

Trading up

Potential and performance in non-formal learning

eds

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with Christian Glahn

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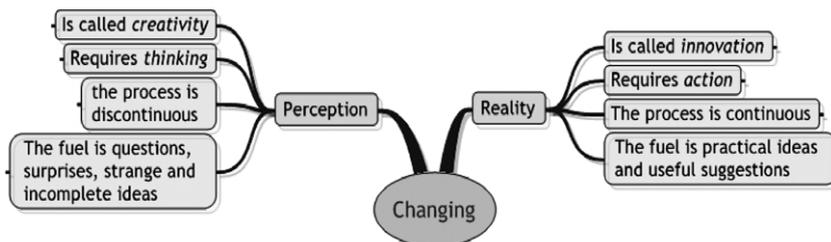


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Foreword

This book is important.

To produce change in any field is not easy. To produce change in the educational field you need a critical mass of opinion, research, practice and reflection. This book adds significantly to the critical mass pushing for change in the field of youth non-formal education across Europe. As De Brabandere explains in *The Forgotten Half of Change*, for change to be effective, we need to change not once, but twice: we need to change reality within a given system and we need to change the perception of that reality. So what are the characteristics of these two linked types of change?



This book is important because it shows how change is coming in the youth non-formal learning sector.

Let's look at the *reality*:

- an increasing number of initiatives capture, document, and confirm the non-formal learning of young people and those who work with them;
- opportunities for dialogue between practitioners, researchers, trainers, administrators and policy-makers – like the seminar which gave rise to this publication – are taking on new forms through internet platforms and active observation (such as that reported by Williamson and Taylor 2005);
- the seemingly eternal debate about quality is beginning to produce fruit, looking at both the quality of specific non-formal learning opportunities *and* the relevance of the content and skills gained.

Excitement mounts when we look at *perceptions*:

- the value of non-formal learning in youth work is starting to get the codified or formal recognition it deserves;

- individual young people have the possibility to look at and demonstrate their competences and learning in new ways;
- practitioners can take new pride in their work

Within the wider context, sudden leaps in perception are evident when we add that the field of youth has been included, for the first time, in the conclusions of the March 2005 meeting of the European Council under the Luxembourg EU Presidency.

One of the participants in the seminar came from Minnesota and, together with a colleague, they put together a briefing paper about their impressions of developments in European-level programmes in the youth field (Walker 2004). Their conclusion fits the spirit of this book: "We're not working on these program, policy, and practical issues alone, and we are challenged to stay in dialogue with others who share our interests and commitment."

I wish you challenging reading and courage to change reality and the perception of it.

*Mark Taylor
Brussels, May 2005*



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1. Introduction: tracks and tools for trading up in non-formal learning

Lynne Chisholm and Bryony Hoskins

The term “trading up” is used in everyday speech to refer to a transaction in which something of value is offered in exchange for something that promises to be of greater value, but which serves the same kind of purpose. In such transactions, strategic action and negotiation, together with the ancillary resources and the competences of those involved in the process, influence whether and how much added value results from the transaction. Typical everyday examples include buying and selling houses and cars in order to live in a larger property or drive a better vehicle. These indicate achieving a better standard of living, but they also raise the social status of the owner. The term “trade” here relates directly to commerce, in which money signifies value.

The word “trade” is also used in a different sense to mean an occupation, classically comprising manual employment, including self-employment. The level of skill and competence objectively needed to practise specific trades varies considerably, but in addition, the social value attached to given kinds of activities and the skills and competences required to perform them also differs. In other words, subjective factors also enter into the equation of whether an occupation is regarded as unskilled/low-skilled or high-skilled, and hence of lesser or greater worth. Those practising a trade – that is, earning a living by working in a given occupation – commonly refer to their community of practice by using the phrase “in the trade, we ...” This underlines the fact that those working in a particular occupation operate within an established framework of norms, values and standards. These are developed, sustained and amended over time by the practitioners themselves, both in their ongoing working activities and by collective quality assurance mechanisms, which are classically self-regulated and may or may not have a formal legal basis.

Ultimately, trade as commerce and trade as an occupation are closely linked, since the latter also refers to a transaction. In this case, skill and competence are offered – whether directly as a service or indirectly in the form of a product – in exchange for payment, typically in the form of money but not necessarily and always so. Payment could take the form of gaining personal satisfaction or receiving social esteem and approval for investing time and energy in worthwhile and useful activities on behalf of the community. In other words, voluntary activities in youth, social and community work are by no means excluded from the picture.

This title of this book connotes all the meanings set out above. It draws attention to the *value of non-formal learning* for itself and its *added potential* for knowledge



societies and economies. It addresses the question of why taking the *track towards greater recognition* of non-formal learning is both worthwhile and important, and offers examples of the *kinds of recognition tools* that are appropriate for doing so. It examines the sensitive issue of defining and monitoring *the quality of performance* in non-formal learning processes and their outcomes. It sets non-formal learning and its greater recognition into the broader context of the analysis of *education and social change*, and it places it firmly within the remit of *current policy developments*, most particularly at European level.

Early 2004 saw the issue of a joint working paper (European Commission/Council of Europe: 2004) which presents a common position on education, training and learning in the youth sector as an integral part of voluntary and civil society activities. This working paper places particular emphasis on the validation and recognition of non-formal learning. It also seeks to build bridges with the European-level policy agenda on implementing lifelong learning, which itself is part of the “Education and Training 2010” initiative under the Lisbon Strategy.¹ This implies forging closer links between research, policy and practice in the youth sector with that in formal education, vocational education and training and adult and community education, as the joint working paper clearly states:

“All initiatives in education and training underline the increasing role of lifelong and lifewide learning. They emphasize that learning must encompass the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning for promoting personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability. As a consequence they plead for a better validation of non-formal and informal learning and they state particularly a need for a better social and formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning.”

This working paper lent the impetus for a research seminar held in May 2004 within the framework of the Partnership Programme on Youth Research between the European Commission and the Council of Europe. This seminar brought together researchers, policymakers and practitioners working on and in non-formal learning from within and also beyond the youth sector. The common interest of all those involved lay in explicating the actual and potential value of non-formal learning, wherever it might take place but in particular in settings beyond the institutional and regulated boundaries of formal education and training provision and its characteristic forms of assessment and qualification. The issue of how to lend recognition to non-formal learning as an educational activity and to its learning outcomes lay at the centre of concern. The chapters in this collection comprise a selection of contributions to the seminar together with a small number of complementary additions and extensions. The publication as a whole highlights three dimensions of the valorisation of non-formal learning:

-----> **Valorising non-formal learning as a field of practice**

By its very definition, non-formal learning lies outside the mainstream of education and training provision in modern industrial societies. It draws on particular sets of principles, values and methods that are generally less widespread, or at least less prioritised, than those that inform schools, colleges, universities and vocational training institutions. Living in today’s European societies and economies increasingly requires a wider and differently accented profile of knowledge, skills and competences – both in the lifelong and in the lifewide sense. Established formal education and training systems and processes find it increasingly difficult to respond across the full range of individual and social need and demand, whereas the potential of non-formal learning settings, methods and out-



comes has long been underexploited. Hence, those who have participated in non-formal learning opportunities may well have benefited from doing so in a variety of ways, but may well think that this somehow “does not count” as “real” learning with “real” outcomes. Those who work in the sector may well be highly competent professionals, but they may well conclude that the quality and value of their work is accorded insufficient esteem and respect outside their own community of practice. There is clearly a need to raise the level of recognition in terms of social awareness and respect, and this is coupled with the need to make better social and economic use of the outcomes of non-formal learning in response to a changing world.

-----> **Valorising the potential of the educationally disadvantaged**

The links between formal educational achievement and qualification on the one hand and the structure of opportunities for social inclusion and vocational integration on the other hand continue to tighten. Good levels of formal education and qualification are a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for making successful initial transitions into the labour market, which is, for most people, a key pre-structuring factor for shaping and realising a satisfying personal and social adult lifeworld. It is now widely argued that continuing education and training should and will become a recurrent or consistent accompanying feature throughout active life for more and more people, so that sustaining and reshaping a satisfying working, social and personal life will mean engaging in a continuous cycle of development and transition. However, it is already well established that those with low levels of formal education and qualification are increasingly cut off from the opportunity to create the basis for a satisfying life in these terms, and certainly find themselves caught in positions and roles of semi-dependency. Their educational experiences are likely to have failed to provide the basis for a sense of self-worth and potential. It is no less well established that those who do poorly at school are still much more likely, for a variety of reasons, already to be at a social and economic disadvantage. And those who begin adult life from this situation are then much less likely to take part in continuing education and training of all kinds, partly because they are not given the opportunity to do so, partly because their life circumstances make it difficult to do so, and partly because they are not motivated to do so. For such young people and adults, non-formal learning offers a positive alternative route to achievement, affirmation and recognition. The intrinsic and personal rewards are of great value in their own right, and are likely to have a positive effect not only on overall quality of life but possibly also on future educational and social participation. There is every reason to suppose that non-formal learning outcomes would also help to release more of the potential of many more people, both by uncovering and developing the knowledge, skills and competences that they already possess and by supporting the acquisition of new kinds of capacities on their part. Non-formal learning should not be defined in the first instance as compensatory or emancipatory education for the marginalised and excluded, but there is clearly a need to provide alternative routes to learning for those who are educationally disadvantaged.

-----> **Valorising non-formal youth training as an occupation**

Being a non-formal youth trainer is a relatively recent occupational label with which non-formal learning practitioners working in the youth sector are likely to self-identify. Many may still not explicitly do so, since there are a range of quasi-occupational titles that are used to denote similar kinds of activities with a ped-



agogic or social-pedagogic dimension, the most obvious of which in English is “youth worker”. The fluidity of the boundaries and of the composition of this community of practice inevitably means that as an occupation, it has not been in a strong position to set the terms of trade transactions, that is, to negotiate appropriate and acceptable levels of contractual, financial and social reward for the provision of given services. At the same time, there is no obvious career progression structure that offers long serving and highly experienced practitioners routes towards roles with greater responsibility and reward. Demand for non-formal youth trainers has risen in the past 15 years or so, particularly with the expansion of mobility and exchange programmes and activities at European level and with the increasing policy attention being given to encouraging social and political participation at all levels of community life in Europe. Nevertheless, the budgetary resources available to the sector as a whole remain low in comparison with the formal education and training sectors, and these, too, are not necessarily that well-funded either. There is a clear need to raise the level of occupational recognition and reward, not only in the legitimate interest of practitioners themselves but also, above all, in the interest of ensuring the consistent and high quality of non-formal learning professional practice. This is best secured by providing a solid and coherent basis for occupational entry, progression and self-regulation of professional standards.

-----> **Non-formal learning on the European policymaking agenda**

All current education and training policy documents and initiatives underline the increasing significance of lifelong and lifewide learning, which, appropriately implemented, should take place in an integrated and coherent manner along the full formal–non-formal–informal continuum.

The Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sports has not only promoted but also practised non-formal education since the mid-1970s (see here: Eberhard 2002.² Its 1998 Ministerial declaration firmly encouraged greater recognition of the knowledge and skills young people can acquire non-formally, and three years later the Council’s Parliamentary Assembly adopted a recommendation³ in which non-formal learning, as a de facto partner both for lifelong learning and in youth policy, was firmly placed within the educational enterprise as a whole. The Committee of Ministers followed through in 2003 with the adoption of a similar recommendation,⁴ additionally underlining more clearly the need to work towards the development of effective standards for the recognition of non-formal learning.

The explicit distinction between formal, non-formal and informal learning together with highlighting the significance of recognising different kinds of learning and learning outcomes was included in the European Commission’s Memorandum on lifelong learning (European Commission 2000). After the ensuing consultation process, these issues were accorded priority for action under the heading “Valuing learning” in the Communication on lifelong learning (European Commission 2001a). This placed emphasis on the need to develop tools that could document – and ultimately evaluate – knowledge, skills and competences gained in non-formal and informal learning contexts and processes (and see here: Bjørnavold 2002). Subsequently, the Education and Training 2010 initiative has been pursuing the issue in a number of ways, amongst which are the new Europass (which combines several earlier transparency and recognition tools and the European CV) and agreement on a set of common principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Council of the European Union 2004). The



White Paper on Youth (European Commission 2001b) had also drawn particular attention to the importance of non-formal learning for young people, with the Partnership Programme between the European Commission and the Council of Europe on Youth Worker Training becoming one of the key channels for implementing the call to raise the recognition and improve the quality of non-formal learning in the youth sector⁵.

The purpose of agreeing common principles for validating non-formal and informal learning is to encourage the development of transparency and mutual recognition in similar fashion to the efforts that have been made in the past thirty years to enable the recognition of formal qualifications across sectors and countries, whether for gaining access to education and training courses or to employment and career development opportunities. The availability of common principles as a reference framework enables support for individuals in seeking recognition, links different sectors and institutions together to open up pathways to qualification and mobility, and provides guidelines for the design, implementation and evaluation of recognition tools. The remit of the common principles covers, in principle, all sectors and all age groups, and the key elements include the following entitlements: to receive validation; to opt out of validation; to appeal the outcomes of validation; confidentiality of validation outcomes; open access to validation; parity of treatment in validation⁶.

The European Commission/Council of Europe's 2004 joint working paper is hence to be seen against this backdrop of a rapid and intense period of European-level policy development on non-formal learning. Prepared as the common principles on validation were being finalised, it aimed to clarify how these policy initiatives can be understood in relationship to the youth sector, especially in the light of the sector's longstanding engagement with non-formal learning in practice and with a view to future scope for cooperation between the education, training and youth sectors overall.

In 2005 the European Commission Youth Unit's working group on Commitment and Engagement has been given the task to reflect on the application of the common principles in the youth field and to give recommendations towards a possible Council Resolution in 2006 on the topic of recognition of non-formal learning. Both European institutions in 2005 are working towards the development of concrete tools for demonstrating skills and competences acquired through non-formal learning with the Council of Europe's European Youth Worker and Youth Leader Portfolio and the European Commission's YOUTHPASS – a certificate gained by participants of the YOUTH Programme.

-----> **Key points from the joint working paper**

In working towards greater recognition of non-formal learning and its outcomes, the 2004 Joint Working Paper sets out the following characteristics of non-formal learning in the youth sector:

- voluntary and often self-organised learning, embedded in the intrinsic motivation of participants to learn;
- close links with young people's aspirations and interests, using participative and learner-centred approaches in as supportive environment;
- open course structuring, based on transparency and flexibility of curriculum design;



- evaluation of quality of learning as a collective process, without assessment of individual achievement levels, and accepting the value of learning from making mistakes;
- preparing and implementing learning activities in a professional manner, regardless of the basis on which those leading and facilitating an activity are involved, that is, including those working on a voluntary basis;
- making the outcomes of learning activities available to interested publics and foreseeing course evaluation and planned follow-up.

It also proposes a number of practical steps that need to be taken in order to make progress in developing recognition tools for the sector:

- simplifying methods of documenting learning histories and ensuring that recognition instruments such as portfolios are equally useful for personal development, social participation and education or employment related purposes;
- finding a good balance between recognition tools that respond to quality assurance demands in the context of validation consonant with more formal accreditation, and those that encompass the more open forms of self-evaluation and reflective assessment practices of non-formal learning environments;
- assuring open, ready and flexible access to validation mechanisms and procedures;
- understanding validation as confirmation and taking up the learner's perspective when asking about learning outcomes, how these were reached and the meanings they hold;
- developing and actively using quality criteria across the span of relevant dimensions: quality of the learning environment and learning experience; quality of learning outcomes; professional quality of those leading and facilitating learning activities; quality of the resources available for implementing learning activities; quality of reflection, evaluation and dissemination; quality of the relationship between investment and benefit, ...;
- applying quality criteria that are relevant for acquiring and improving personal, social, communicative and intercultural competences alongside cognitive knowledge and technical skills together with the capacity to use these for problem-solving in real-life situations.

