. The organizers and teachers in an adult education programme can be no more than that; to be effective therefore they have consciously to identify

themselves with those who are participating in it primarily as learners. Only on this basis of equality, and of sharing a task which is of mutual benefits, is it possible to make full use of the existing human resources in the development of a community, a village, or a nation. It is within this context of sharing knowledge that all the different techniques of teaching can be used.

The most appropriate techniques in a particular case will depend upon the circumstances, and the resources, of the learning community and of the nation in which it lives. For it is no good spending time and money on elaborate visual aids which need skilled operators and electricity if either the skilled operator or the electricity is lacking in the village which wants to learn! It is no use relying upon techniques which need imported materials if you are working in a country that has a permanent balance of payments problem. And in a poor country the techniques used must be of very low cost and preferably capable of being constructed out of local materials, at the place where the teaching will be done, and by the people who will teach and learn. Self-reliance is a very good educational technique as well as being an indispensable basis for further development.

### The organization of adult education

This need to become increasingly self-reliant in adult education, as in other aspects of development, will have to be reflected in the organization of adult education activities. Obviously there is no »ideal« adult education organization pattern to which all nations could, or should, aspire. The type of organization has to reflect the needs, and the resources, of each country, as well as its culture and its political commitment. The one unavoidable thing is that resources have to be allocated to adult education. It will not happen without them! There is a regrettable tendency in times of economic stringency — which for poor countries is all the time — for governments to economize on money for adult education. And there is a tendency also, when trained people are in short supply, to decide that adult education must wait, or to pull out its best practitioners and give them more prestigious jobs in administration.

All this means that adult education has to be given priority within the overall development and recurrent revenue allocations of governments or other institutions. What priority it obtains is perhaps one of the most political decisions a government will take. For if adult education is properly carried out, and therefore effective, it is the most potent force there can be for developing a free people who will insist upon determining their own future.

backward countries they are laughably small in relation to the need. So choices have to be made between such things as generalized education, different kinds of specialized mass education, the radio, mass circulation of subsidized literature, residential education, the training of the educators and an increase in teachers untrained in techniques, and so on.

Once again, there is no »best« choice or balance among all these necessary activities. What is appropriate will depend upon the existing level of knowledge and understanding in different fields, and upon the existing resources in men, materials, and equipment. In Tanzania, for example, we have now broken through the stage where miserable conditions were regarded as »the Will of God«. Our present task is therefore primarily that of helping people to acquire the tools of development — the literacy, the knowledge of health needs, the need for improved production, the need to improve dwelling places, and the basic skills necessary to meet all these needs.

We are finding that the organization of this second stage is much more difficult, with our limited resources, to ensure, that when people have learned a skill, the ploughs, and the carpentry equipment, and the survey levels etc. are also where they are wanted and at an accessible price level! But there is a saying that nothing which is easy is worth doing, and it could never be said that adult education is not worth doing! For it is the key to the development of free men and free societies. Its function is to help men to think for themselves, to make their own decisions, and to execute those decisions for themselves.

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