Education Without Schools: Learning Among The Ponapeans

N. J. COLLETTA

Dr. N. J. Colletta is presently on leave from the State University College at Buffalo to work as a consultant to the Ministry of Education and Culture, Indonesia, in the areas of nonformal education and rural development.

Northeast of New Guinea and about 8° above the equator lies the highly volcanic island of Ponape, the crow's nest of the Eastern Caroline Islands.1 Ethno-graphically, Ponape is part of the greater cultural area known as Micronesia or "tiny islands." But as Mason suggests, the concept of Micronesia as a homogeneous cultural area, bordering Melanesia on the south and Polynesia on the east, loses its utility when confronted with the vast heterogeneity of cultures and languages within its bounds.2

The Ponapeans are predominantly an agrarian people who tend to live on dispersed agricultural plots rather than in consolidated villages or in the district center enclaves, Although government employment and schooling have increased their steady gravitation toward the latter. The physical environment of the island, with its geographic isolation, high rainfall, and fertile coastal plains, has structured the evolution of a subsistence agrarian economy functioning on an extended communal family effort as a means of assuring survival. It is the informal transmission of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs commensurate to this mode of subsistence that this article shall focus upon.

EDUCATION—AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

The feast was well underway. The men had just completed the uhmw (ground oven) under the watchful eyes of Daro and the others. A multitude of bread-fruit lay roasting under the heap of banana leaves and simmering stones. Daro proceeded to lay his single small breadfruit in the miniature uhmw he and his companions had so skillfully duplicated. Observing this event, his father, in a proud, joking manner acclaimed, "Now you may get married my son, you are a real Ponapean man." ... the air filled with conjoint laughter. . . . Daro was but six years old.

The above narrative, as related by a Ponapean, connotes an educational process different from Western schooling. Here, and in situations less clearly defined but much more common to the daily life of Ponapeans, knowledge, values, and skills are continually transmitted and renewed incidentally by word and by example.

Education as exhibited in formal schooling is a relatively recent innovation, but the operational phenomenon itself, in terms of learning and pedagogy, is firmly rooted in the history of man's struggle with nature from time immemorial. Anthropologists, centering on the process of enculturation, have long alluded to educational practices of mankind in their ethnographies.

In 1943, at a symposium on education and culture, Robert Redfield addressed his comments to the informal day-to-day situations in which tradition was communicated and modified.3 Later, Melville Herskovits pursued the notion of education in the broader context of a total learning system, distinguishing between the three components of education, enculturation, and schooling.4 He claimed that while education encompassed all realms of human teaching and learning, enculturation pertained primarily to nondirected learning, while schooling was that aspect of education performed by trained specialists in designated locations at particular time intervals.

Edwin Smith, when addressing himself to the process of indigenous education in Africa, divided it into three distinct areas: the "formal," as when a person is apprenticed to a trade or when the traditional rules of conduct are impressed through initiation rites; the "informal," as when young

people learn by direct imitation; and the "unconscious," as when children in their play unknowingly follow impulses which have a social end and which are stimulated by the actions of their older models.5

"In short, a well-educated person, from a cultural point of view, is a person who, to paraphrase [Eric] Fromm, wants to do what he ought to do—the 'oughtness' being defined by his culture."6 The process of transmission itself is referred to in as many ways as there are discrete disciplinary paradigms. Sociologists speak of socialization, psychologists talk of conditioning, anthropologists refer to enculturation, and educators beg and borrow from all of these disciplines and label it education. But the actual "process" still pleads understanding and clarification.

With this brief perspective in mind, we shall investigate the process of informal learning among the Ponapeans of Micronesia.

BIRTH AND INFANCY

A Ponapean child enters the world with much merriment and happiness. The child is seen not only as a gift from heaven, but also as an addition to the communal labor force and insurance for the parents in old age.