The research seminar that gave rise to this publication was designed to take these matters on board in an integrated way, by joining up research, policy and practice together in a networked discussion. Progress in the space that lies between the three corners of this eternal magic triangle demands, in the first instance, the readiness to free up abstract debates over definitions of non-formal learning vis-à-vis formal and informal learning. Collecting and learning from examples of different kinds of learning as they occur in real life is a productive, research-based activity that serves a variety of purposes, including making definitions more precise and relevant. This is not quite the same thing as collecting examples of good practice, which implies that quality criteria and standards to differentiate the good from the bad exist, are known and are consistently applied. Such criteria certainly exist and are applied, but for the most part, this takes place implicitly and to some extent in an unsystematic way. In the context of applied research with policy relevance, it is preferable to start by documenting examples as simple examples in their own right, whose characteristics and qualities can



then be analysed more closely. The examples that are included in this collection do not claim to be more than examples in this basic sense, but they offer a starting-point for going further.

-----> **Pathways through this collection**

The chapters are ordered according to their positioning around a thematic circle marked by the four sectors *policy–practices–participants–professionalisation*, as shown in Figure 1.1 below. The collection begins with a policy-relevant perspective on education and social change (du Bois-Reymond), moving clockwise around the circle to end where the journey began. The circle sequence also expresses the *informal–non-formal–formal* learning continuum. The earlier chapters include examples from the more informal end of the spectrum (Colley; Gerzer-Sass) and the later contributions relate to more formalised expressions of how to valorise non-formal learning (Morrey and Drowley; Azzopardi) before moving back towards policy and action at the macro-level (Rzayeva and Karsten). At intervening stages of the journey around the circle, contributions consider practices in relation to participants (Bechmann Jensen; Ajello and Belardi; Preißer), followed by accounts that raise issues about the field of tension around professionalisation processes in relation to participants and policymaking (Søgaard Sørensen; Kovács). And, of course, as everyone who knows the non-formal learning youth sector cannot overlook, the circle metaphor carries high symbolic meaning with respect to the norms and values of social action.

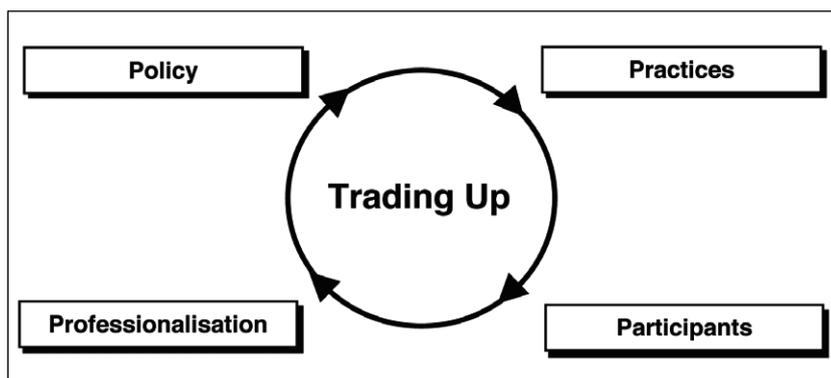


Figure 1.1 – Thematic cycle of trading up

This way of describing the chronology of the collection represents the intention to suggest that the linkages between the issues at hand are multidimensional. The logic of paper texts is that of linear sequentiality, which imposes a one-dimensional structure in which there is a beginning and an end, and an overriding reason for the ordering of what comes in-between. This is a paper text, whose very physicality connotes a particular logic. The circle metaphor points towards the networking logic of hypertext format, suggesting that the chapters may be read in a different order from that presented in the collection. They are rather to be seen as examples of potential positioning around the circle, but these examples do not represent all possible positionings. Readers may well wish to reposition issues around the circle to suit their interests and perspectives, on the assumption, of course, that the reordering can be rendered plausible. The circle of this collection is also an intentionally segmented sequence, and therefore readers will find brief editorial interventions between the four segments of the



circle, which offer some food for transitional reflection. The editorial conclusions fit into the pattern: they are not intended as a full stop, but as something of a dash in a spiral curriculum. The past few years have also been a dash for those involved in non-formal learning in quite another sense of the term, but there is every reason to be optimistic about this particular acceleration in the pace of social and cultural change. The journey towards reshaping learning remains fascinating and holds no less promise than ever. This collection is but a tiny step along the way.

Endnotes

1. All relevant documents can be accessed via the following sites: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/objectives_en.html; http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lll/life/communication/com_en.pdf; http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/ccg_report_october_2003_final_en.pdf. See also: Chisholm, L. (2004) Getting to work on lifelong learning: policy, practice and partnership: summary conference report Office for Official Publications of the European Communities: Luxembourg (also available in French and German; and in PDF-format for downloading at <http://www.cedefop.eu.int> (publications section) or <http://www.trainingvillage.gr>)
2. Information on youth policy and action in the Council of Europe can be accessed via: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/Youth/.
3. The Recommendation on Non-Formal Education can be accessed at <http://cm.coe.int/dec/2001/748/71.htm>.
4. The Recommendation on the Promotion and the Recognition of Non-formal Education/Learning of Young People (Rec (2003) 8, 30 April 2003); can be accessed at <https://wcm.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=21131&Lang=en>
5. Information on European Union youth policy and action can be accessed via: http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/index_en.html; information on the Partnership Programme can be accessed via: <http://www.training-youth.net>.
6. In the meantime, a European Inventory on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning has been established, in order to collect and monitor developments in this area, at <http://ecotec.com/europeaninventory2004/>.



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2. What does learning mean in the "Learning Society"? Opening plenary address

Manuela du Bois-Reymond

To be honest, I can only answer this question in one way: I don't know, I just do not have a clear-cut answer to the question posed in the title of this address. My only consolation is that I'm not the only one: there are many people who think about education – formal or non-formal – and about learning – in or outside schools – who also do not come up with clear-cut answers about what learning means in a learning society.

As I prepared this contribution, I asked myself whether there have ever been times when there were unambiguous answers to the question. Yes, there have, but then the question was not what learning means in the learning society, but simply: what does learning mean in and for *society*. So perhaps there lies the crux: we may still have an idea what learning is all about in the human life course – ideas which are bound to growing up, personal development, becoming a socialised member of society, specialising in certain fields of knowledge to make a profession or job out of it later and so on. But our idea about a *learning society* is much less clear. Or we have too many ideas about it, plunged as we are into the jungle of writing about information societies, about knowledge societies, about the global web in a globalised world held together by multitudes of networks, about lifelong and lifewide learning which is said to be necessary to stay on the sunny side of life, and not least about learning societies as such.

In all these concepts of society, learning is important one way or the other – but in what ways and to what ends? And what is so new and different in comparison and contrast with former times? We find ourselves rapidly confronted with more questions than answers.

The concepts mentioned above all have their own discourses and controversies. I shall refrain from giving definitions and disentangle theories. I only want to observe that there is a lot of rhetoric in these discourses and that this signals, if nothing else, a crisis in the field of learning and society.

Neither shall I dive into the complicated matter of how to validate skills, competences nor learning accomplishments in general – I leave that to the experts who are the main actors at this seminar. Instead I will take this opportunity to put loose elements and ideas on the table, like a puzzle that is taken apart and whereby it is not certain that all the pieces belong to the same game. Perhaps several games have been mixed up? As inhabitants and observers of late modernity, we do not know whether we are sitting in front of a pile of disparate objects



that belong to the same jigsaw puzzle, to several jigsaw puzzles, or indeed whether they do not belong together at all. We just do not know.

All the puzzle pieces sitting in front of us have to do with learning and society, and I shall pick out some of them for closer observation. Some pieces are smaller, others larger. Some have strategic value, like the corner and frame pieces of a puzzle which tell us something about borders. Others are less defined, belonging to a vague field somewhere in the middle of the puzzle (but where and what is the middle?). Some pieces connect nicely, whereas others stay isolated.

But let's start to play the game by taking up the first piece:

-----> **Piece one: the right to learn is also the duty to learn**

Today we regard it as self-evident that everybody has the right to go to school and learn. The problem is rather that not enough children learn enough. But provision and take-up of compulsory schooling for all children in Europe is actually a very recent innovation – it began in earnest only about 150 years ago. So only relatively recently were all young people allowed to learn in formal educational institutions and only from then can we trace the development of the idea that all have the *right* to learn.

For the purpose of this discussion, the history of formal learning can be roughly divided into two epochs. In the first epoch, a minority of young people learned a lot and the majority learned nothing or very little. The second epoch began when mass education systems were established in all European countries. Today, we have moved across the threshold into a new, third epoch, whose characteristics remain less clear – but we are in it. The former transition from the first to the second epoch and the present transition from the second to the third epoch can be described as times of upheaval. In terms of learning and thus of society as a whole, these were once and are once more *revolutionary* times.

The right for all to learn is inseparably bound to the *obligation* to learn. We know of no modern education system that can do without compulsory schooling (although there are cases in which parents may choose to send their children to particular kinds of schools or indeed to educate them in other ways, such as at home). Today children and young people stay for such a long period in the educational system that sociologists speak of a *prolongation of the youth phase*. Some researchers now question whether young people today will ever achieve the social status of adulthood, able to make their own living. Instead, young people remain endlessly dependent or semi-dependent. Whatever the case, it would appear that modern youth has internalised the obligation to learn.

Who are the winners in modern mass education systems? In principle, the correct answer should be that everybody wins, because everybody has the right to learn. But in reality, this is not the case, because besides providing education, the most important task of the mass-school is *selection* – which is another way of saying that certain groups of young people are prohibited from learning all there is to learn. This is the main paradox of mass education, of formal schooling. Descriptions and debates on modernisation losers always incorporate the notion of young people who have learned too little, who have accumulated too little educational capital to make it in society. That was not always so. At the high point of modernity during the 1950s/1960s, young people with few or no educational qualifications found employment and were regarded as useful members of



society. This was also the period during which what later became known as the *gendered normal biography* in western societies became firmly established.

In retrospect, the establishment and organisation of a global system of compulsory education was the most successful project of modernity. Then, social and political discussion was not about the learning society but about the *working society* and how to educate the young in order to fit the needs of the labour market. Non-formal learning certainly existed then too, but there was no *discussion* about it.

That was my first puzzle piece, and I can find a second one which I can connect to it:

-----> **Piece two: compensatory education to make up for unequal opportunities**

Together with many others of my age and generation, I well remember 1970s fierce debates about introducing educational strategies that would open up more learning opportunities to those children who were sorted out of the formal education system. In those days, the discourse was framed in the rhetoric of social democratic and other left-wing progressive thinking. Compensatory education was widely promoted to help the underprivileged to gain more scholastic capital.

This is perhaps a very important puzzle piece, which, if turned around so that it can be seen from another perspective, might connect up with pieces of non-formal education as we define this kind of learning today! In other words, is compensatory education a forerunner of non-formal education?

There is no clear answer to that question either. Some proponents of compensatory education in the 1960s/1970s did envisage non-formal education as a powerful ally in their fight for equal opportunities. Others did not regard it as a partner of the same standing and reputation. Instead they used elements of non-formal education *selectively* to insert into the existing school system, so that formal education could work better and in so doing reduce the failure rate. Incidentally, this was also the period during which the working society ran into trouble. It was no longer so easy for everyone to find jobs, and it became gradually more difficult for those with few or no educational qualifications in particular.

Let's leave it at that for the moment and look for another piece:

-----> **Piece three: meaning, motivation, context, reflexivity**

At the 2004 annual conference of some 4,000 German-speaking educational scientists in Zurich, I was able to sample current discourses on pedagogy, education and learning, both in the paper-giving sessions and as represented in the hundreds of books lined up for sale on the academic publishers' stands. There as elsewhere in contemporary educational debate and literature, I have become aware of a new rhetoric, one that speaks about situated or experiential or self-administered learning and of new methods and new media for use in schools. It seems that there is a growing consciousness that *subjectivity*, the "subjective factor" in education and learning, is receiving greater recognition than in the past – as if the educational community senses that something is wrong with the learning conditions in our times. What, then, is it that is wrong?

As a way towards trying to answer this question, I would like to refer to the YOYO-project on youth transitions into the labour market in relation to the potential of participation and informal learning. This study analyses its findings with the help of four interrelated concepts: meaning, motivation, context and reflexivity. In this



project, we worked with two contrasting groups of young people, *described by the terms disengaged learners and biographical trendsetters*. Disengaged learners are potential losers, or are already losers, of modernisation. These young people had experienced unhappy school careers, were dropouts and did not make it into the labour market. In contrast, the biographical trendsetters experimented with new learning pathways, using elements of formal educational provision and working out their own informal ways of learning and working. In other words, they are modernisation winners. Here, I want to draw attention to two important ways in which these two groups differ.

Firstly, the *learning habitus* of biographical trendsetters is characterised by a meaningfulness of why and what to learn, by a high degree of motivation, by a self-made context in which learning and working projects are embedded, and by an attitude of self-reflection. They repeatedly ask themselves whether this is what they really want, whether there are alternatives, what the risks of different options are, whether they are ready to take a chance on a more risky option and how to find the information they need to make their decisions. For disengaged learners, the situation is more or less the opposite: the learning provision to which they have access holds no meaningfulness for them and therefore they show low motivation and experience much frustration with formal education and training. They find themselves in alienated learning contexts and, as far as the capacity for self-reflection is concerned, they have few chances and less competence to consider the alternatives that may be possible and to grasp their own role in the process.

Secondly and more importantly, when disengaged learners enter participatory projects that provide meaningfulness and contextual learning opportunities, many of them changed towards becoming biographical trendsetters. In other words, they became active participants and navigators of their learning biography. This means, then, that the divisions that emerge in formal education between “unable” and “able” learners fade in non-formal learning contexts.

These findings do not count as world news. The history of pedagogy is full of ideas and experiments about learning which are close to or identical with the discourse field mapped by the four concepts noted earlier. The European reform movement of the first part of the 20th century developed many ideas about “open learning” and tried them out in practice, as did later the critical education movement in the United States from the 1960s onwards and as did educational projects that arose through the 1968 political and social movement.

The question arises as to why such ideas and practices, which have demonstrably positive results for young people, have not been universally adopted. This is a complex issue, to which many puzzle pieces could contribute parts of the explanation. Here, I will look at just one of those pieces, but it is a very large one, and its name is power relations.

-----> **Piece four: power relations**

Like all societal activities, education is embedded in a field of power relations. Who are the players on that field? If we compare formal with non-formal education, we see that the players of formal education have more power and resources than the non-formal education players. The power field of formal education is clearly marked; it covers a lot of territory and has a large population. Its actors hold a range of different statuses and exercise highly differentiated functions. For



example, they include pupils and students with their rights and obligations of learning. These actors must play the formal game, otherwise they become losers. Then there are the teachers and behind them the teacher trainers. Then there are the bureaucrats in the ministries and municipalities and their various advisory organs, all of which sprang into life with the introduction of mass education and have since multiplied and divided into many different instances. Then, too, thousands of researchers join the game, cooperating and competing in national and international organisations. Next come the politicians and unions, and so on. In short, formal education has become the biggest public and private sector in society.

