

Part I

The Context

... certain ideas burst upon the intellectual landscape with tremendous force. They resolve so many fundamental questions at once that they seem to promise that they will resolve all fundamental problems, clarify all obscure issues. (Geertz 1993)

In this first Part, I argue that the concept of NFE arose during a time of two major sets of changes.

The first were occurring **within the field of development**:

- a) a move away from an elitist modernisation-and-growth approach to development to one based on mass integrated rural development and social change; and
- b) a move away from a deficit (needs-based) paradigm of development to a paradigm based on disadvantage, an understanding that development consisted as much of changing the structures of society as of providing inputs.

The second set of changes (closely related to these changes in development approaches) were taking place in regard to new analyses of **education in developing countries**, with calls for and programmes of reform to enable education to achieve developmental goals more effectively.

It is out of this context that the discourse of non-formal education was created. This section examines first the developmental changes and secondly the educational reform agenda at that time.