

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INFORMAL EDUCATION FOR TEACHING CONSUMER EDUCATION

\*Dr. Urvashi Pande \*\*Dr. Manjari Acharya

**The Informal Education-**Some see informal education as the learning that goes on in daily life. As friends, for example, we may well encourage others to talk about things that have happened in their lives so that they can handle their feelings and to think about what to do next. As parents or careers we may show children how to write different words or tie their laces. As situations arise we respond. Others may view informal education as the learning projects that we undertake for ourselves. 'Going with the flow' opens up all sorts of possibilities for educators. On one hand one may not be prepared for what comes, on the other one may get into rewarding areas. There is the chance, for example, to connect with the questions, issues and feelings that are important to people, rather than what one think might be significant. Such conversations and activities can take place anywhere. These contrasts with formal education which tends to take place in special settings such as schools. However, we should not get too tied up with the physical setting for the work. Formal education can also take place in almost any other location - such as teaching someone to add up while shopping in the market. Here it is the special sort of social setting educator has to create that is important. One builds an atmosphere or grabs an opportunity, so that one may teach.

Obviously, informal educators work informally - but they also do more formal things. They spend time with people in everyday settings - they also create opportunities for people to study experiences and questions in a more focused way. This could mean picking up on something that is said in a conversation and inviting those involved to take it further. Informal education is works through, and is driven by, conversation. It involves exploring and enlarging experience. It can take place in any setting. The purpose of informal education at is no different to any other form of education. In one situation we may focus on, say, healthy eating, in another family relationships. However, running through all this is a concern to build the sorts of communities and relationships in which

people can be happy and fulfilled. John Dewey once described this as educating so that people may share in a common life. Those working as informal educators have a special contribution to make here.

A focus on conversation is central to building communities. The sorts of values and behaviors needed for conversation to take place are exactly what are required if neighborliness and democracy are to flourish. What is more, the sorts of groups informal educators such as youth and social action workers work with - voluntary, community-based, and often concerned with mutual aid - are the bedrock of democratic societies. It comes as no surprise then that those working as informal educators tend to emphasize certain values. These include commitments to:

- Work for the well-being of all.
- Respect the unique value and dignity of each human being.
- Dialogue.
- Equality and justice.
- Democracy and the active involvement of people in the issues that affect their lives.

As informal educators one has to spend a lot of time thinking about the values that run through our work. They do not have a curriculum or guiding plan for a lot of the work, so they have to consider how they should respond to situations. This involves going back to core values. Reflecting on these allows educators to make judgments about what might best help people to share in a common life.

**Need of Specialist for Informal Educators-**As we have seen, everyone is an educator - but some people are recognized or appointed to teach and to foster learning. There are three main reasons why specialist informal educators may be needed. First, it may be that some situations demand a deeper understanding or wider range of skills than many of us develop in our day to day lives. In many communities the role may be fulfilled and developed by 'elders' or by those who are recognized to be wise. In other situations, often linked to the development of capitalism, there has been an increased division of labor. Additional or alternative forms of learning and teaching are needed. Second, it may be that people do not have the time to spend



exchanging and learning with others in the ways they wish or need. Because of their situation, they may not have a chance to engage in the sorts of conversations they find fulfilling. Third, a good deal of the work that informal educators engage in is with other professionals. For example, an informal educator working in a school will have to spend a lot of their time deepening and extending the understanding and orientation of teachers and other staff. With the pressure to produce results and to achieve good test scores, relationships and processes can be easily neglected.

**Role of Informal Educators-** · To place conversation at the centre of their activities. · To operate in a wide range of settings - often within the same day. These include centres, schools and colleges, streets and shopping malls, people's homes, workplaces, and social, cultural and sporting settings. · To look to explore and enlarge experience. · To put a special emphasis on building just and democratic relationships and organizations. · To use a variety of methods including groupwork, casual conversation, play, activities, work with individuals and casework. While their work for much of the time is informal - they also make use of more formal approaches to facilitate learning. · To work with people of all ages although many will specialize around a special age range e.g. children, young people or with adults. In other words informal education is lifelong education. · To develop particular special interests such as in children's play and development; community development and community action; literacy and basic education; advice; outdoor and adventure activities; arts and cultural work; and youth work.

