

## ALS INFED TO JUSTIFY THE LIFELONG LEARNING LITERACY FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNERS

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Henry Ford once supposed, “Anybody who possesses education stays young.”

Lifelong learning (LLL) as a learning goal has become a major consideration in planning for Alternative Learning System (ALS) programs and projects, which are not categorized as either non-formal education (NFE), or informal education (INFED). Introduced as lifelong learning for sustainable development (LLL-SD) in Philippines in the early 20’s by the UNESCO, this paradigm gradually influenced the practice of ALS in the Philippines. More than functional literacy (FL) which is the immediate objective of ALS, LLL is concerned with learning beyond schooling... learning for all... throughout life.

In the context of ALS, it is the INFED that best reflects the features of LLL. With INFED, learning is flexible, diverse and available at different times and different places (ubiquitous). Its objectives address the concerns for personal fulfilment, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion, life-wide dimensions that transcend economics and vocational matters.

The Informal Education Program is intended to be used by the mobile teachers, district ALS coordinators of the Department of Education and other interested individuals or organizations who desire to implement INFED in ALS. This was prepared by ALS Task Force Office and ALS Implementers with the guidance of consultants from the academe for use as a quick reference guide for learning facilitators of INFED. More specifically, the program serves the following purposes: To equip ALS implementers with

relevant basic information and background on INFED in ALS within the LLL context; to enable ALS Implementers to explore, determine and implement diverse and dynamic INFED programs for the wider community of learners; to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and practice of INFED and LLL by creating a niche in the global scenario (Informal Education Program A handbook for Implementers).

INFED in ALS is founded on several important concepts from which the operational definition of INFED was drawn. These building blocks are: the principles of learning that operate in ALS including Adult learning theory and principles, the conceptual framework that guides the understanding of LLL, and the existing literature on INFED. These principles were formulated on the experiences and practices of field implementers on the ground. The Principles of Learning in the Alternative Learning System are as follows: Learning does not only take place within the four walls of the classroom; teachers and schools are not the only source of learning; learning is fun when teaching-learning strategies are employed; learning is not compartmentalized into subjects but it is integrated and holistic; meaningful learning happens when learning is perceived as relevant and can be applied immediately; learning is enhanced when the needs, interest and experience of the learner are considered; prior learning must be recognized even when acquired with the use of mother tongue; life skills are best developed through the application of the 4 A's of the learning process: activity, analysis, abstraction, application; functional literacy is a right of all Filipinos regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, social standing. In addition to these ALS principles, there are adult learning theories and principles that guide ALS implementers. These are based on an understanding of how adults learn best. Andragogy as a process of learning uses approaches that are problem-based, collaborative and which gives emphasis on equality between teacher and learner. Briefly, the principles of adult learning are the following: 1. Adults (grown person) are as expected driven, engaged and self-focused, 2. Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences, Adults are goal oriented, relevancy oriented, practical, and 4. Adult learners are expectant to be appreciated.

Adult Education literatures defined Informal Learning or Education in the context of Lifelong Learning in various ways. These are the following as for related literature:

Just to figure Philip Coombs thoughts on InfEd a.k.a. the Informal Education, he expressed that it is a lifelong improvement through person's acquire attributes, knowledge, skills and values from daily practice and learning inspirations and educational resources in her/his population, from her/his affiliation or family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and mass media (Baguma and Oketcho, 2010). He further explained Informal Education as learning which results from conscious efforts either on the part of the learner to learn from environment.

Ahmed agreed to Coombs and further described Informal Education as unorganized, unsystematic and even unplanned (at times) yet, it has great contributions for the pronounced substance of any person's total lifespan knowledge that of "schooled person" (Smith, M.K. 1999, 2008).

Paolo Friere, an educator has called for a deeper understanding of the life world of adult learners. His learning theory suggested that people learn new things best in the context of their use and assumes that one's daily experiences in various settings, peer group, family, etc. - are significant frameworks for learning. Friere's theory supports that different strategies must be used to address the adults' needs for lifelong learning in the context of the demands of daily life of adults. He suggested that in order for adults to truly learn, they must be able and willing to take control of their own environment and act upon it.

UNESCO Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) stated that Informal Education can be provided through formal, informal and non-formal education. This can be obtained efficiently when it is planned, purposeful, self-paced through reading, television and radio program or close observation of activities aimed at meeting the needs of the recipients.

ALS Definition by Philippine Experts on Education (academe and education practitioners may 10, 2006) described INFED as an educational program that addresses the interests and special needs of the marginalized and other interest groups of learners that make use of life skills approach for personal development. It is learning outside the formal and non-formal education program that is drawn from life experiences and is acquired from reading, media and close observation. It is lifelong learning process for civic, aesthetic, cultural, spiritual and economic and physical development.

*References:*

Informal Education Program Guidelines Module