The most important means to exert influence in this field lies in the *power of certification*. Broadly speaking, this is the power to define the contents and accomplishments of learning. In this respect as in others, learners do not have much power, although this is beginning to change with the rapid expansion of private-sector provision, which literally sells education and qualification, thereby putting public education under pressure. However, learners (and their parents) not only exert power by buying additional education. They also exert power by refusing to swallow the officially prescribed curriculum, as is demonstrated by the many who fail in school and who drop out of school. This “negative power” of learners is growing in importance, because knowledge societies need not only *many* learners but also *motivated* learners who are prepared to continue learning throughout life and who are prepared to embark on challenging and complex kinds of learning.

In comparison, the non-formal education field is smaller and less clearly marked. Its borders are a little vague, and they shift according to national definitions of welfare state and youth work. In recent times, with the replacement of welfare for “workfare”, non-formal education overlaps with parts of formal education, as, for example, in youth training schemes that combine general, vocational and social learning. In comparison with formal education, the representatives of non-formal education are less numerous, if only because non-formal education is not obligatory, but quite the reverse. All in all the social power and influence of non-formal education is much lower than that of formal education. The lower professional status of non-formal educators, their lack of influential organised professional representation and a much less influential position on political agendas are just a few of the indicators that demonstrate this.

If the power of certification makes formal education so strong, then would it not be useful to gain certification power for non-formal education? Here we come across a paradox which certainly plays an important role in this seminar – that of *certifying non-formal contents, methods and outcomes*. That this is a paradox is no secret to those who are here, and the question of how to deal with it stands at the heart of the discussions that will follow. I turn instead to the next puzzle piece.

-----> **Piece five: intergenerational learning; support and trust**

In post-traditional societies intergenerational relations shift from the more hierarchical towards the more egalitarian. Parents do not claim total power over their children and although schoolteachers might perhaps want to claim that power, they too are drawn into the new culture of negotiation and informality (“Come on, Mr. Smith, I should really get more than a D grade for this piece of work, don’t be a spoilsport!”).



Recalling the point made earlier about the transitions between different learning epochs, we might argue that there has possibly never been a time when school-teachers were so desperate and powerless in the classroom as they are today. The reason is that officially, they are still actors in the power field of formal education, but at the same time they have to endure all the contradictions today's schools encounter. Today, we are living in an epoch that demands the lifelong/lifewide learner, the intrinsically motivated learner, the inventive learner and more. In other words, teachers are impaled on the horns of the dilemma which enjoins them to teach under conditions that demotivate rather than motivate the learners (and themselves as teachers).

In the FATE project we asked what kind of support young people get from significant others. The results show that parents are the main source of support in almost all respects, but that teachers are seldom mentioned as support-givers. What does that mean for learning? Is it that learners migrate, so to speak, from the school and turn away from the formal educators? Sometimes it seems like that, as we have demonstrated with the biographies of our disengaged and trend-setter young people.

What is it that young people miss in their relationship with their schoolteachers? In the YOYO project, the young disengaged often complained that their teachers did not care, "they didn't give a damn". This impression (which is not necessarily accurate for most teachers) is probably a consequence of the dilemma in which today's teachers find themselves, as I noted above. Pupils – that is, learners in schools – also miss competent and relevant *counselling* about their educational, vocational and life choices. Many teachers simply do not know what to advise. Why should that be so?

Teachers are obviously part of the turmoil and contingencies of post-traditional societies – how can they possibly know, any better than most people, how things develop on the labour market and in the economy? Of course they cannot. But instead of making precisely this general problem of not-being-able-to-forecast under the conditions of late modernity, instead of making this problem a corner piece of the school curriculum and thereby establishing, so to speak, a mutual understanding of what knowledge is, is not and should or could be, school-teachers step aside and avoid the issue. More broadly speaking: these problems are not part of the official school curriculum.

The relationship between *non-formal educators* and their clientele, on the other hand, is more open in quality. This makes it possible and easier to pose questions about biographical choices, to share knowledge and ignorance and to reflect on both of these (as well as on the reasons why), and to incorporate the results of this communication into the learning process. It seems that in non-formal education there are more opportunities for the teachers, tutors, coaches, trainers (there is no one single term that pleases all) not only to teach but to learn as well, and so to conceive teaching and learning as being two sides of the same coin. So in the end, young people in formal education have little *trust* in their school-teachers, they don't feel "meant" by them. They place more trust in their guides and mentors in non-formal education, albeit that they, too, cannot answer all questions of life.

In sum: The modernisation of the intergenerational relationship between formal educators and pupils/students has resulted in a quasi-relaxed attitude, but has not resulted in a relationship with truly shared interests and doubts.



-----> **Piece six: ambivalences**

The last piece I want to take up on this occasion is about ambivalences. The main idea here is that every piece of our learning puzzle can take on different meanings and positions. Obviously this is impossible in real puzzles, which brings me to the limit of my chosen metaphor.

Not only formal but also non-formal education encompass light and dark discourses, by which I mean that each contains an optimistic and a pessimistic view on learning potentials and conditions. Both views are ideologically charged. For example, according to the dominant rhetoric in non-formal education, participation is a good thing. But is it a good thing under all circumstances? Not if one imagines the costs learners must pay when they are unwilling to participate in a training course on the grounds that it leads to an occupation to which they do not aspire. So one has to specify: participation under which conditions? What are the rights of the “learning subject” to reject or modify the education and training provision that she or he is offered?

To go a step further: learning is a necessary and valuable activity in our type of society, but is only really effective if it goes together with high motivation; only then will the learning subject be able and willing for lifelong and lifewide learning. But in propagating these ideals and demands, a threat is implied: “You’ll soon see what will happen to you if you don’t learn lifelong and lifewide!” So one has to specify again: what is a humane and at the same time economically healthy relationship between learning demands and learning freedom? To put it more radically: is there a humane relationship possible in this respect? As a negative utopia one could imagine the totally controlled learner, from pre-school until retirement – and possibly even after. We are not so far from that state of affairs, when one considers current visions of electronic portfolios that students might soon be carrying with them from their early years through to postgraduate studies and then on to their employers.

At this point let me once more pose the question of the modernisation losers: as Jürgen Habermas (2001) has recently pointed out, what we see in advanced societies with much formal education is *not* a gradual diminishing of the divide between winners and losers, but on the contrary a *widening* of the cleavage (Habermas 2001, Castells 2000).

-----> **Prognoses: mission impossible**

I close with a view into the future – which is, as we all know, impossible to do. Therefore I pose two opposite hypotheses:

First hypothesis: formal education institutions – particularly compulsory schools – will prove unable to change sufficiently radically and appropriately to provide a stimulating climate and curriculum for intrinsically motivated learners. Formal education will therefore atrophy into ever more bureaucracy, painstaking measurement races à la PISA and modularised knowledge bites. In short formal education will deteriorate to locations of *dead learning*. Meanwhile *living learning* will migrate to other sites, preferably (but not only) non-formal education.

Second hypothesis: Mounting societal pressure will force formal and non-formal education into a prudential match whereby the core curriculum of the school is not affected, but whereby elements of non-formal education are incorporated into



contexts and locations of full-time learning, something that is already under current discussion in many European countries.

Is there a *third way*? A way whereby the prudential match between formal and non-formal education dissolves and remarriage takes place so that the differences between formal and non-formal education disappear and a new *learning culture and learning habitus* develop all over Europe? I am afraid I have to conclude by saying that I honestly don't know (du Bois-Reymond 2004).

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Intermezzo i: from policy to practices

Lynne Chisholm and Bryony Hoskins

Using the phrase *from* policy to practices could suggest that policy influences, perhaps guides or even directs education and training practices – in other words, it implies a top-down perspective on accounting for why things change (or, no less importantly, why they stay the same). Practitioners do not warmly welcome top-down perspectives, partly because policymakers are seen as interlopers in matters for which they do not possess the requisite expertise and understanding. In addition, top-down action connotes the curtailment of professional autonomy. At the same time, most accept that guiding frameworks are legitimate and useful, if not essential, for ensuring coherence and quality. It is really more a question of the balance of power between the actors setting the frameworks: those who are working “at the chalk-face” over against those who furnish the resources and licence to do so. Similar issues arise for the relationship between (social) science and policy: how far does theory and research inform policymaking, how far does policymaking influence, guide or direct scientific activities and interests?

These are eternal debates, but it is more helpful to root their discussion in specific examples, since the balance of power and influence between policy, practice and research varies between contexts and across time. Education and training are fields in which policy plays an influential role in shaping the directions and the scope for both research and practice. The reasons include not only the proportion of public resources that education and training provision demand in modern societies, but also the importance of education and training for cultural, economic and social reproduction. Generally, non-formal learning largely escapes regulation, but at the cost of low-level resourcing and lesser recognition. Non-formal learning has also largely escaped scientific gaze, partly because topics of lesser policy priority do not generate priority on research agendas and for research funding. In the youth sector at least, research is also an activity conventionally regarded with a degree of suspicion. It is usually associated with formal institutions (universities and similar) and is largely practised by people who hold high-level formal qualifications and who frequently work in universities, national or regional research institutes and so forth. In addition, practitioners (in the non-formal and formal sectors) may conclude that research also exercises a kind of regulation over their individual and collective practices, since researchers construct conceptual and interpretive explanations that are ultimately external to education and training activities. It is not necessarily easy to gain research access to education and training settings, and it is not unusual for practitioners to reject research findings as poorly informed or simply irrelevant.



Under these circumstances, practitioners may tend to see science and policy in a closer and more direct alliance than is generally the case, certainly as far as social and educational research is concerned. Du Bois-Reymond writes in this volume about the educational concomitants and implications of knowledge societies and – still more so – knowledge-based economies. This is a social analysis of education in a specific context, and it adopts a diagnosis widely expressed in the contemporary research literature: formal education and training provision cannot respond well to changing social and economic requirements, and therefore non-formal learning is becoming steadily more important. Current education and training policy – most prominently at EU-European level, but increasingly in national discourses – also stresses that education and training practice must change to meet new and pressing requirements. In policy documents, economic arguments generally dominate, though by no means exclusively so: arguments that profile the social benefits of learning, both in themselves and in support of economic prosperity, are always present and sometimes equally prominent. Does this mean that social scientific analysis follows the direction of political discourse, or has it helped to shape that discourse? The only viable answer is that the two are interdependent: in reality, the demarcation line between science and policy is relatively blurred, *communication flows in both directions*. This communication is sometimes hierarchically structured, but very frequently not at all. The appearance of the terms “knowledge society” and “knowledge-based economy” in policy documents since the mid-1990s is a consequence of the insertion of pre-existing conceptual analysis and research findings into policy discourse, which sought frameworks to make sense of palpable economic and social trends that demanded constructive response. Whether the policy responses to date have been constructive – or even effective – is another matter, and on this point both researchers and practitioners hold a variety of assenting and dissenting views.

The insertion of non-formal and informal learning into policy discourse (see the introduction to this volume) followed a similar route, albeit with a less controversial follow-through in research and practitioner communities. By and large, the rapidly increasing policy priority attached to non-formal and informal learning – regardless of sector of practice – has been warmly welcomed in all quarters. Many hope that as a result, more resources will be devoted to non-formal educational provision in the coming years, not least in the youth sector. Whatever the underlying research and policy rationales for prioritising non-formal learning may be, in practical terms the sector and its practitioners are likely to receive greater material support and professional recognition. Existing good practice will be disseminated more broadly and could have greater impact on education and training provision *tout court*. Most importantly, those participating in non-formal learning are likely to derive greater personal and social benefit from having done so. This kind of flow from policy to practices is indisputably positive. The two contributions that follow this first intermezzo are examples of positive flow. Both mentoring (Colley) and the documentation-validation of skills gained in family life (Gerzer-Sass) directly relate not only to valorising non-formal learning as a field of practice but also to valorising the potential of disadvantaged groups.

Yet few social and educational practices are solely beneficial, whereas trading up always entails costs. In these connections, Colley points out that mentoring, however beneficial, brings a certain kind of regulation and it can expropriate resources. Mentoring contributes to the regulation of the subject, just as do other learning and socialisation processes. Its non-formal and informal contextualisation lends mentoring a subtler masking than classroom-based imperatives may



do, and could hence be regarded as potentially more powerful in constructing constraints rather than opening horizons. Furthermore, mentoring projects and programmes frequently rest on volunteer mentors. This may be largely unproblematic in paid work environments where mentors are company employees. Community-based projects may depend on mentors who are otherwise not in paid work and whose own informally acquired competences (such as family skills) for mentoring are effectively expropriated but are still not explicitly recognised.

This kind of critique also, of course, raises questions for the youth sector as a whole, which has long depended on the commitment and expertise of volunteers to provide social activities, non-formal education and personal guidance/support for young people. Volunteering, however, also has a strong tradition in the youth sector for other reasons – it underlines a value-based commitment to active participation in social and community life, which is desirable and worthwhile in its own right. From this point of view, volunteers also learn and benefit from the work they do with and for young people, which emphasises the reciprocal quality of social and educational relations. In sum, both research and policy need to develop much more complex understandings of the individual, social and economic benefits of non-formal and informal learning in practice.



3. Formal and informal models of mentoring for young people: issues for democratic and emancipatory practice

Helen Colley

Mentoring for young people – especially those who are socially excluded – has grown into a mass social phenomenon in some advanced capitalist countries at the turn of the millennium. Long a part of youth workers' approach to informal education, literally millions of volunteers have now been drawn into formal mentoring programmes in Anglophone countries – though these have not proved so popular yet in most European countries. A debate about this shift to more formal programmes has been central to mentoring since it came to prominence 25 years ago, focused on questions such as these: Are formal or informal styles of mentoring more effective? Is mentoring an inherently informal activity? And what happens to processes and relationships in mentoring when it becomes more formalised within institutions or through validation measures?

To address these questions, I draw on recent research commissioned by the Learning & Skills Research Centre in England to review concepts of formal, non-formal and informal learning (Colley, Hodkinson and Malcolm 2003). Only a few points from the full report can be outlined here, but they are necessary to explain the conceptual framework of this analysis of mentoring.

First, we found that there is no consistent distinction between informal and non-formal learning. Second, and more surprisingly perhaps, we found there to be little consensus about how to separate formal and informal learning, despite the fact that both terms are championed by particular academic and professional groups. We agreed with Billett (2001), McGivney (1999) and Davies (2001) that there are important weaknesses and dangers in efforts to categorise learning in these ways. They invariably claim the superiority of one type of learning over the other, in ways that do not appear to be justified by existing empirical evidence. They may also serve to obscure informal learning in formal learning situations (such as the “hidden curriculum” by which students learn their allocated place in social structures), and *vice versa*.

We consequently argued that, rather than distinguishing *types* of learning, it is more appropriate to refer to attributes of informality and formality – that is to say, characteristics socially constructed and ascribed to particular practices by certain communities of practitioners and researchers – present in all learning. Three of our key findings were that we were unable to identify (or imagine) any learning situation that did not possess both informal and formal attributes; that shifting the particular balance of informal and formal attributes inevitably changes the nature of the learning; and that any evaluation of that balance has to incorporate



an understanding of the wider context and power relations in which the learning is situated.

The commissioning of this research itself reflected two important policy trends, both of which assume a distinction between formal and informal learning. The first of these is a drive to introduce more formal attributes into learning that has traditionally been regarded as informal, since it happens beyond educational institutions. We have already seen the insistence by the UK's policy-makers for some years that almost all learning opportunities funded by government, including adult 'leisure' classes, require certification. The European lifelong learning agenda has created a further intense policy interest in the identification, assessment and recognition of 'non-formal' learning, particularly in the workplace (European Commission (EC) 2001a; see also Bjørnavold 2000) and for young people (EC 2001b). These refer predominantly to learning that has long been regarded as *informal*, and the concept of *non-formality* is invariably linked to the desire to introduce more formal attributes to learning in these contexts.