**Informal Education and Other Forms-** 'Informal education' may well be described in Scotland as community education or community learning, in Germany as social pedagogy, and in France as animation. Similarly, informal educators' concern for justice and democracy may well bring them close to popular educators in South America. Another possible way of describing this way of working is as 'non-formal education'. We can get into all sorts of side alleys if we spend too much time arguing for our own way of naming the work. We can focus too much on difference and not enough of what is common. However, there is a serious point in thinking about these things. Naming the work in this way or that brings out different qualities, emphasizes different things.

**Non-Formal Education:** Some may contrast informal with non-formal education. The people who do this tend to present: · Informal education as the lifelong process in which people learn from everyday experience; and · Non-formal education as organized

educational activity outside formal systems. The distinction made is largely administrative.

**Community Education:** 'Community education' is also used to describe the work we are interested in. Community educators in Scotland and in many Southern countries have similar concerns and approaches as 'informal educators'. In fact the way that the Scottish Community Education Council defines community education is very close to our view of informal education. The main difference may lay in the way that workers view the setting in which they operate. Community educators may see themselves as educating for community, in the community. Informal educators may also be working to further democracy and commitment to others, but they may not label the setting for their activities as being 'in the community'. A social worker in a residential home may see it as a community, but not as the community as a whole.

**Youth work and community work:** Some youth workers and community workers describe themselves as educators. Others may view themselves, first and foremost, as organizers (of groups and activities), or as case or care workers. As a result, youth work and community work can take very different forms. To limit confusion we can focus on aim and 'client group': · Youth work: work with young people that is committed to furthering their well-being. · Community work: work that fosters peoples' commitment to their neighbors and participation in, and development of, local, democratic forms of organization. If we think about these as educational processes, then much of what is claimed to be special about youth work and community work are the very qualities we have been describing as informal education.

**Social Pedagogy and Social Education:** In Germany it may be described as social pedagogy and associated with social work and, perhaps, a 'problem-focus'. It is a perspective, 'including social action which aims to promote human welfare through child-rearing and education practices; and to prevent or ease social problems by providing people with the means to manage their own lives, and make changes in their circumstances' (Cannan et al. 1992: 73-4). Originally, in the mid 1800s, the term was used for a way of thinking about schooling as education for community (or sociality). Hence, social pedagogy is sometimes translated as 'community education'. In North America it was talked of as 'social education' - and connected with many of John Dewey's concerns.

**Animation:** In France and Italy and among some arts workers the processes explore here may be described as animation. For example: · Using theatre and play as means of self-expression with community groups, children and people with special learning

needs. (Sometimes called creative-expressive animation). · Networking with people and groups so that they participate in and manage the communities in which they live (sometimes called socio-cultural animation). · Developing opportunities for pre-school and school-children such as adventure playgrounds, toy libraries, outdoor activity centers, and organized sports activities (sometimes called leisure-time animation). At one level, we can talk of animation as 'making things move or happen' - much as animators do of cartoon pictures. In this view workers are motivators or 'inspirers'.

**Looking forward-** Here, then, is something of the promise of informal education. Hopefully, informal educators: attend to the vast range of opportunities that arise in everyday settings for learning. Look to relationships and processes - and how these can be made more fulfilling. Express certain, compelling, concerns - for democracy, justice and respect for others. Informal education's central form - conversation-carries these. Value people's experiences and feelings work in ways that help people to deepen their understandings and commitments and to act on them. In daily life we all act as educators from time to time. But there is also a need for specialists - educators who are skilled in, and committed to, working with people in everyday situations so that life can be more fulfilling and all can share in its fruits.

**“Consumption and consumerism is a continuous process from cradle to grave”**The world of advertising seems too good to be true to many. It has glamour; it offers the best things in life and has quick-fix solutions to almost all problems that young consumers may face. Advertising has become such an inextricable part of our lives - thanks to television - that we can't really imagine life without it. Teenagers are psychologically and indirectly forced to go for conspicuous purchase. Therefore, the consumers must be wise buyer and directly in contacts with the utilities. Currents trends indicate that teens have a large amount of disposable income but are not knowledgeable about consumerism. Since children are becoming young consumers at an early age, children must learn to obtain information about goods and services, understand the psychology of selling and advertising, learn to shop wisely and distinguish between wants and needs. It, then, becomes very important for children to be taught to Shoppe wisely and a few simple precautions will ensure that they choose the right product at the right price. Since consumer education is a tedious and procedural subject its teaching becomes challenge for the teacher in the class room. If proper implementation of educational technology is given cumulative acquisition of attitudes and skill in knowledge will