A girl usually wishes to go home to her mother to have the baby. Mothers and sisters are frequently present at the birth, but brothers are strictly excluded. Girls are expected to be stoic during childbirth, and it is very rare to hear any outcries or demonstrations of pain. The umbilical cord is buried immediately after birth to guard against black magic or any other spiritual antagonism.

The status of the young man and woman changes after the birth of their first child when they are considered officially to have entered the adult world with all its responsibilities. It is generally felt that the first girl belongs to the mother's family, the first boy to the father's family, and all others to the couple themselves. Soon after the arrival of the baby, both grandmothers come and stay for a couple of months to help the nursing mother. The girl's mother takes care of her and the household chores, while the boy's mother takes care of the baby.

Indulgence is the rule as the infant is rarely out of the arms of various family members, especially the grandmothers, aunts, and older sisters. Sometimes the mother will let the baby cry, but another family member will caress it, as a crying baby is thought to indicate a lack of love and thus could bring shame on the entire family. Even in later years, a crying child will be granted its wish in order to prove parental love. A grandmother caring for her eighteen-month-old grandson quickly excused herself from an interview when the child began to cry, explaining, "I'm sorry but I can't talk to you now because the boy is crying." She proceeded to fondle and play with the child until he was happy again. She never hit or yelled at the child, saying, "Hitting him is wrong, he is too young, he would not even understand what he has done wrong. Wait until he can understand. Then he may be punished. To spank him now is only to teach him to cry."

The infant's legs and feet are often massaged with coconut oil so that his first steps will be strong. The Ponapeans prefer to bathe the child in the mornings because they believe that the morning water is the cleanest. Since it is also the coldest, they often rub the child down with coconut oil to protect his tender body from the harsh effects of the water. Coconut oil is considered to be highly medicinal and is frequently used to guard the child against fungus and to help heal cuts.

The baby sleeps in the same room as the rest of the family and usually near the mother. The child is free to nurse whenever he is hungry. The nursing mother is given the best food, so that she will produce much milk. It is believed that the mother must eat as much as possible in order to keep her milk flowing strong. She does not work much for the first month as too much action is thought to sour the milk. She must not bathe in cold water for the same period for fear of drying

up the milk. The mother is supposed to eat during the night because the Ponapeans believe that this is the best time for the mother to produce milk. The Ponapeans will never wake a sleeping baby because they believe that a baby does most of its growing when asleep.

Weaning begins from six to twelve months when the mother starts to give the baby bananas and papaya to eat. Before the baby has teeth, special foods are prepared, but for convenience, mothers generally prefer to wait until the baby can eat regular food. Weaning is gradual and geared to the child's pace. A widely accepted psychoanalytic belief holds that such unlimited breast feeding (orality) results in a character marked by a great level of interpersonal affection and generosity.7 These are certainly traits exhibited in later life by the Ponapeans, especially as evidenced at the feast. It should also be noted that prolonged breast feeding is linked to high affectivity and dependence between parent and child which are also dominant Ponapean character traits.

When a child is able to walk, he is expected to relieve himself outside the house, but is forbidden to go near the outhouse for fear that he might fall through the hole. He usually follows the example of the other children as they go about their toilet activities. In this act the child initiates his natural mode of learning by imitation and by being controlled through fear of public (peer group) shame.

The family is careful to see that the firstborn will not be jealous of a new arrival. The firstborn will sleep with the father while the newborn sleeps with the mother. Sometimes the firstborn will be spanked if he hits his new sibling, but usually the mother will say, "This is your baby whom you must love." Although every family seems to treat the sibling jealousy problem differently, there are often enough people around so that the first child does not suffer much loss of attention.

When the infant reaches his first birthday, a feast is given to confirm ritualis-tically his survival of the difficult first year. In some instances naming the baby is withheld until this occasion for superstitious fear of premature death.