The second distinct strand of current policies in the UK runs in the opposite direction, since it is to increase informal attributes of learning situations traditionally regarded as *formal*. For example, unqualified learning assistants may now take classes on their own, and large numbers of learning mentors are also being employed in schools. These two parallel policy moves – to formalise the more informal, and to informalise the more formal – are but the latest in a long line of attempts to combine or "hybridise" particular constructs of formal and informal learning (e.g. Fordham 1979). Therefore we were interested in tracing a case study of such attempts over a period of time and analysing their consequences.

Mentoring offered an ideal exemplar for an historical investigation. It is arguably one of the most visible examples of a practice where the formal and informal attributes of learning interpenetrate in a highly permeable way. Much discussion in the literature focuses around formality and informality in mentoring, given that its essence is most commonly agreed to be that of a trusting personal relationship (Roberts 2000). On the one hand, mentoring appears to have been initially *discovered* as a highly informal learning experience, and then increasingly formalised in the hope of replicating its perceived benefits more widely. On the other hand, formalised mentoring programmes are still generally regarded as introducing informal attributes to education and training practices that were previously more formal.

It is important to note here that most research on youth mentoring has been conducted in the US and the UK, and this paper therefore reflects those particular policy contexts. They differ from the European policy context, as they present a more overt economically instrumental view of learning, and narrower concepts of social inclusion defined by being in employment. I begin by considering briefly early debates about "formal vs. informal" mentoring in business management, which exemplify some of the issues, before exploring in more detail how these have evolved in the context of mentoring young people.

-----> **Formal vs. informal mentoring: issues of democracy and emancipation**

Early research on mentoring in the US in the late 1970s focused on the context of business management. Several studies (Levinson et al. 1978; Schapiro 1978; Roche 1979; Speizer 1981) revealed that unplanned mentoring appeared to be highly effective in enhancing young managers' training and career development.



However, it functioned primarily through “old boy networks”. Senior management positions – providing the pool of mentors – were the preserve of white middle- and upper-class men, who invariably chose to mentor younger managers with the same characteristics. By sharing privileged access to powerful social networks and inside knowledge of the corporate culture among their own kind, unplanned mentoring just as effectively – though covertly – marginalised other social groups (Kram 1988). These findings led to intense interest in the possibility of introducing planned mentoring programmes, driven by two very different and potentially conflicting sets of concerns. These raised issues of democracy and emancipatory practice as central to the development of mentoring.

On the one hand, the global recession that followed the oil crisis of 1973 had led businesses to focus on economic competitiveness and cost-cutting. Mentoring of new managers on the job by senior managers was seen as a way of maximising their rapid acquisition of skills and knowledge, whilst also allowing personnel departments to be down-sized and reducing expenditure on more formal off-the-job training and development activities. On the other hand, the Civil Rights and Women’s Movements in the US were campaigning for access to the benefits of mentoring. Having won affirmative action legislation, they demanded that planned mentoring programmes be introduced to support positive discrimination in the workplace (Gray 1986). The potential tensions between employers’ drives to reduce costs and demands for more inclusive planned mentoring appeared to be temporarily resolved in this situation. Companies had to hire and promote women and blacks in greater numbers, but at the same time ensure that these new managers could ‘hit the ground running’ and ensure competitive productivity rates.

These concerns about social justice reveal the problem in assuming that unplanned mentoring is purely informal. Such mentoring embraced and reproduced within the workplace aspects of social structures, norms and conventions, as well as organisational power and status, that are in fact deeply formal (cf. Billet 2001; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). In turn, this also indicates a need to question the assumption that access to the benefits of mentoring could be widened simply by transferring it into more formal institutional arrangements. In his contribution to the first international conference on mentoring, Hunt (1986) attempted to tackle this debate by categorising the differences in style between formal and informal mentoring, summarised below:

Informal mentoring	Formal mentoring
Unplanned	Planned
Individual goals	Organisational goals
High social intensity	Medium social intensity
Voluntary friendship	Relationship mediated by matching process
Indefinite time-span	Limited time-span
Less directive	More directive
Difficult to track, perceptions biased	Monitored according to specified criteria
Suited to smaller enterprises	Suited to large organisations
Paternalistic	Organisationally structured

Figure 3.1 – Informal compared to formal mentoring



This categorisation suggests a series of factors that distinguish formal from informal mentoring:

- the degree of external control
- the degree of planning and institutionalisation
- the level of intentionality
- the nature (organisational or individual) of its goals
- the locus of decisions about goals (internal or external to dyad)
- the depth of the dyadic relationship
- the degree to which participation is voluntary (by both partners)
- the time frame
- the nature of its evaluation
- the 'ecology' of its setting

Hunt (1986) also distinguished between their expected outcomes. However, he notes that these expected outcomes for formal mentoring are not necessarily guaranteed. There is both the possibility of their distortion in the process of transferring mentoring from the informal to the formal plane, and the risk of conflict with the continued functioning of informal mentoring activity:

Informal mentoring – outcomes	Formal mentoring - outcomes
Political awareness for privileged group	Acculturation for all new managers
Passing on existing skills to juniors	Skill training for increased productivity
Linking junior and senior managers	Fast-track developing of talented newcomers
Reflected glory for mentor	Rejuvenating older managers at 'plateau'
Sponsorship of the privileged	Promotion according to merit
Exclusivity of dominant grouping	Inclusivity for diverse groupings

Figure 3.2 – Outcomes of informal mentoring compared with formal mentoring

These outcomes are somewhat idealised, but they suggest other influential aspects of the process that need to be considered in evaluating mentoring:

- the broader political purposes of mentoring
- the broader economic purposes of mentoring
- the association of mentoring with different types of knowledge and learning
- the degree to which it produces stasis or dynamism within organisations
- the degree to which it reproduces or redresses social inequalities within organisations.

All of these aspects suggest that shifting the balance of informality and formality to increase formal attributes will alter the nature of the mentoring process, and – in certain models at least – that it can disrupt the dyadic nature of the mentor relationship. It does so by introducing external, institutional agendas into the process of mentoring, and by shifting the locus of control to the institution and powerful groups which dominate it (Gay and Stephenson 1998).



This raises questions about the extent to which more formalised mentoring redresses or reinforces social inequalities. Hunt (1986) noted that, despite the apparent coincidence of interest which impelled the initial development of planned mentoring programmes, traditional ‘informal’ mentoring would probably continue to function much as it had always done. This would create the potential for conflict between planned and unplanned mentoring processes, with their different compositions of formal and informal attributes.

Time has shown that such conflicts have indeed occurred. Planned mentoring has been shown to create negative consequences in some instances, although these are under-researched and under-reported (Scandura 1998). Women, for example, continue to find it difficult to obtain effective mentors, and cross-gender mentoring has made some women more vulnerable to sexist prejudice and harassment from their mentors. Thus, despite the benign intentions of planned mentoring programmes, intended positive consequences can fail to materialise; unintended negative consequences may arise; and the negative consequences of ‘informal’ mentoring remain unchallenged. A similar history can be traced in mentoring young people for social inclusion, to which I now turn.

-----> **Mentoring young people**

As in the field of business management, mentoring for young people also rose initially to prominence in the US from the late 1970s onwards. In this context, research focused on the transitions to adulthood of ‘at risk’ adolescents in poor communities (e.g. Werner and Smith 1982). These studies revealed that *informal* mentors, sought out by young people themselves among their own kin and community, appeared to be a key protective factor for successful transitions. Resilient young people solicited information, advocacy, challenge and emotional support from their mentors to tackle particular crises and overcome adverse circumstances.

Philip (1997) terms this “natural” mentoring, and argues that certain characteristics underpin its effectiveness. It is located within the young person’s own community and neighbourhood, and therefore the mentor has localised knowledge that is highly relevant. The mentor may have some status in the local community, but is not in a position of direct authority over the young person. Such mentoring is unplanned and spontaneous in nature, but nevertheless largely intentional, with young people negotiating their own agenda and exercising control over the interactions. The young person’s participation is unequivocally voluntary, matched by the willingness of the mentor to respond. Philip argues that there is a high degree of intimacy and trust in the relationship, and the mentor preserves confidentiality even though this may bring them into conflict with others in authority (e.g. parents or police).

Related to this, the goals of “natural” mentoring may relate not only to conventionally accepted achievements such as successful school graduation, but also to young people’s goals of establishing independence and identity, and even of experimenting with sexual activity or drug use – goals which dominant value-systems construct as risky or deviant (Philip and Hendry 1996). This requires a high degree of non-judgmentalism and acceptance of the young person on the part of the mentor. Despite its appearance of extreme informality, our analysis reveals that this type of mentoring in fact relies on practice that is strongly coded in terms of the unspoken rules by which it operates, and the boundaries it maintains between official and unofficial sources of support for young people. This suggests



that, in order to be effective, it has to take into account and respond to formalised structures and processes within the community.

A similar type of mentoring has traditionally been part of the role of professional youth workers (Jeffs and Smith 1987). This does not appear as informal as the “natural” mentoring described above, nor is it strictly formalised. Youth workers are often drawn from the local community, their knowledge is grounded in that locality, and they tend to adopt styles of dress and speech patterns common to the youth sub-cultures in which they are working. However, they are able to do outreach work with young people who are not resilient enough to seek support themselves. The focus is on helping young people define their own needs, to find ways of meeting those needs, to develop knowledge of other cultures, and to practise social skills and experiment with new identities in a safe environment (Philip 1997: 141). Youth workers emphasise the importance not only of relating to individuals, but also to their peer group and the wider community. Fostering young people’s existing friendships and social ties is seen as creating an important “anchor” in their lives, and loosens the purely dyadic nature of the mentoring relationship. This approach to mentoring also aims explicitly to develop young people’s social and political awareness and their capacity for active citizenship. In all of these respects, *informal* mentoring by detached youth workers mirrors “natural” mentoring closely, with the same defining factors:

- localisation
- non-institutional settings
- voluntary participation
- intimate and trusting relationship
- negotiated agendas and goals
- non-authoritative relations
- autonomy and control residing with the young person.

Before moving on to look at the increased formalisation of youth mentoring, we have a final, important caveat to add to these analyses of more informal mentoring. In contrast with unplanned mentoring in business management, where there are at least some critiques of its practices, evidence of its negative effects, and discussions of its relation to deeper social structures operating in the workplace, we have not discovered any such critiques of unplanned youth mentoring. Philip’s study combines a review of the literature with one of the most detailed empirical investigations of such mentoring in the UK. Yet, despite acknowledging that her research revealed evidence of negative outcomes, she chooses not to incorporate this evidence into her study. Consequently, the available research may present an idealised and favourable view of unplanned mentoring for young people, and reflects the deep-seated interests of one particular group of professionals (youth workers) in asserting the superiority of the ‘informal’ model they promote.

Just as in business management, however, findings of research into “natural” mentoring for socially excluded young people were used as a rationale for introducing planned mentoring programmes on a massive scale in the US, the UK and other (mainly Anglophone) developed countries throughout the 1990s (Miller 2002). Rather than encouraging the “natural” or youth work forms of mentoring, these have been driven by youth policies that are seen as authoritarian and prescriptive (Jeffs and Smith 1996), and favour more formalised models of mentoring. Here too, formalisation is driven by two different responses to the socio-economic climate.





Freedman (1999) argues on the one hand that the state has used it to minimise social unrest that might be created by cuts in welfare spending in response to the deep recessions of the 1980s. On the other hand, he suggests that the middle classes have flocked to volunteer as mentors through concern for social justice. The combination of these good intentions with policy imperatives, however, has resulted in engagement mentoring as a missionary “crusade” waged by the middle classes on poor, working class youth. To a certain extent, he sees the middle classes salving their own consciences by mentoring urban youth, even as they themselves retreat from the inner-city areas, taking their social and economic capital with them. A more optimistic view is that this might generate social solidarity and lessen the threat of anomie, and that it might also undermine class, gender and racial inequalities in the labour market by enhancing young people’s social capital (Aldridge, Halpern and Fitzpatrick 2002).

As a result, mentoring has now become a central element of government education and welfare policies in England, and in my own study of mentoring (Colley 2003a, 2003b) I have reviewed this process of increasing formalisation. I term the dominant model that has emerged “engagement mentoring”, since it explicitly targets socially excluded youth with the aim of re-engaging them with paid employment and formal routes into the labour market. Engagement mentoring is currently being promoted by four different UK government departments, and the new *Connexions* youth support service and the introduction of learning mentors through *Excellence in Cities* are two of the most significant initiatives so far.

In contrast with more informal models, engagement mentoring takes place within an institutional framework shaped by policy-makers and professional practitioners, and is often confined to institutional locations. As other reviews of engagement mentoring practice confirm (e.g. Skinner and Fleming 1999), there is usually a more or less overt element of compulsion for young people to participate. This includes close monitoring of interactions, and sanctions threatened for non-compliance, such as withdrawal of welfare benefits, eviction from supported housing, or imprisonment rather than a probation order. Agendas and goals are negotiable only within tightly framed expected outcomes, which young people may contest and resist, but often at the cost of the above-mentioned sanctions. A central aim cited in all major recommendations for or reports of engagement mentoring is that of altering young people’s attitudes, values and beliefs, in order to develop the necessary attributes of employability that employers demand (e.g. Employment Support Unit 2000; Ford 1999; Social Exclusion Unit 1999).

Mentors are overwhelmingly drawn from higher-status individuals outside disadvantaged young people’s own communities, with business people and university undergraduates as two favoured sources of volunteers. Mentoring relationships are therefore marked by social distance, competing value-systems, and more intense power differentials than pertain in unplanned mentoring (Freedman 1999). In parallel, engagement mentoring is often geared towards getting young people to separate from their local peer group (or even from their families) and move out of their communities (Colley 2001a; Philip 1997).

The result in practice has been a polarisation of mentoring provision for socially excluded youth, with “natural” and more informal youth service-based approaches on the one hand, and more formalised, planned schemes on the other. These models can be contrasted as follows:



'Natural' mentoring	Engagement mentoring
Unplanned	Planned
Unfunded, or difficult to obtain funding	Central, long-term funding
Voluntary participation	Degree of compulsion
Individual goals	Policy and institutional goals
High level of negotiation	Low level of negotiation
Shared background and experiences	Social distance
High social intensity	Low-medium social intensity
Self-sought friendship	Relationship mediated by matching process
Indefinite time-span	Limited time-span
Less directive	More directive
Difficult to track	Intensely monitored on specific criteria
Located in familiar surroundings	Located in institutional settings
Relates to wider social ties and peer group	Focuses on individual
Rooted in the local community	Separate from local community

Figure 3.3 – Natural mentoring compared to engagement mentoring

Both models contain mixed attributes of formality and informality. The differences between them reflect similar aspects as in business mentoring: degree of external control, nature and locus of goals, level of intentionality and voluntarism, depth of the relationship, time-frame and evaluation, and ecology of setting. “Natural” mentoring is strongly influenced by the formal structures of its social context, in the family or local community. On the other hand, as my research shows (Colley 2003a), even in the most formalised engagement mentoring schemes, young mentees can exercise significant agency in controlling dialogues and events, often resisting or evading the official purposes of the scheme. This has been shown to result in counterproductive outcomes, where mentor relationships that were highly valued by the young person, and which clearly provided them with important benefits in terms of increased self-confidence and social skills, nevertheless ended with re-exclusion for the mentee as they failed to achieve pre-ordained, employment-related goals required by government funding regimes.

