

Diverse Learners in Nonformal Education

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Theoretical Orientation

- n Learning is a relational process based on trust.
- n When a trusting relationship exists between learner and teacher/context, and this relationship is appropriately mediated by other people, tools and experiences, then desired learning occurs.

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- n For various reasons, some young people and teachers do not develop trusting relationships conducive to learning in formal education settings. When alienating relationships develop in school, young people do not perform well and do not learn what the school has to teach.
 - n This situation tends to affect learners who belong to groups that are not socially privileged due to ethnicity, poverty, language, or gender.
 - n Nonformal learning settings, such as after-school programs, have features that are more likely to ameliorate this situation than schools.

Features of Successful Nonformal Settings for Diverse Learners

- n Flexible curricula
- n Locally-tailored activities
- n Stress “conversational and associational practices” (Smith, 2006) rather than curriculum practices
- n Deeply involved adults
- n Opportunities to develop youth-valued identities
- n Receive community support

Outcomes of Participation in these Settings

- n Greater student engagement in academic tasks
- n Improved grades and school attendance
- n Increased motivation to continue in school
- n Higher self-confidence about school, work, and the future
- n Increased community involvement