Adoption is a common practice, especially if one family has an abundance of children and another has few. It is not necessary that a very close relative adopt a child, but the person should be in the same clan. Usually a woman will adopt a girl and a man a boy. One cannot reclaim a child unless he is mistreated and runs home. One must pay to take an older child back if he has not run away, since it is considered that repayment must be made for the time and effort put into rearing the child. Sometimes there are arguments between families if the real parents do not like the way that their child is being reared, but for the most part adoption seems to go smoothly for all concerned.

When the child begins to crawl, he typically becomes the ward of the eldest daughter and is carried almost continually. Thus the dual functions of child care and training for motherhood are combined. When the child begins to walk, he takes his place in the extended family "pecking order" of playmates, and childhood officially commences.

CHILDHOOD

A child is encouraged to start helping with the family chores as soon as he is able to walk. Beginning with the task of fetching for the mother, the child will later carry water, sweep, gather firewood, and care for younger siblings. He is rarely forced into more complicated work, but he is encouraged to watch. The Ponapeans closely observe their children's behavior, and if one seems interested in a particular skill, his curiosity is quickly fed. The initial interest, however, comes from the child.

During this period the play group becomes the primary educational institution for the child. Through various forms of play the children mimic adult behavior, strengthen their muscles,

stimulate their intellect, and develop their powers of observation, imagination, and imitation. It is common to see children constructing and sailing miniature boats, spearing fish, sling-shooting fowl, and imitating dances and songs they have seen their parents perform on festive occasions. It is quite evident that this play is a direct practice of adult roles. The play group is sexually mixed and structured along a hierarchical order determined by age, with all members usually coming from the same extended family or clan. The group is marked by a great deal of freedom from parental involvement as the members of the group guide, reprove, and cultivate each other's behavior. It is here that the foundation for shame as the mechanism for social control and the adult character trait of extreme social sensitivity are firmly inculcated. At this stage also the respect and security of rank and place in the social order are first incurred.

During this period, too, the fundamental rule of all Ponapean education is laid down: All learning and teaching transpires in real life situations. There is no sharp cleavage between the life space of the child, his physical environment, and the adult world. Children are not isolated from parents in separate physical structures or caste-like categories. All take active part in family life, religious rites, and economic processes. One observes and participates when ready. The readiness is intrinsically determined by the individual and encouraged with expectations of success by significant others in the form of adults and peers. Moments of instruction are not segregated from moments of action. Learning occurs through self-initiated activity in which individuals are in total sensory involvement with their environment.8 Ponapean indigenous education is not just a listening process where the burden rests upon the teacher, but is a full educational experience with the learner actively seeking what he needs to know. Securing and developing keen perceptive powers are firmly grounded in Ponapean cosmology. They approach the world in a balanced sensate manner. They are "wholistic" and "relational" rather than "analytical" in their world view.

All education is in response to social demands. Knowledge is sought where it is thought to be meaningful and a useful guide to one's survival. The basic principles of Ponapean indigenous education are deeply rooted in the experiences of childhood. The identification with and mimicry of adult roles become a lucid learning process sanctioned and guided by the group in the context of daily living.

YOUTH

At about age ten the child becomes more active in the economic life of the family. The boys take on such responsibilities as gathering and cutting firewood and feeding the pigs, while the girls wash, cook, and care for the younger children. The earlier indulgence pattern and the unrestrained freedom of childhood now fade into the constraints and responsibilities of family cooperation. All skills are learned by working side-by-side with the elders. The prolonged observation and practice of childhood begin to get their full test as learning proceeds through private trial to public performance. A youth will humbly refuse to attempt a task unless he is sure that he can perform it correctly and thus avoid public embarrassment. Identification, prolonged observation, and confident participation become the fundamentals of learning. The entire extended family interacts as both teachers and learners. Siblings, parents, uncles, and aunts all become crucial educators in the Ponapean lineage network. Community education and apprenticeship work hand and hand as the growing youth who wishes to acquire a particular skill attaches himself to a clan member who possesses the skill he desires.