The increased formalisation of youth mentoring was in part based on the benign but flawed assumption that, if resilient young people have found themselves mentors, then all disadvantaged youth who are given a mentor will become resilient. As in the business management context, the flaw lies not just in ignoring other variables, but in interpreting a correlation between having a mentor and success as a direct causal relationship. Garnezy (1982) and Philip (1997) warn that it may entail less benign value-judgements about what may constitute “success”, and about which people make suitable mentors. As in business mentoring, questions can be posed about the continued operation of natural mentoring



alongside official models. In the context of youth mentoring, however, where the distance between the two appears greater, and the value-judgements potentially more conflicting, these questions are sharpened. What might the consequences be for young people facing the competing and sometimes conflicting directions of natural and engagement mentoring?

Dishion, McCord and Poulin (1999) report a systematic review of engagement mentoring research in the US. This demonstrates that many programmes recorded worse outcomes for young people who had been mentored, than for control groups. Williamson and Middlemiss (1999) suggest that interventions which aim to separate disadvantaged young people from their kinship, peer group and community ties and re-engage them with the formal labour market are unrealistic, since the social and financial costs to young people are too great.

The most recent research published in the UK (Philip, Shucksmith and King 2004) examined three different forms of youth mentoring and befriending, by both professionals and volunteers. Once again, this revealed that young people positively valued the experience, but that it is a “risky business”. The end of the mentor relationship can undermine these perceived benefits and reinforce feelings of exclusion. The authors point to the danger of seeing mentoring as a ‘cure-all’ rather than a useful element in a range of interventions. A further important finding is that dominant approaches to mentoring may be too narrow and too tightly prescribed to allow for more productive choice and negotiation on the part of young people. The expectation of achieving prescribed outcomes within defined timescales is likely to be counter-productive.

Engagement mentoring has been criticised by a number of authors (Gulam and Zulfiqar 1998; Jeffs 1999; Philip 2000; Piper and Piper 2000), who have argued that it represents a form of social engineering. In summary, they claim that it is based on constructs of young people, and of the poor working class communities they inhabit, as deviant and deficient. The qualities of “employability” that it seeks to instil have been characterised as little more than compliance and deference to the will of powerful employers (Ainley 1994; Gleeson 1996). Interventions taking such a pathological view of youth may reinforce rather than counteract inequalities. Here too, issues of less visible power relations and the covert interests of dominant groupings are at issue.

Inequalities may not just pertain to those being mentored, either. The vast majority of formal mentors for socially excluded youth (voluntary or employed) are women. Although often marketed to volunteers as an experience that will enhance their cultural capital, the continued perception of mentoring as an inherently *informal* process means that their cultural capital becomes in fact limited: they receive only a minimal amount of training and support in comparison with traditional levels of post-graduate education and clinical supervision for professionals working with disadvantaged youth. There is also an emphasis on mentors’ personal dedication to their young mentees, and an expectation that they will go “beyond the call of duty” in their caring (this is exemplified in Ford (1999), although repeated many times elsewhere), which may itself be highly exploitative of women’s gendered role as carers (cf. Colley 2001b, 2003a). Furthermore, professionals such as youth workers and social workers may welcome mentoring in their role as an opportunity to work *with* rather than *on* young people, but may experience difficult tensions between acting as a mentor and fulfilling other aspects of their professional roles (Philip, Shucksmith and King 2004).



This analysis of different models of youth mentoring therefore confirms important influences on mentoring styles identified by Hunt (1986) in the corporate context: instrumental political and economic purposes, association with different types of knowledge, and the reinforcement or disruption of the *status quo* within institutions, communities and society as a whole. It also confirms the thesis in our wider report (Colley, Hodgkinson and Malcolm 2003) that evaluating the effects of the particular balance of informal and formal attributes in different models of mentoring is essential in deciding the way forward in policy and practice. This leads us to conclude by considering the implications of this analysis for the European youth sector, especially the debate on validating and recognising ‘non-formal’ learning.

-----> **Shifting the balance of in/formality in mentoring: implications for the European youth sector**

The background paper for this conference focuses in part on:

“... the controversial item of validating non-formal education/learning in the youth field. Some refuse this altogether, considering that this is the opening for formal education to take over. In fact, non-formal learning in youth activities should not lose its open character and become a formal structure by imitating the formal education system” (EC and Council of Europe 2004: 10).

As I noted earlier, our research (Colley, Hodgkinson and Malcolm 2003) suggests that it is unhelpful to pose the problem in this way, pitting one supposed type of learning against another. We demonstrated through a wide range of empirical case studies that such shifts do change the nature of the learning, but that it is impossible to judge such shifts according to simplistic, abstract equations: *informal* does not necessarily equal *good* and *formal* equal *bad*, nor is the opposite always true. Above all, if we are considering introducing formal attributes such as validation and recognition/accreditation, the outcome depends very much on the *purpose, context and power relations* in which these changes take place.

Power (1997) argues that we live today in an “Audit Society”, driven by a strong sense in many areas of public policy that the only way to achieve change and to ensure value for money is through tightly targeted activities, focused on clearly measurable outcomes. The example of engagement mentoring is merely one example of this growing trend. The promotion of these approaches in much of the policy literature appears to proceed from a basic assumption that such changes are either self-evidently beneficial or, sometimes, that they represent the only possible course of action.

European policy documents argue that the problems of validation and recognition of less formal learning can be mitigated by ensuring “transparency”. However, Strathern (2000) argues that this desire to render the invisible visible is at the heart of the audit culture, and that such visibility is double-edged. It is supposed to confirm people’s trust in one another, although “the very desire to do so points to the absence of trust” (Strathern 2000: 310). Audit may claim to promote transparency on the one hand, operate as a tool of disciplinary surveillance on the other, and, in a third turn, encourage subversive forms of concealment in which people cloud transparency, play the audit “game”, and engage in “creative accounting” to meet targets and preserve their own interests. The outcomes of such efforts to render the invisible visible cannot be guaranteed, and may even distort or block the intended outcomes, as we see happening in engagement mentoring.



If we look at the moves to change the composition of formal and informal attributes in youth mentoring in this light, a number of questions can be posed. First, why is planned mentoring so popular with some governments? There are many indications that it offers them a much cheaper alternative, through the use of volunteers, than traditional youth work. However, the lack of formal training and qualifications for volunteer mentors means that they are often ill-equipped to take a “professional stance” in dealing with young people, especially the most disadvantaged youngsters. This may have particularly serious implications for young people acting as peer mentors.

Second, how democratic or emancipatory a process is mentoring? My research on engagement mentoring (Colley 2003a, 2003b) showed that mentors internalised tacit but very powerful proscriptions on discussing key political issues and subjects such as trade union rights with their mentees. The institutional setting constructed a very limited view of what active citizenship might mean or what other models might be developed.

Third, if mentoring is aimed at integrating socially excluded youth, what should its main focus be? Dominant policies, and the models of mentoring they promote, focus on changing young people themselves to fit in with existing social and labour market structures. But if these structures themselves contribute to social exclusion, through narrow definitions of employability, through gender, racial and class discrimination, and through stereotyping, this poses a different emphasis. Mentors’ role should include advocating on behalf of young people when they encounter these barriers, and equipping them to challenge and change such structures – including by campaigning for formal legislative changes.

Finally, and most importantly perhaps, how can mentoring help us respond to a key issue highlighted in the European White Paper on youth (EC 2001b): the individualisation of young people’s careers in the 21st century? All too often, mentoring programmes in the US and UK have been planned as an individualised intervention that reinforces the isolation and fragmentation of young people’s trajectories. But it does not need to be used in this way. The radical tradition of mentoring within the remit of youth and community workers has treated it quite differently, as a necessary precursor for some young people to gain confidence, with the goal of enabling them to participate in collective movements for social change (Fordham, Poulton and Randle 1979; Philip 1997). This social purpose might be an important element to introduce into planned mentoring programmes.

Further research will be essential in developing a way forward for mentoring – not limited to the evaluation of its technical measures and outcomes, but through analysing mentoring through the relationship between its micro-level interactions and its wider social and economic context. To do this, we need more case studies, in which qualitative methods can reveal the meanings and intentions brought to the practice by all its stakeholders. Above all, we need research that gives those in mentor relationships – especially young people themselves – a voice, and refuses to suppress evidence of negative experiences. If we understand not only “what works” but – more thoroughly – the complexity of what *happens* in mentoring young people, we may be able to develop it as a democratic and emancipatory practice, with a productive balance of formal and informal attributes.



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4. Family skills as a potential source of innovative human resources development

Annemarie Gerzer-Sass

This paper introduces the “skills balance” tool, which was developed within the scope of a research project. With the help of this tool, the project aims to utilise family-related qualification potentials for the purposes of corporate human resources development. To this end, family work and informal skills gained outside the workplace need to be recognised within the corporate context. The skills balance thus provides corporate human resources development with a tool enabling recognition of employee skills, especially those acquired in family life, and exploiting the competences potential associated therewith. In this way, the skills balance is embedded in the discussion surrounding the goal of finding better ways of combining family life and parental employment and is seen as a building-block helping to achieve a fairer distribution of family-related tasks and employment between the genders.

Family: one of different ways of life – but a learning place of inestimable value

Although living in a family is only one of a number of different forms of cohabitation, it will, however, continue to exist in many changing forms and guises: the nuclear family to the same extent as the unmarried couple with children, the single parent with child(ren) or the newly built family practising social parenthood (step families, adopted families and many different forms of foster/care families). “It is no longer possible to assume, query or definitely say what family, marriage, parentage, sexuality, eroticism and love are, mean, should or might be; they vary in terms of contents, exclusions, norms, morals, and possibilities and must be deciphered, negotiated, coordinated and justified in all details regarding how, what, why or why not” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1990). Accordingly, in the year 2000, the concept of family is no simple programme. When it comes to the learning of skills, however, it is an effective one. In light of the above, family life deserves closer scrutiny to ascertain the skills acquired within the scope of tasks performed within the family and the way in which these skills can be utilised for a person’s own work-related situation and further development.

The main justification for the above is that conventional technical and professional qualifications are becoming outdated at an increasingly fast pace due to new working-world structures resulting from technological and organisational changes. In the wake of this process, supra-professional qualifications – key-qualifications or lifelong learning – and social skills are gaining increasingly in importance. And this trend is not limited to the requirements of high profile jobs.



Informal processes and places of learning are thus increasingly moving to the centre of interest, as far as the theory and practice of skills development are concerned. The family, as one of the key areas of life outside the workplace, including the experiences and activities associated therewith is, however, only just beginning to be recognised as a place where skills are learned that can be exploited by companies. So far, this area of life has tended to be viewed rather as the source of performance deficits and skills loss. Family work, however, actually teaches us work-relevant skills, regardless of whether we acquire such skills parallel to gainful employment or during a family phase. These skills are mainly those of women/mothers, which is why the transfer of qualifications acquired in family life has been limited to traditional female, i.e. domestic, educational and social fields of work, so far. Partnership-oriented fathers actively participating in everyday family life and child raising possess these family-related skills, too. Research into how family skills can be transferred to the world of work should therefore not focus on mothers alone but also include fathers. This is especially true, given the fact that conventional male-female roles are changing, mainly and especially as a consequence of the transformation of the working world. A brief digression therefore follows, in which these interactions are outlined.

-----> **The changes in the role played by family cannot be understood in isolation from the transitions in the working world**

Generally, industrialised societies have resolved the conflicting demands of family life and work by a functional division of labour between men and women, as observed throughout all social strata. The intergender contract based on this division of labour brought great instabilities in its wake, involving, as it did, inequality of the contractual partners, economic dependencies and the lack of visibility as well as social marginality of the female component of the gender-based division of labour. The American anthropologist James Scott calls this principle functional transparency. In the private sphere, in particular, this principle was enforced by linking it with certain values, e.g. the key value that maternal child raising is superior to all other forms of upbringing. Within a single generation, however, structural changes in the national economy have led to a decline in the share of industrial jobs from 50 to 33 per cent, enabling an expansory growth of the service sector and the development of the high-tech labour market (Bertram 1997). The principle of functional transparency, characterised by fixed time schemas, lifelong employment possibilities with one and the same employer and a clear division between male-female roles, is only found to a limited extent in these new sectors. The question of combining work with family life is thus not only a matter of underlying conditions such as more flexible working hours and requirement-oriented child care offers but also, and first and foremost, a matter of how the male role can be detached from its unilateral functional definition as the main provider and “worker”. This cannot be achieved merely through a “process of re-education” alone but will necessitate a cultural change which must also be supported to a large extent by companies. All recent studies give testimony to the desire to be able to be “more of a father”. Achievement of this goal, however, soon encounters obstacles: financial reasons are cited in this context and above all non-acceptance by employers, e.g. when fathers wish to take part of parental leave (Vaskovica and Rost 1999).

So far, measures taken by companies addressing the question of how to establish a balance between family life and work have been aimed at women or mothers. To date, the significance for corporate policy of family-friendly offers tai-



lored to fathers has not, or has only just been recognised or made the subject of discussion (Busch 1997). Admittedly, scientific studies repeatedly draw attention to the significance and responsibility of fathers for families (Fthenakis and Griebel 1993; Seehausen 1995) and call for a family policy that includes mothers and fathers to an equal extent (Wingen 1991). Now, however, questions are being raised that go further than this, e.g. how additional skills gained through family-related tasks can be utilised at the workplace and what, apart from support for women, must be included in what is referred to as a “family-friendly corporate policy”. Even if this process is still in its infancy, it nevertheless implies a change of paradigm in corporate policy; so far, the latter has been oriented to the market and in-company performance criteria and has failed, or almost completely failed, to include the family as a resource and innovation potential (Sass 2000).

To support this change of paradigm, the research project “Family skills as a potential source of innovative human resources development” endeavours to provide a tool according to which the time taken off to bring up the kids and for family work is no longer regarded as “lost time” as far as one’s career path is concerned but as time in which additional qualifications are obtained.

-----> **Enhanced skills through family work – an attempt at re-evaluation**

The trend and transition in the working world is accompanied by a re-assessment of learning. Lifelong learning is the magic formula that will allow successful transition to the knowledge based economy and society. The EU Commission defines lifelong learning as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence” (European Commission 2000). In this context, informal learning places move to the centre of attention in an addition to formal learning places such as educational and training institutions. Admittedly, the family is mentioned, along with leisure time and communities, as an informal place of learning, but no further reference is made to it subsequently. Since the learning and practising of social skills, however, are associated with informal places of learning, and more recent studies have confirmed that over 70% of social skills are acquired outside institutionalised places of learning (Livingstone 1998), failure to increase the focus on families is a shortcoming.

The project “Family skills as a potential source of innovative human resources development” attempts to remedy this shortcoming. The project aims at recording and evaluating the social skills gained through family work with the help of a newly developed tool, the skills balance, and then making these skills utilisable by companies. In recent years, strategies and procedures for imparting and validating social skills have become increasingly decisive in personnel selection – even if only for executives – and furnish evidence of the interest in social skills (cf. Erler and Nußhart 2000). In light of the above, the skills balance raises the question of how experiences gained within the scope of family work and the skills acquired thereby can be recognised as a potential, so that they can be exploited for one’s own career path, how skills acquired in the family can be transferred to the workplace and how private and public-sector employers can be convinced that they are squandering crucial skills potential if they fail to include the skills training that mothers and fathers undergo in the family setting in their corporate qualification and knowledge management system.