occurs by building upon what one has previously understood. Teaching technology involves the mechanism of instructional process in the classroom situation. It has three components 1) Method 2) Material 3) Media. In the traditional approach to school teaching, most class time was spent with the teachers lecturing and the students watching and listening. The students work individually on assignments, and cooperation is discouraged. Such teacher-centered instructional methods have repeatedly been found inferior compared to instruction that involves active learning, in which students solve problems, answer questions, formulate questions of their own, discuss, explain, debate, or brainstorm during class that is cooperative learning, in which students work in teams on problems and projects under conditions that assure both positive interdependence and individual accountability. This applies understanding of content, acquisition of critical thinking or creative problem-solving skills, formation of positive attitudes toward the subject being taught, or level of confidence in knowledge or skills. Today it is the believed that education must be based on the principle that **humans are social animals** who learn best in real-life activities with other people (informal education). Given this view of human nature, the most progressive teacher desires to provide not just reading and drill, but also real-world experiences and activities that center on the real life of the students. A typical progressive slogan is **“Learn by Doing!”**

**What I hear I forget, what I see I remember, what I experience, I know.** To make hearing permanent and effective, plain talking and lecturing is not enough, it has to be accompanied by practical experience and exposure. The educator must provide opportunity. Actual involvement by learner so that they can see, practice, gain confidence, ask question and apply to real life situation. Keeping this philosophy in mind, the researcher in present study has developed three educational media in order to test the efficiency of educational media for imparting consumer education and to equip the children with critical awareness regarding consumerism and in a participatory process attempt to discover ways of strengthening their response towards the media.

**Methodology:** The research design used for present study has two pronged approach. A descriptive survey with pre-tested, validated interview schedule was used to acquire the information needed for knowing the awareness among the students regarding the consumerism .After the survey an intervention program (need based) was designed to enhance the level of awareness among the selected respondents, thus the most suitable design for the

present study was a combination of descriptive cum experimental method sandwiched with again the descriptive survey method for post test.

**Upshot:** Majority of the rural and urban respondents had acquired better mean scores regarding general consumer awareness in pre-test. Scores acquired regarding redressal mechanism, advertising gimmicks were poor. Regarding problems faced by consumers in market place rural respondents had awareness up to certain extent. After the intervention program, majority of the respondents from urban and rural area scored the highest in general consumer awareness, the second highest score was in enhancement regarding buying behavior. Regardless of the locale, majority of the respondents showed major change in awareness regarding advertisement misguiding consumers and problem of product and services; whereas problems of weights and measures, cheating by shopkeeper showed less enhancements in awareness in spite of intervention.

To test the difference in the effectiveness of the participatory, semi-participatory and non-participatory media on the enhancement level of awareness regarding consumerism among the selected respondents, one way ANOVA was carried out.

(Table 1 show that the  $F_{cal}$  (41.287) was greater than  $F_{tab}$  (2.99) at alpha 0.05. This implies that there is a significant difference amongst the three mean net gain scores of the respondents exposed to different educational media. Thus it could be said that the type of media and involvement of the respondents had significant effect on the enhancement level of awareness regarding consumerism

Table 2 shows the performance of the respondents in each treatment group having exposure to selected educational media. The net gain scores, which is difference between the pre-test mean scores and post-test mean scores was computed for the three treatment group, which showed that Participatory Media was the highest (1.0087) amongst the rest educational media; whereas Semi-Participatory Media scored 0.6616, coming on the second position. Non Participatory Media scored the least (0.4321), stood on the third position.

Table 3 shows the least significant difference between the three treatment mean scores. Least Significant Difference Test is a statistical procedure that determines if the difference found between two treatments is due to the treatment or if the difference

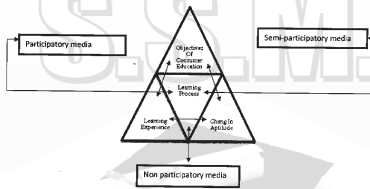
is simply due to random chance. Table 11 depicts that semi-participatory and participatory media ( $0.3471_{LSD}$ ) performed significantly better than Non participatory media ( $0.2295_{LSD}$ ). The participatory and non-participatory media ( $0.5766_{LSD}$ ) performed than that of participatory and semi-participatory media ( $0.3471_{LSD}$ ). However all the three means were greater than LSD calculated (0.1254), indicated that the results were “significantly different” due to the treatment and not due to random chance (Fisher, 1935).