Knowledge and skills common to daily survival (tiak en sop) are free for the observation, but matters dealing with magic, medicine (winani), ritual, and legend (loquia put a put) are much more difficult to acquire. It is believed that these areas are highly sacred and are to be passed on to select individuals within a specific clan. Different clans control different areas of knowledge which are often testimony to the clan's status. Elders who control a specific area of knowledge within the clan release it gradually over time. It is common practice not to reveal all one knows until death is near. If knowledge is divulged earlier, it is believed that certainly status, and possibly life

itself, will begin to fade. Individuals are usually selected to receive certain areas of knowledge with their temperment in mind. For example, magic and medicine are typically taught to the child who exhibits the most even disposition and silent tongue, so that he can be trusted not to divulge or misuse the secrets. These secrets are not entrusted to the individual until he is well past the age of twenty, and even then they are given piecemeal until his teacher's dying moments.

Legend and ritual are frequently taught in the same manner. But one may also obtain this knowledge by close observation at feasts, through song and dance, and around the kava stone. One Ponapean made the analogy between his learning of certain legends and the putting together of a jigsaw puzzle. "First I would spend much time with different elders listening to their tales, but one has to be cautious since it is our custom not to tell all or at least not to tell it truthfully. Then I would have to compare the different versions of the legend given to me and piece them together to arrive at the real version." It is further contended that such sacred knowledge may be transmitted through dreams and spiritual inspiration. Occasionally this knowledge is traded, sold, or given as a marital dowry.

Attitudes, values, and beliefs are often implicitly transmitted through Ponapean sayings and proverbs. Such maxims as "The quietness of a man is like the fierceness of a barracuda" convey moral lessons and social attitudes.

Other advanced technical skills, such as the intricate tying of the feast house poles, the building of a canoe, and the planting of yams, are also highly guarded and diligently transmitted. These skills, like all other knowledge, are kept in the clan for status purposes and are usually imparted within the clan according to individual interest and dexterity. If a child shows interest in canoe construction, he will be singled out to learn that particular skill. Each child will be given at least one skill, although many will acquire several in varying degrees of mastery.

Another matter of considerable importance that is taught both directly and indirectly during this period is "right relations" or interpersonal gestures of respectful behavior. This lesson is usually demonstrated in the home and at the feast house, where parents will point out to the child the behavior which should be accorded certain titles of rank such as the Nahnmwarki. The child is also taught the high language (maing) to be employed when addressing nobility and the polite language forms for addressing elders. He learns not to touch those above him, especially the head of an elder, to speak softly, and to stand below people of rank when addressing them.

The feast is the one comprehensive educational experience continually repeated before the eyes of the entire community, for here rituals are performed, songs are sung, dances transpire, legends are told around the kava stone, and special foods are prepared, all in an atmosphere imbued with the acknowledgement of rank, status, and prestige. In this context, the inculcation of skills, moral teachings, and attitudes of respect culminate to reinforce ritualistically the social solidarity of the group. The traditional feast can be somewhat envisioned as the nearest functional analogy to the modem day formal school in its emphasis on instruction, indoctrination, and social selection.

MECHANISMS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Need dispositions or motivational tendencies within a culture are often both a creation and a creator of the value patterns of the controlling social structure under endemic environmental conditions, with the control being maintained through a system of rewards and punishments.

The dominant forces of behavioral control at work in Ponapean society can be categorized as: intrinsic situational mechanisms; threats and corporal punishment; supernatural sanctions; ridicule and shaming; praise and prestige; and material reward.