One characteristic feature of the family as a place of learning is that learning does not occur in an organised form but in the form of ‘learning by doing’. This type of learning can also be regarded as action-oriented learning, since personal and



knowledge development are based on active responses to a live learning culture. The direct, personal, and responsible nature of the family setting and the emotional aspects mean that the family, as a learning place, has a stronger and frequently also more sustainable effect on skills development than many formal learning processes (Gerzer-Sass 2001). However, for these skills acquired outside school, the problem arises of how to transfer them to the working world. Most people are unaware of what they have learned outside school and vocational training, above all in the family, and of all the things they can do. The low level of public and corporate acceptance of these skills makes it difficult or impossible to bring them into play at the workplace, thus preventing their recognition. This holds true, despite the fact that many of these skills are applied as a matter of course in everyday work.

-----> **The skills balance: individual recording and evaluation of social skills**

The skills balance comprises four sections and commences with the topic: “Life history as learning history”. In this context, people are encouraged, with the help of a mind map, to retrospectively recognise and ascertain the most important fields of learning and experience outside formal areas of learning, such as schools, training and vocation, in their own biographies and the key influences, events and topics that set the course for their personal development e.g. activities in sports clubs, amongst friends etc., allowing them to acquire certain skills and continuing to be of importance for them today. Via this biographic approach, the family, as a field of experience, is introduced by means of several exercises and people are asked to describe effects of family experience and learning on their own person. The whole range of coping skills that are needed or must be mobilised to solve everyday problems is presented using an everyday example, i.e. a child that suddenly falls ill. This example also serves to demonstrate that reacting to different requirements, in different situations and with various persons does not only enrich existing skills by adding new experiences but also helps to acquire new skills.

Taking the example of “self-assertion”, we further demonstrate that this skill is trained or newly acquired both in the family and at the workplace through very different role requirements, in various situations and contexts. As far as self-assertion is concerned, there is indeed a connection between dealing with one’s son playschool teacher for example, and dealing with one’s supervisor at work.

This and similar examples are intended to illustrate the fact that skills acquired in the family can indeed be transferred to the work situation, even if certain modifications may sometimes be required.

In light of the above, the skills balance must be viewed as a process-oriented instrument encouraging people to become aware of their own skills and regard them as their personal “capital” capable of being used on many occasions.

As already mentioned above, the skills balance aims at drawing up individual or personal skills profiles. For this purpose, it offers a catalog of different skills areas or individual skills that can be used for self-assessment purposes. The skills area “flexibility and mobility”, for example, allows us to assess whether we “adjust our objectives and ideas to new situations and altered circumstances”, “recognise and accept our own interests and needs” and “are open to new tasks and challenges”. Assessment takes place according to a scale ranging from “excellent”, “good”, “adequate” to “almost non-existent”. Assessment by another person, be



it a colleague, a supervisor etc. may help review and objectivise the skills profile and replace measurement. This “dialogue-type” assessment is being increasingly used in place of the required measurement, as indicated by the small number of empirical studies conducted on this topic. Use of skills profile depends on personal interests and the current situation: be it at the workplace, for professional re-orientation, after a family phase, for planning follow-up training or simply to check up on where one currently stands in terms of skills development.

Since the skills profile is not a general “psychology test” but aims at developing a basis for professional human-resources development, the skills balance must also be incorporated in personnel work. To this end, an “Information brochure for persons in charge of human resources (HR) development” has been prepared, which provides information and tips on how to use the skills balance. Depending on already existing corporate HR-development tools, the skills balance can be used as a basis for personnel interviews, re-engineering measures for corporate reasons or decision making within the scope of team-development processes. However, this necessitates estimation and (at least rough) definition of the share of social skills needed in line with the corporate requirement profile. By comparing the corporate requirement profile with the personal skills profile, supervisors or persons in charge of human resources can review whether an employee is suitable for the job in question (partly suitable or not really suitable etc.) and find out where additional qualifications might be needed. Admittedly, this approach leaves aside questions relating to technical knowledge, which continue to be highly significant for all job-related tasks. It is, however, up to the individual company to decide how to link the skills balance with the tools demonstrating technical qualifications.



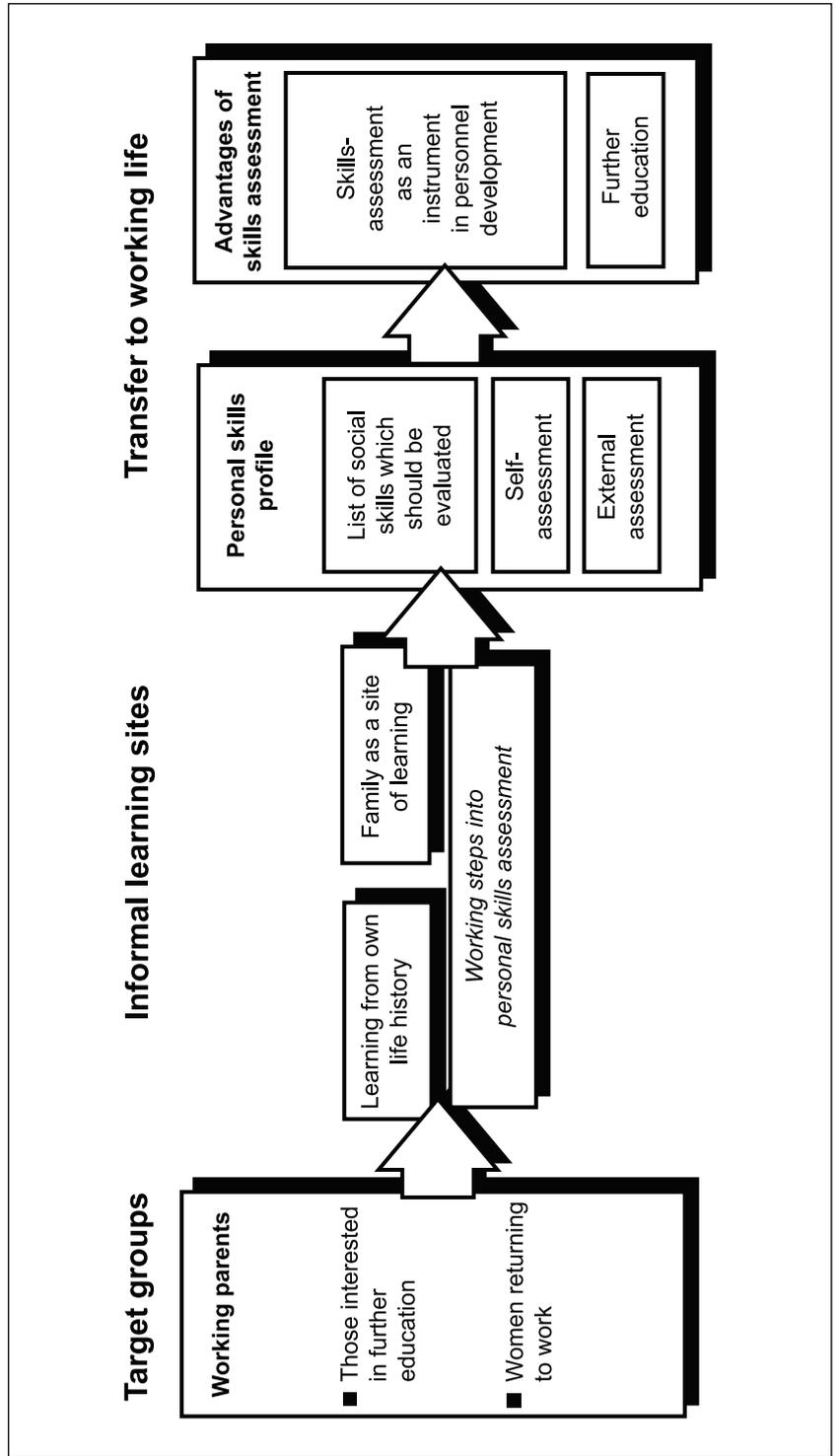


Figure 4.1 – structure of the skills analysis



-----> **Vision for the next decade: family-raising activities – a tangible competitive edge**

So far, the upgrading of family work has been regarded as a family-policy topic and has seldom been seen against the background of equal opportunities for women at workplaces. Given this situation, the skills balance may help to stop family work from being seen more or less solely as the responsibility of women and encourage men to gain more skills in this field. Currently, it could provide women with a comparative competitive edge over men, since it is they who have so far assumed responsibility for the family and this fact should be turned to advantage.

If the skills balance succeeds in proving that family work opens up additional qualification potentials for the workplace and the labour market, - and what is more, does so even free of charge for employers - this is a matter that concerns not only social policy but first and foremost the world of business. Not only would this enable corporate modernisation strategies to be linked with equal opportunity perspectives, both at the workplace and in society, for men and women involved in family raising activities, but it would also allow for parental-leave-related career breaks and phases of family-related part-time work as training periods in the professional biography and thus make them more valuable in economic terms (Gerzer-Sass 2003).

This would probably also enhance acceptance of employees who wish to combine family life and work by the general public and companies. Last but not least, it would help considerably to do away with the currently predominant cultural paradigm according to which singles – constantly available and employable – are seen as ideal employees. Unfortunately, corporate expectations in terms of work-related mobility and biography-related flexibility still stand in the way of parenthood or a responsible life with children. This conflict becomes evident in the deficits addressed as “structural neglect of families” by the 5th family report of the German government (BMFSFJ 1995). Whether Germany will survive as an industrial location will also be determined by the extent to which current indifference towards the role played by families in human potential safeguarding can be overcome. To ensure economic value-added, we will have to establish a balance between human and fixed capital (BMFSFJ 1993).



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Some results of the pilot study

The results shown below are based on a written survey among employees who worked through the competence review sheet, which was one element in the test



phase of the project “Family Competences as a Potential for Innovative Personnel Policies”. The results on hand refer only to the German survey. Partial results of similar surveys done in the Netherlands and the UK can be found in the conference documents.

The survey was done voluntarily and anonymously. A total of 142 persons from companies, the private and public service sectors and institutions of further education was interviewed. The evaluation results are not representative, but they do reflect a number of trends and, in some statements, reveal first points of emphasis.

Of the 142 people interviewed, 18 are men and 124 women. Most of them (82%) have children, i.e. 27% one child, 53% two children and 20% three or more children. The average age of the youngest child is 7.

Along with the survey results, Figures 4.2 and 4.3 also show self-assessment results derived from the competence review sheet. Forty-four given categories or competences are involved here which were evaluated by the interviewees according to their level of ability (Figure 4.2). Simultaneously, interviewees were expected to estimate if respective competences had been recently acquired, developed further or had not been influenced by family commitments (Figure 4.3). A detailed version of categories can be found in Figure 4.1.

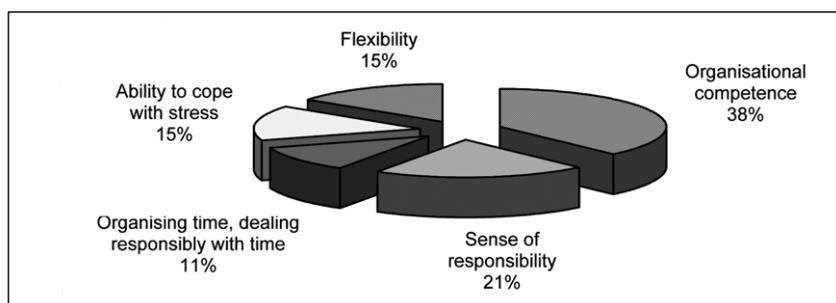


Figure 4.2 – Most important competences gained in family work (open answers)

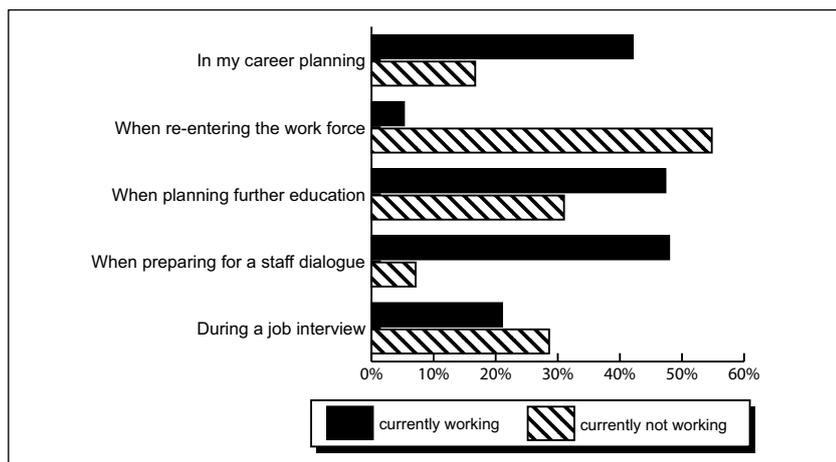


Figure 4.3 – Definite intention to make use of the results of the competence review sheet results in the near future (multiple responses, %)



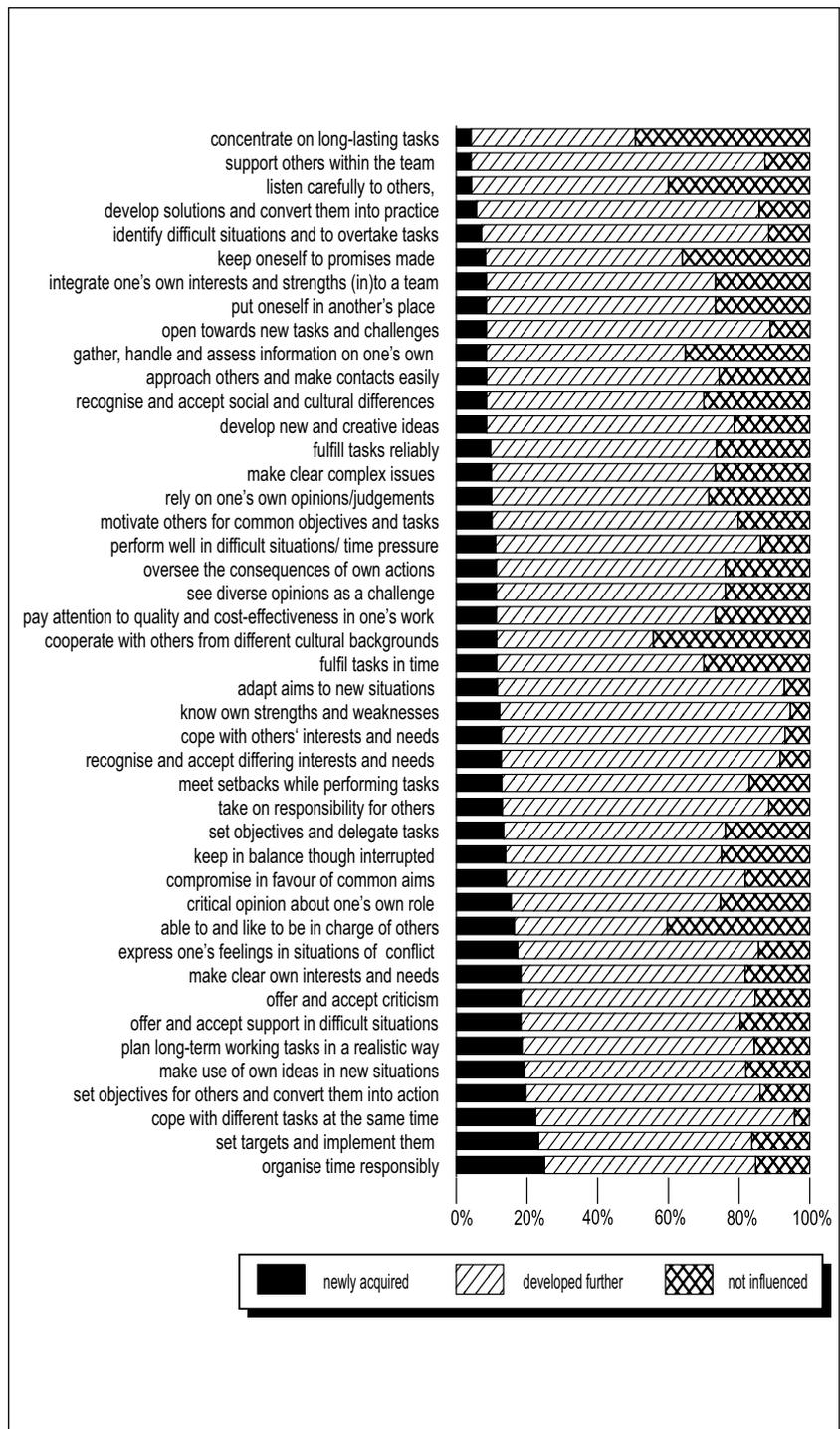


Figure 4.4 – Competences gained through family commitments (multiple responses, %)