**Conclusion** -From the results of present study it could be seen that regardless of gender and income there is a significant difference in enhancement of awareness level regarding consumerism between different educational media group. The group exposed to participatory media (Games and activity, informal education) showed the evident difference in enhancement of level of awareness than the other groups exposed to semi-participatory (television followed with group discussion, formal and informal) and non-participatory media (lecture method, formal). Negligible difference was observed in enhancement of level of awareness

in the group which was exposed to non-participatory media.

Thus the results of the study justify the statement that *What I hear I forget, what I see I remember, what I do I know*. To make hearing permanent and effective, simple talking and lecturing is not enough, it has to be accompanied by practical experience and exposure. The educator must provide opportunity of actual involvement to learner so that they can see, practice, gain confidence. ask question and apply to real life situation. The inadequacy with the lecture method particularly for school children has been brought to the fore by Orukotan and Oladipo 1994; Oke and Oshodi, 2000 and even present study confirms the same. It is expedient for the school teachers to make use of participatory media in passing on the information to the students. The investigator is sure that story of consumption and consumerism will continue effectively for the trained teenagers.

Student’s motivation and engagement are ongoing challenges for classroom tutors especially when dealing with monotonous and procedural subject like consumerism. To adequately teach students about consumerism, activities must be relevant to them and the items they consume. It should be intrinsic and motivational. It should be enjoyable, promote participation, help students set personal goals related



to consumerism, and provide positive feedback to the students. With careful, creative planning, consumerism in the classroom can be a rewarding experience for the students, both today and in the future. Promoting intrinsic motivation to become wise consumers, it requires following three strategies. **First**, the tutor must eliminate threats and stress in the classroom. Learning activities that are fun and encourage participation can help the students learn and retain an increased potential for continued behavioral change. **Second**, helping the students set meaningful goals (both long- and short-term) will assist them in transferring classroom learning into practical application. **Finally**, feedback is a great source of intrinsic motivation. It is essential that activities promote success and acknowledge student achievement. It is also helpful to create activities that provide automatic feedback so that students are encouraged to strive towards success (Jensen, 1998). It can be concluded from the major findings of the present study that using interactive activities and games in teaching encourage active learning as well as collaboration. The most important point of

participation in an activity requires the use of content by the learner; thus ensuring students are working with the ideas that are being taught, and applying them. In lecture situations students are assumed to be doing this on their own (Reuben, 1999).

In addition to memory and performance benefits, games and interactive learning method have important social benefits for students. Students need to have learned the content and to be supported in the social norms of applying it, therefore for students to transfer what they have learnt, they also need to practice the skill of abstracting what they know and applying it (Alexander and Murphy, 1999). Students often have particular difficulty in far, transfer tasks, where they have to use information in context very different from the learning environment. Interactive activities and games promote transfer because they require student's participation and active involvement with the core content. Creating opportunities for students to practice applying the content, such as games or stimulation, can bridge the distance between learning concepts presented in classroom and using that information to solve a problem met in their real situation.

**Table 1: Effectiveness of the participatory, semi-participatory and non-participatory media on the enhancement level of awareness regarding consumerism**

Source of variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	Fc value	F <sub>t</sub> value(2,189)	Level of significance
Between Groups	10.786	2	5.393	41.287	2.99	P-value <0.05( NS)
Within Groups	24.688	189	.131			
Total	35.474	191				

**Table 2: The net gain scores between the pre-test mean scores and post-test mean**

Educational media	Pre-test scores Mean	Post test scores Mean	Net Gain Scores	Ranking
Participatory media	1.7261	2.7348	1.0087	1 <sup>st</sup>
Semi-participatory media	1.7335	2.3951	0.6616	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Non participatory	1.8249	2.2571	0.4321	3 <sup>rd</sup>

**Table 3**

Treatment with	Mean net gain	LSD at 5%
Participatory Media (P)	1.0087	
Semi Participatory Media (S)	0.6616	0.1254
Non Participatory Media (N)	0.4321	

**Establishing significance with LSD at 5% (0.1254)**

P-N	1.0087-0.4321	0.5766	e"	reject $H_0$ ; $\mu_P \neq \mu_N$
P-S	1.0087-0.6616	0.3471	e"	reject $H_0$ ; $\mu_P \neq \mu_S$
S-N	0.6616-0.4321	0.2295	e"	reject $H_0$ ; $\mu_S \neq \mu_N$

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