Both Spiro9 and Lee10 have elaborated on the notion of intrinsic motivation which applies in describing motivational tendencies among the Ponapeans. The unity of social sphere between adults and children, the immediate utilization of acquired knowledge, the reality and meaningfulness of the learning situation (in terms of survival), and the near "total expectation" that the individual is willing and capable of cultural acquisition serve as internalized incentives to self-actualization and the realization of social norms. Ponapean children deeply desire adult status and are constantly reminded of their proximity to that state. One continually hears such phrases as "Ke sohte cock wia ohl en Ponpei," or "Can't you do it like a Ponapean manl" One informant told how his father took him to work on a canoe when he was a small boy. When he exhibited the slightest interest, his father quickly placed a small adze in his hand and told him to work on a section. He claims this early granting of responsibility and verbal support gave him a strong feeling of personal worth and intrinsic motivation. He went on to recall that after that occasion he frequently pleaded with his father to allow him to work on the canoe.

Fear of the spiritual world is utilized to control behavior from early childhood onward. Little children are often disciplined with the threat that a spirit will harm them. Later in life these same adults exhibit a tremendous fear of "riyala" or spiritual curse.

Although parents are generally permissive during early childhood, they enforce strict discipline (kakos) from about age ten. Threats of loss of inheritance and shame are preferred techniques of controlling adolescents, but corporal punishment is not precluded. If the child is small enough, a mother will often project the threat of physical retaliation onto a stranger or an ominous animal. This gesture serves to place the discipline outside the nuclear family and to preserve the affective harmony of the parent-child relationship. This also explains why the avuncular role is frequently one of disciplinarian in the extended family.

Ridicule and shame are probably the most typical forms of control in Ponapean society. Children are especially quick to point out shortcomings or public blunders in the most explicit terms, while elders are more apt to utilize humor and more subtle nonverbal forms of ridicule and shame. In general, as one enters adolescence, public abuse is withheld in favor of the defensive posture of mutual respect behavior. It then becomes a social taboo to shame openly or to be shamed.

The other side of ridicule and shame, praise and prestige, are equally effective in the control of behavior. The bestowal of titles under the "prestige economy" provides the Nahnmwarki an important motivating and controlling device. Individual praise for acts of bravery, generosity, and skill are common reinforcements. Although it is accepted practice to deny obsequiously all public praise, this behavior sometimes makes the praise seem even more outstanding. An American teacher in the community college related an experience that she had with this cultural trait. When she began teaching, she publicly praised one of the students, and he denied the praise. She continued to praise him lavishly as he profusely continued to deprecate his abilities. Finally, she stopped, realizing that she was being led by his self-denial to honor him far beyond initial intent.

As in every known society, some form of material benefit accrues to certain behaviors. In Ponape, a highly titled person will receive a larger portion of food in the distribution at the feast, although traditionally he is also expected to contribute generously. Land inheritance and marital dowry are common entities used as a means of control. And finally, knowledge, which indirectly relates to material gain and social status (payment for practicing magic or medicine or renown for knowing legends or certain skills or rituals like the proper butchering of a dog), is a central avenue of social recognition and control among the Ponapeans.11

All mechanisms of social control are related to and supportive of the ongoing social structure of Ponapean society. This society is centered in the institution of the matrilineal clan and actualized through the practice of competitive feasting.

In essence, the indigenous Ponapean educator plays upon the student's curiosity, wonder, fear of the unknown, respect for elders, pride, desire for acceptance, powers of self-restraint, rivalry, and covert competition in the control and molding of the cultural character.

THOUGHT PROCESSES AND METHODS OF PERSUASION

The Ponapean tends to make mental associations which are concrete and immediate rather than abstract and defined in terms of multiple causation. He learns by listening, watching, or doing, not by reading. He stores no knowledge in symbols remote from contemporary application. His educational emphasis is placed on a specific act of behavior in a concrete situation. Connections are more of significance and finality than causal in nature. Classification, experimentation, and abstraction may occur for practical knowledge (i.e., totemic classification), not as an end in itself.