Field of competence/skill	competence/skill	Skill profile = degree of your competence				In my family activity these skills were...		
		I can do this...				Newly acquired	Developed further	Not influenced
	Please tick whatever refers to you	Very well	Well	Well enough	Not well			
Self-organisation/ Self-management	1.To know/be aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses							
	2. To be able to set targets and bring them to operation							
	3. To be able to make clear one's own interests, desires and needs							
	4. To be able to spend and organize time in a targeted and responsible way							
	5. To be able to make use of ideas and competences in new and unfamiliar situations							
Sense of responsibility	6. To be able to oversee the consequences of one's behaviour							
	7. To be able to reliably fulfil tasks one is responsible for							
	8. To keep oneself to promises made							
Resilience/ability to cope with stress	9. To be able to perform well in difficult situations and under time pressure							
	10. To be able to concentrate on tasks, also when they are long-lasting							
	11. To be able to meet setbacks while performing tasks							
Communication skills	12. To be able to keep in balance, even when one has to cope with work interruptions							
	13. To be able to approach others and to make contacts easily							
	14. To be able to listen carefully to others, even for extended periods of time							
	15. To be able to make clear complex issues in a calm and precise way							
	16. To be able to have a critical opinion about one's own role in a discussion							

Figure 4.5 – My personal competence profile – self-assessment

Family skills as a potential source of innovative human resources development



Cooperation skills	17. To be able to cope with with other people's interests and needs								
	18. To be able to express one's opinion and personal feelings and interests even in situations of conflict								
	19. To be able to rely on one's own opinions/judgements and to defend them against controversial positions								
	20. To be able to offer and to accept criticism								
	21. To be able to offer and to accept support in difficult situations								
Team-working skills	22. To be able to add and integrate one's own interests and strengths (in)to a team								
	23. To be able to see diverse opinions as a challenge and stimulus								
	24. Willingness to compromise in favour of common aims								
	25. To be able to support others within the team with respect to optimise common results								
Intercultural Skills	26. To be able to recognise social and cultural differences and to accept them								
	27. To be able to cooperate with people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds								
	28. To be able to put yourself in another's place even when they are much different from you								
Flexibility/mobility	29. To be able to adapt aims and ideas to new situations and changing demands								
	30. To be able to cope with different tasks at a time								
	31. To be able to recognise and accept differing interests and needs								
	32. To be open towards new tasks and challenges								
	33. To be able set objectives for oneself and for others and to convert them into points of action								
	34. To be able to plan long-term working tasks in a realistic way								

Figure 4.5 – My personal competence profile – self-assessment (cont.)



Planning and organising skills	33. To be able set objectives for oneself and for others and to convert them into points of action								
	34. To be able to plan long-term working tasks in a realistic way								
	35. To be able to fulfil tasks in time								
	36. To be able to gather, handle and assess information on one's own								
Creative problem solving skills	37. To be able to identify difficult situations and to overtake tasks								
	38. To be able to develop new and creative ideas								
	39. To be able to develop solutions and to convert them into practice								
Leadership skills	40. Willingness to take on responsibility and tasks also for others								
	41. To be able to set objectives and to delegate tasks								
	42. To be able to motivate others for common objectives and tasks								
	43. To be able to and like to be in charge of others								
	44. To pay attention to quality and cost-effectiveness in one's work								

Figure 4.5 – My personal competence profile – self-assessment (cont.)

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The project was scheduled to run from June 1999 to June 2001. In its preliminary phase (until June 2000), the project aimed at developing methods for identifying and validating family skills suitable for application in the field. The result, the



“skills balance”, was presented at an international workshop in Brussels in September 2000. The second phase (until June 2001) was to pilot the skills analysis with 15 selected companies, follow-up training institutions and, on an individual level, with users. The results were presented at an international workshop in Brussels in Mai 2001 (BMFSFJ 2003).





Intermezzo ii: from practices to participants

Lynne Chisholm and Bryony Hoskins

Practices are made up of structured and structuring interactions between people and groups. Participants in learning processes are an active and critical element of those processes, both as those who guide, support and mentor the acquisition of knowledge and competence (teachers, trainers: learning facilitators) and as those who are pursuing a path of personal, cognitive, social and professional development (pupils, students, trainees: learners). This way of describing the division of labour in learning processes draws attention to the importance of making a distinction between the roles and activities (practices) that take place in a learning encounter and the person(s) who adopt and perform these (participants) in the encounter or across a series of encounters. Learning facilitators (of all kinds) inevitably also learn from the work they do, including from learners (of all kinds) who may on occasion be more competent or knowledgeable on a topic or aspect. Learners are also capable – to varying degrees – of self-direction, which represents an integrated division of labour in the learning process. Furthermore, they learn together with other learners, both in a self-generated manner and as intentionally prompted by learning facilitators.

At this level, the focus lies in understanding what happens on the ground of education and training practice. This demands a close-up perspective and a process-based approach, and it generally rests on concrete examples of practice. Applied educational research here comprises an explicating activity, that is, it shows *how* the elements of learning encounters are interlinked on the basis of actual examples – and is likely then to render an interpretive account of *why* and with *what kinds of effects* the observed patterns are as they are. Colley's account of mentoring can also be seen from this vantage-point. Applied researchers working on non-formal and informal learning will typically find that such contexts and processes are more flexible in the extent to which they can accommodate to people's needs and demands as learning citizens. Gerzer-Sass's research report on making family skills visible for human resources development provides an example.

However, making descriptive (how) and analytic (why, wherefore) sense of learning encounters, both as events and sequences, requires an orientating framework. How, why and to what ends are non-formal learning settings and methods more flexible and accommodating? What does it mean to say that non-formal learning complements formal learning? What is the particularity of the division of labour in non-formal learning processes, and to what does this pattern particularly contribute as far as participants are concerned? In the next chapter, Bechmann Jensen injects an orientating conceptual framework into the circle of



this collection. This contribution explores the nature of non-formal learning settings and considers these from the viewpoint of the actors involved in the encounters they generate. Interestingly, it applies a structural model to do so. The model hinges on the fundamental cultural dichotomy in western civilisation between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’, which is typically treated as a binary dichotomy across a range of social phenomena that are divided into two categories firmly separated from each other (such as male [hard] versus female [soft]). The hard/soft distinction can be and is *culturally* applied to different kinds of knowledge, skills, competences – and to different varieties of learning. Within learning settings, practices can equally be labelled as ‘harder’ and ‘softer’ – as can the participants who perform them. Ultimately, the distinction between hard and soft relates to social power: the harder, the more powerful *and* the more powerful, the harder. Bechmann Jensen’s contribution closes precisely by raising the question of the distribution of power in different kinds of learning contexts and their outcomes. On whose behalf and to the benefit of whom might the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes take place? To what extent might “formalising the non-formal” amend the balance of power in non-formal learning processes, placing learners in a less favourable position to take on *structuring as opposed to structured* roles and activities?

The two concrete examples that follow on describe instruments that consciously privilege *learners as structuring participants* in the recognition process. These instruments and the processes in which they are embedded are planned activities that take place outside formal mechanisms (assessment procedures, examinations, accredited qualifications and diplomas), but each aims to render skills and competences not only visible but also practically helpful for employment and further education and training purposes. Ajello and Belardi describe the guided and assisted construction of digital portfolios by young people; Preißer reports on the guided and assisted review of skills and competences in the context of shaping a personal and professional life project which can be undertaken (and in principle repeated) at different stages of adult life.



5. Formalising the non-formal: potentials of sociality and the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes

Torben Bechmann Jensen

This contribution does not pretend to offer a definitive, state-of-the-art account of non-formal learning, but rather a contribution to ongoing discussions in the field. The approach is not one of providing a conclusive explanation of the nature and the status of non-formal learning in the youth sector in Europe, but rather an exploration of the possible impact of new forms of recognition for learning outcomes that result from participation in non-formal education. Recognition of non-formal learning outcomes holds potential, but also poses problems. The reflections that follow also derive from living and working in Denmark, a country with a specific set of educational and social traditions. These lead both to long-standing and dense provision of non-formal learning opportunities throughout life and to a comparatively high level of social recognition for as well as participation in non-formal learning, both directly and as an integral outcome of community, social and voluntary activities. Involvement in transnational and European-level youth affairs, in research and in practice, inevitably prompts those from Denmark to reflect on the place of non-formal learning in education and society, since that which is part of the established everyday of Danish social and educational life is not necessarily regarded and practised in the same way elsewhere in Europe.

→ The “hard” and “soft” distinction between the formal and the non-formal

A variety of theoretical, research-based, institutional and practice-based definitions of formal, non-formal and informal education and learning are available, but despite this – and perhaps also for this very reason – its essential nature seems, to some extent at least, difficult to pin down. Another way of couching this is to suggest that to date no specific definitions attract a broad consensus amongst those who are actively involved in the field.

To begin with, it is helpful to make a distinction between the organisational level of educational provision (agencies), educational outcomes (competences, qualifications) and educational experiences, practices and development (learning processes). In all three categories, formal, non-formal and informal varieties can be identified.

- *Agencies* can be schools, youth-clubs, cultural clubs, sport and leisure organisations, projects, NGOs and so forth. They can all be more formal or less formal in nature. Schools in the mainstream education system are legitimate and publicly integrated institutions. Other educational agencies are funded or supported by public administration or from private sources, but may operate



less formally. Agencies such as local associations and social groups can also work on at grassroots level and may have no funding support, but they are still organised from within by participants themselves.

- *Competences and qualifications* denote and represent what one has learned, such as being able to read, write, and calculate, to use other languages, to work with tools or computer programmes, to exercise responsibility in relation to time, materials or other human beings, to be reliable and, sociable... All competences are evaluated in one way or another, but usually only those that can be easily measured with the help of tests and examinations will be recorded in certificates and thereby visible to other people as formal qualifications. Other kinds of competences may well be valued as important by peers and others, but they are seldom rendered visible as letters or numbers.
- *Learning processes* may take the form of active involvement, paying attention, being disciplined, listening, participating, undertaking tasks, taking the lead, co-operating, being motivated and so forth. Depending on how the learning situation is framed (aims, content, activities), learning processes can also be described as more formal or less formal.

However, the complexity and mixture of formal, non-formal and informal agencies, competences and qualifications and learning processes make it difficult to draw an explicit line of whether a given example or category should be regarded as formal, non-formal or informal. In other words, non-formal and informal learning also takes place in formal educational agencies, whereas non-formal educational agencies may well employ formal learning processes and may produce learning outcomes that could be subject to formal evaluation or which are formally recorded and recognised.

The non-formal INGO *Médicins sans Frontières* offers an example. Trained doctors and nurses work voluntarily in a non-formal organisation, but within it they certainly using the competences to which their formal qualifications attest. Undoubtedly they also use informally-acquired competences, since they have to work out how to optimise their abilities to help people in need throughout the world. The *Red Cross* falls into a similar category: in Denmark, it initiated a national telephone hotline for young people suffering from loneliness. The hotline is staffed by young volunteers, who speak with their lonely peers and try to help them, but they do not hold any formal qualifications for this kind of activity, which could be seen as belonging to the field of psycho-social work for which others may formally train to enter as a profession.

Similarly, it is evident that non-formal and informal learning takes place in schools and universities, which are central pillars of formal education systems and which provide, in the first instance, formal learning in all its dimensions. The organisation of extracurricular activities among pupils and students, political groups of students dealing with demands and standards, committees or groups arranging parties and even working together among students in order to pass exams or whatever – all of this facilitates informal and non-formal learning. Formal secondary and higher education curricula nowhere describe how all this takes place, nor are these activities explicitly included in any course, examination or degree regulations. Neither are those who teach in schools and universities formally responsible for bringing about such non-formal and informal learning.

The conclusion has to be that it is quite difficult to identify non-formal learning as something exclusively belonging to one or the other institution, organisation



or agency. Non-formal learning pops up in a lot of different settings and many people will participate in non-formal learning without realising this explicitly. To focus on competences and qualifications as the key dimension to distinguish between the formal and the non-formal does not solve the problem. Typically, the line is drawn by establishing a dichotomy between “hard” and “soft” skills. Hard skills are those that are learned directly in connection to curricula – to know about things, to be able to read, write, calculate and so forth. Soft skills refer to more generic qualities such as being sociable, creative, responsible, reflective and so forth – and these are the competences that are thought to be those conveyed through non-formal and informal learning. The problem remains that both hard and soft skills – and the qualifications that render them visible – are facilitated in different settings, no matter whether these settings are regarded as formal or non-formal.

-----> **“Cognitive” and/or “social” competences**

Mørch and Stalder (2003) propose a simple triangular model (as shown in Figure 5.1 below) in order to gain a better picture of the relationships between the acquisition of competence and personal developmental processes in post-modern societies. This depicts systematic correspondences between the two sets of dimensions. Being, doing and knowing together make up the concept of overall competence at the individual level. Informal, non-formal and formal learning together make up the overall spectrum of ways to acquire competence. Linking the two triads together offers clues to which kinds of contexts, situations and methods offer the potential for different kinds of learning and their specific associated outcomes.