In a sense, the Ponapean has internalized nature's values and norms. The structural aspect of his life remains permanent and undisturbed, while the functions or events are merely reconstructed to meet predetermined ends. There is no reflective choice, only spontaneous, uncritical, and immediate action. It is a matter of the sacred over the secular, or, as Piaget labelled it, "egocentric logic" in which an intuitive jump is made from premise to conclusion in a "wholistic" leap of faith supported by personal and visual schemas of analogy and socially determined values.12 Thus in the forming of their opinions, emotional response takes the place of logical demonstration. Fixed values and limited needs (as governed by the ascriptive social structure) ascertain the meaning and arrangement of perceptions into streams of thought, while the phenomenon of perception itself is one of total sensory involvement in a restricted physical environment.

It is important to note certain related themes in the indigenous educational process. First, select knowledge is hierarchically aligned with age and status and is passed down in an authoritarian manner. There is little personal initiative in the learning process for acquiring highly specialized knowledge, such as magic and medicine, which differs from more general knowledge related to daily survival. The Ponapean mode of transmission, surrounded by a deeply internalized respect for the wisdom of the aged, favors rote memorization and direct imitation over free thought and creative initiative. It must also be remembered that imitation is a unique learning skill that is itself unconsciously learned through constant repetition. In short, when discussing the educational process, one has to consider not only the content to be learned but also the structure of the learning environment and the structure of the learning style itself.

In Ponapean culture the question "why" is rarely directed in pursuit of causal explanation. Not only is causation assumed to be self-evident in the concrete nature of the learning context, but this question would also be viewed as an affront to the Ponapean norms of respect behavior, thus a culturally antisocial response. One story of an American science teacher's efforts to teach multiple causation goes as follows:

One day I decided to dramatically illustrate to a science class why it rained. I proceeded to set up a terrarium and to demonstrate the water cycle as I had so successfully done on numerous occasions in the States. I carried through the experiment explaining and showing the causes of rainfall while the whole class sat in utter boredom. When the class ended I asked the Ponapean teacher what I had done wrong. At first he made excuses such as the 'class is tired, it is the end of the week,' so as not to embarrass me. I persisted and finally he quixotically responded, 'You know that it rains, I know that it rains, don't you think the class knows that it rains?' ... I departed in silence.13

It seems as if they perceive secondary analysis as a useless expenditure of energy. The knowledge that it rains is sufficient, why know more?

It is frequently implied that preindustrial peoples, such as the Ponapeans, do not have the capacity for the scientific method and processes of reflection and abstraction. Paul Radin,14 Levi-Strauss,15 and other eminent scholars have presented sufficient evidence to the contrary. They demonstrate the existence of highly scientific modes of inquiry and thought among so-called primitive peoples. But as Dewey has pointed out, "Environmental deprivation as experienced in the limited physical mobility of isolated primitive tribes has not been conducive to innovative utilization of the scientific method in reshaping the environment."16 This is surely one explanation for the Ponapean disregard for in-depth analysis. Moreover, the fragmental nature of secondary analysis is not in line with the traditional relational, wholistic Ponapean world view alluded to earlier.

It is also possible that the authoritarian nature of the Ponapean social structure which stresses interpersonal dependence and exhibits a lack of opportunities for decision-making in the formative years could contribute greatly to this form of cognitive development. In his study of indigenous education among the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest, F. C. Spencer observed a similar developmental phenomena and referred to the overall education process of the Pueblo as one of "arrested development."17

The road to becoming a Ponapean adult is long and arduous, and one's control over one's life remains rather minimal as long as one's parents are living. Freedom of physical movement is great. Freedom of mental diversion is heresy.

The methods of persuasion common to Ponapean social interaction are quite supportive of the above mental processes. There is the deference to age-related position or rank. One's position in the social hierarchy can be employed to command direct obedience, as personal power by age and title is legitimized throughout the entire social structure. To deny a social superior this mental deference is to cast doubt upon the social order itself. Secondly, there is the accepted proverb or "cultural truism," which timely expressed will often win an argument. Again, this is illustrative of the submission of individual logic to historically accepted statement as passed down for generations. To question the idiom is to confront the collective consciousness. Finally, there is the subtle process of indirect logic, whereby one plays upon the pride, shame, or public consciousness of the other to convince him of a certain point. When a favor is requested, for instance the emotive reasons are always given first, until the request, though still unverbalized, becomes evident. This is quite different from the Western style of first presenting the fact or question and then straining for reasons to support it. A good example of this custom was observed one afternoon when one Ponapean male approached another to borrow his canoe. There was no direct request. The borrower initially commented on how he had to go to town to buy milk for his child. Then he mentioned how hard it rained the previous night and how muddy the paths were. Finally, the owner of the canoe submitted (in my presence) that he take his canoe. The first response was clever hesitation, "Your canoe is most worthy, but I really can't..." This, of course, brought on insistence by the canoe owner, "You must!" Finally the borrower succumbed, "if you insist." The ritual was complete.

Having examined some of the more prominent aspects of informal education among the Ponapeans, we must now turn our attention to the all-important question of "Education for What?"

EDUCATION FOR PERMANENCE

Ponapean education is essentially social in character. Although it may tend to such activities as skill training and mental discipline, its primary purpose is the enhancement of social solidarity—the preservation and transmission of the culture as it exists. In its aims Ponapean education is distinctly unprogressive, serving to perpetuate existing conditions (continuity) rather than to induce an element of unrest and chance (discontinuity). This is not to denigrate all aspects of Ponapean indigenous education, such as the interrelating of thought, act, and function; the stress of learning through participation in real life experiences; and the employment of intrinsic

motivation inherent in the joy and meaningfulness of a learning activity and other such facets described in the preceding pages. It would be difficult to deny that modern progressive educators have more often than not looked to the origins of man for some of their more "progressive" concepts.

The major task of Ponapean indigenous education is the inculcation of the values of the group and the perpetuation of those group values through the linkage of past tradition with present action and future generations. Human and material innovations are more likely to be adapted to the social structure, rather than the social structure being adapted to them.

Ponapean indigenous education is tradition bound, conservative, and authoritarian in nature. It educates to reproduce itself. Lineage becomes not only a biological construct but also an important educational concept inasmuch as the family is the central educational institution. Education is consensus rather than conflict oriented. Social harmony and cultural continuity become the overriding themes.

The Ponapean accepts his needs as fixed and predetermined by a social structure which incorporates both spiritual and natural orders. He maintains an aesthetically balanced sensory perception on reality, virtually unmarred by the filtering mechanisms of a highly technological society. His experiences and meanings are affectively (as opposed to cognitively) biased by a clear perception and unquestioning acceptance of socially defined reality. Complex choice and decision-making are not a conditioned part of his mind. Cognition (discrimination and generalization) does not occur as a matter of free will (independent decision among multiple alternatives), but as an act of social conformity. He sustains a tolerant perception on reality without judgment. There is little individual selective perception of reality, nor is there abstract discrimination and deduction about perceptions. One's life chances are predetermined. There is little risk-taking, control of natural events, or notion of discontinuity. There is no concept of directed change. Immutability is not only a trait, but a goal of Ponapean society and informal education.

Today this highly functional, informal education process is experiencing the greatest challenge to its survival, the American formal school. Inherent in this challenge is a threat to the very existence of Ponapean traditional culture. The future looms large for the disjunction between informal and formal learning on Ponape, but the fact remains—education need not transpire in the sole context of schools!

1 This article is derived from data collected in a larger study conducted by the author on the role of education in cultural character change among the Ponapeans. The study was funded by the Ford Foundation and would have been impossible without their generous assistance.

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11 Knowledge is highly regarded in such a communal society where limited material entities are shared by most people thus diminishing the ultimate worth of material goods. But with the greater influx of material goods on Ponape, coupled with new types of knowledge, this phenomenon is gradually changing. Communal practices are falling prey to capitalistic laws of supply and demand, and open competition is replacing atavistic forms of cooperation and covert competition.
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