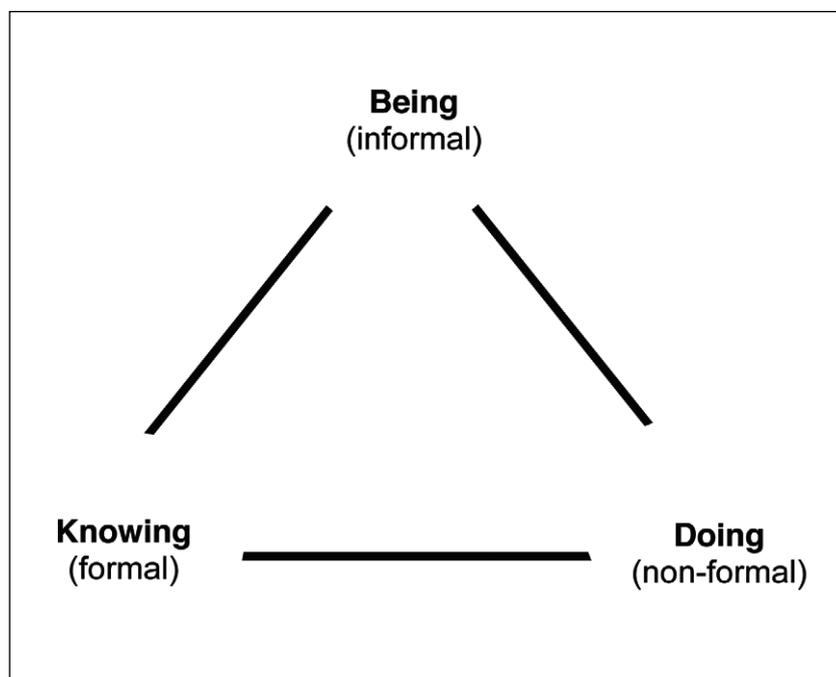


Figure 5.1 – The learning triad



Many agencies, then, provide non-formal learning, though the agencies themselves may be formal, non-formal or informal in nature. Non-formal qualifications may also derive from different kinds of learning. However, it may be particularly useful to look more precisely at how non-formal learning is facilitated, that is, to consider methods as a key attribute for identifying and depicting the non-formal. To this end, Chisholm (2001) provides a list of the key features of non-formal learning as follows:

- balanced co-existing and interaction between cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning;
- linking individual and social learning, partnership-oriented solidarity and symmetrical teaching/learning relations;
- participatory and learner-centred;
- holistic and process-oriented;
- close to real-life concerns, experiential and oriented to learning by doing, using intercultural exchanges and encounters as learning devices;
- voluntary and (ideally) open-access;
- aims above all to convey and practice the values and skills of democratic life.

Non-formal competences and qualifications seem prominently to include (amongst many others) active, participatory, democratic, responsible, reflexive, critical and (inter)cultural elements. These are not formalised qualities and cannot be tested or examined using standardised and generalised tools and measurements. Rather, non-formal skills tend to be similar to everyday life competences or, at least, to be means by which individuals can cope with or handle their lives in different contextual settings. Hence, non-formal skills could be specified in terms of acting as the active mediator between formal knowledge and informal aspirations, wishes and desires (ideology and emotion). They constitute prerequisites for participating in life as a whole – professionally, socially and personally.

-----> **Flesh, profile and shadow**

People might also be pictured in three dimensions, each of which connects with a dimension of learning. The basic foundation of an individual is the body, or the flesh, to which informal qualifications correspond. Formal qualifications, on the other hand, correspond to an individual's profile, that is, the architectural outlines of the body. An individual also throws a shadow of the flesh and its profile into the surrounding environment; this shadow connotes non-formal qualifications. The shadow metaphor resonates with Chisholm's (ibid.) definition, which states that "non-formal education/learning takes place *alongside* and complements the mainstream formal systems of education and training" (emphasis added). This might suggest that non-formal qualifications similarly exist alongside and complement formal qualifications. Like shadows, they will not show up unless seen from a specific angle or in a particular light, that is, unless the intention is to look for them purposively and to search in definitive kinds of contexts.

The quality of "responsibility" serves as an example of a non-formal capacity. It is difficult to regard responsibility as an individual competence in its own right, because it requires a context in which the quality is demonstrated. That is: where and how is responsibility shown and exercised? Responsibility is not an overall ability, but rather something that is revealed to be present in a certain situation, in a certain relation and in a certain context. Most people show responsibility in some way or other, but where and how they do so varies considerably. Showing



solidarity or being loyal are comparable examples. Many people are loyal to their families, peers and close friends. Many demonstrate loyalty towards their workplaces or employers. Solidarity may also be expressed in local, regional, national and international contexts.

The interesting point about such qualities is when they are not exercised or expressed. When do people hold back their sense of responsibility, loyalty and solidarity? One classic situation is when they do not feel a sense of belonging or relevance with respect to the issue or context at hand. Those who remain on the outside, who do not participate, will find it more difficult to identify with those inside and implicated. Where people are not “invited in” and where they are “sent out”, it cannot be expected that they will feel loyalty, solidarity or responsibility towards the insiders. It follows, then, that non-formal competences are most visible and best recognised when people take part in some activity, programme or context, when they are included and aware that their contribution is making a difference. In sum, non-formal competences tend to have a social character. It takes a social context with social relations and an atmosphere of togetherness in order to be able to see, recognise and value them.

-----> **Non-formal qualifications and development – an explication**

Accounts of where, when and how individual and social development and change take place become crucial for the purpose of describing and evaluating processes and their outcomes. However, observations and records of development and change should not be confused with the fact of development and change as such. Put the other way around, the lack of verbal or written accounts should not lead to the conclusion that there has been no development or change. The same logic applies to non-formal qualifications. Even though these are not described and even though non-formal learning is not illuminated, they are still there and they do make a difference. The question therefore now becomes: what is there to gain by explicitly describing non-formal learning and its processes, methods and outcomes? This raises a series of important issues.

On behalf of whom should non-formal learning and qualifications become more visible?

Those young people who possess formal qualifications are also likely to possess non-formal and informal qualifications. Do these young people want or need a more formalised description of the latter? What would they gain thereby? The assumption might be that those who have most to gain are those who do *not* have formal qualifications. But what would be the effect of pursuing this course of action? Would it enhance these young people’s chances for getting heard, getting employed or getting taken seriously?

Should we focus on the recognition of non-formal learning in regard to young people as citizens or as students and employees? Is it possible (and would it be desirable) to separate these dimensions in the first place? Non-formal learning is crucial for participating in social affairs and democratic processes, but it is questionable whether young people are likely to feel included as valued citizens if they are positioned for any length of time as “out of formal education”, as unemployed or simply as in opposition to mainstream society.



What is the expediency of non-formal learning?

Expediency is a key concept in the debate, because non-formal learning and qualifications belong to specific contextual settings. This leads us to a larger discussion about whether non-formal qualifications are used for shared democratic or individualised purposes. Labour markets are increasingly competitive; educational systems are moving the same way.

This represents a significant threat to the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes in themselves. Competition is primarily acted out with reference to formal qualifications, to the hard skills, to being measured, weighted and listed. In such circumstances it is only too understandable that young people are inclined to take an individualised approach to learning and overlook the potential of and the need for non-formal qualifications and skills.

Non-formal qualifications alone do not, for the most part, render individual young people employable. At the same time, employers increasingly demand non-formal qualifications alongside formal qualifications. This suggests that non-formal qualifications are becoming more important as an *additional* means of distinguishing between young people seeking employment and building a professional career. Much research now indicates that having a good level of formal education and qualification is certainly necessary for making a successful transition into the labour market, but that it is not sufficient by itself. Non-formal qualifications are the distinctive extra that makes the difference – they attract the employer’s notice and offer an additional way to differentiate between potential employees in a situation where more and more young people are more and well-qualified in formal terms.

In Denmark, for example, it used to be the case that job applicants gave the names of their teachers, professors or former employers as referees. This practice fell out of use for some time, when the labour market was buoyant, but now it is returning. References of this kind give an impression of whether an applicant is really ‘right for the job’, and they typically include the kind of personal and social qualities that are gained and expressed non-formally and informally. In other words, references give an account of non-formal qualifications. However, references can be described as a black box of random labels, selected by individuals occupying positions of credibility and prestige. They choose for whom they will supply a reference and they decide which labels they will apply. There are no commonly agreed criteria or standards, no guidelines that suggest who is best qualified to act as a referee, and no way to monitor whether referees execute the task accurately and fairly.

This example reveals quite nicely the importance of finding ways to describe non-formal qualifications more systematically than has been generally the case until now. To avoid the black box phenomenon, it is necessary to render non-formal learning and qualifications more explicit and more visible – and thus with greater assurance that all young people benefit fairly.

Are formal goals and tasks needed?

Planning and facilitating non-formal learning requires specific and formal aims. Simply to try to facilitate non-formal learning “in itself” creates the problem of what to be responsible, creative, critical and reflexive about. Activities must be organised around some common goal of interest or some explicit task to perform for the people involved. To identify the goal as “creativity”, for example, makes



little sense without any specification of the direction, material or explicit purpose of the creativity to be achieved.

Can recognition be achieved simply by explicating non-formal learning?

This highlights the issue of specifying the appropriate criteria evaluating non-formal learning. These criteria might, for instance, relate to the nature of the learning setting, or they might relate to quality standards for programmes and projects that are designed for particular target groups amongst young people.

Setting the criteria and finding ways to set these down transparently can prove sensitive and controversial. A recent Danish proposal foresaw that all children and young persons would receive a kind of logbook in which teachers, counsellors, social workers, youth workers – in short, all those professionals who work socially and educationally with young people – would record their impressions of the logbook-holder. This proposal met with much opposition and was rejected by several of the relevant professional groups who would have been involved. The logbook was seen as another step along the road to societal surveillance, and it would give too much power to individual adults who, albeit in a professional capacity, would be able to write down more or less whatever they pleased. Newer professional with little experience might well be hesitant to write a dissenting, alternative report that did not conform to earlier reports by others. Furthermore, it was argued that individuals would be intimidated by the prospect of having to carry around this kind of cumulative written report about themselves. It could well limit their development, either because they would become reluctant to be and do anything that might meet with a negative evaluation by those writing the reports, or because the labels attached to them in the logbook would ‘stick’ and become unchangeable. It would be difficult to ignore the logbook and its content, since not to show it openly would be likely to make people suspicious that there was something to hide.

Writing down non-formal qualifications might also be subject to the same kinds of risks – that is, unless some kind of standard recognition instruments and key concepts were to be developed. And how might individuals become active agents in the process, so that they have control over the information and evaluations that such written qualifications could contain?

Who should do it, and where do we start?

It is possible to explicate non-formal learning and non-formal qualifications, and there is no doubt that this kind of learning and its outcomes are of increasing relevance not only for the labour market but also for participation in democratic processes. Problems arise with respect to who will benefit from such explication and recognition. They also arise as far as reaching agreement on who is in an appropriate and accepted position to specify the explication and who has the right and the expertise to record, evaluate and recognise the outcomes. The educational practitioners themselves – trainers, social and youth workers, teachers – who practise in the field, may not have the energy, the time or the skills required to do so. Does this mean that researchers or policymakers should take on these tasks?

Certainly, there is little point in starting from scratch, as if nothing already existed that would be useful and relevant. So the starting-point ought to be the kinds of activities and environments that are already regular features and locations of non-formal learning. This would enable an overview of existing initiatives to be pre-



pared – that is, collating and compiling a knowledge bank, probably in electronic form. To do so effectively, this would mean that the field as a whole takes on the challenge and the obligation of organising itself to be able to manage such a task administratively. The purpose of the knowledge bank would importantly be to provide an open source of information and experience for all interested parties. In parallel, a corps of advisors or counsellors could be built up, who, drawing on the knowledge bank, could support and guide individuals who are in search of non-formal learning opportunities. These professionals could also act to monitor the development of new non-formal learning initiatives and activities.

Indeed, from 1994 Denmark's Open Youth Education initiative began to do exactly what is described above. Bechmann Jensen and Holmboe (2003) describe this as an alternative to formal secondary education, with the goal of designing and carrying through individually tailored educational pathways over a period of two to three years for each individual young person joining the scheme. Each participant was given a personal supervisor, with whom s/he negotiated a learning pathway, making use of non-formal and small-scale projects, agencies and institutions. Sadly, the scheme was closed down in 2003, although in many respects it had been very successful, serving the needs of a wide range of young people and not only the educationally and socially disadvantaged and marginalised. The initiative was suspended, unfortunately, before it was able to respond decisively to the need for building an overview of educational opportunities in the broader sense, for providing training for supervisors and advisors, and for overcoming the problem of not being taken seriously by the formal system including the labour market and political decision makers.

-----> **Formalising the non-formal, limitations and obstacles**

Formalising the non-formal appears to be a huge task to take on. One could argue that non-formal learning is situated in and dependent on small-scale contextual settings. It has to do with actual and real relations between individuals who develop common understandings of ways in which to co-operate. In this respect it does depend on a micro-social environment, and to move the locus of reflection and action to the macro-social level runs the risk of “unhinging” non-formal education from the contextuality that succours it, and in doing so, leaving nothing but sterile academic abstraction. This stands in contradiction to the purpose of promoting non-formal education in the first place. So is it possible, is it desirable, to formalise the non-formal without losing the potential of the non-formal in itself?

Non-formal learning does not necessarily stand in opposition to formal learning, but nevertheless, the main characteristics of non-formal learning have developed in terms of standing alongside to and as alternative to the formal. These characteristics lend specific strength. Simply to insert non-formal learning into existing formal curricula and programmes provides no independent space and is likely simply to turn the non-formal into another dimension of the formal. This could lead towards setting up a new range of overwhelming social and individual demands with which all feel compelled to comply.

It is possible to describe and specify non-formal learning and non-formal qualifications – but whether these should be applied at individual, institutional or political level is a matter for discussion. Non-formal learning outcomes have to do with developing individual potential, which can be displayed under the right circumstances, but do not belong to individuals as a set of abilities. Hence, the effort of describing and promoting non-formal learning should be conducted at an



institutional and political level, by arguing for optimal conditions for non-formal learning to take place.

In sum, whilst non-formal learning enhances and transforms formal learning into something more useful, it remains uncertain whether the non-formal could or should *replace* the formal. The Non-formal ought not to be just another curriculum of learning, but merely something, which is given space and conditions to utilize.

-----> **Revisiting recognition of the non-formal**

The description and explication of non-formal learning appears both necessary and important, but it might transpire to be especially important to direct these descriptions to the formal system, with the prerequisite that better conditions for the provision and appreciation of non-formal learning are an essential demand.

Recognition of the non-formal ought to be accompanied not only by awareness by the formal system but also by a change of attitude and a change of action. These changes should include actions similar to the ones displayed within the non-formal learning itself, and in particular greater

- trust,
- tolerance,
- appreciation of the non-formal,
- willingness to engage with people with non-formal qualifications.
- invitation to co-operation, partnership and networking,
- acceptance and demonstration of equality,

Finally, recognition of the non-formal learning depends on the willingness of the formal system to spend money and resources to encourage that these learning processes will take place and develop.



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 **6. Making non-formal and informal learning visible through digital portfolios**

Anna Maria Ajello and Cristina Belardi

European Union policy documents increasingly and insistently underscored the changes that are required in education and training systems and practices in order to respond to the challenges of knowledge-based societies and economies (European Commission 1996, 2001). In following up the Lisbon Strategy to raise European competitiveness and strengthen social cohesion, implementing lifelong learning is an integral element of the Objectives and Copenhagen Processes in the fields of general education and vocational education and training¹. The renewed focus on lifelong learning has led to paying more attention to non-formal and informal learning as contexts in which people can and do gain skills and competences that are relevant and useful not only in personal and social life but also in working life. As a result, developing tools and methods to evaluate non-formal and informal learning outcomes – that is, in Bjørnavold's (2000) terms, how to make this kind of learning visible – has taken on high priority in many education and training environments. This joins up with the longstanding expertise in the practice of non-formal education and learning in the youth sector, a tradition that has enjoyed the firm and direct support of the Council of Europe from the early 1970s onwards, as Eberhard (2002) describes.

Recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences could facilitate labour market integration and reintegration and thus contribute to assuring employability in the short and long term. This is undeniably a powerful motivation for developing appropriate tools and methods for recognition in the vocational education and training sector, and not only for young people, of course. It is not the main motivation for pursuing recognition in the youth sector, which places much more emphasis on personal and social development in learning settings that do not generally attempt to measure learning outcomes in any systematic way, and certainly do not rank participants against each other as far as their achievements and capacities are concerned. Nevertheless, the kinds of knowledge and competences that are classically fostered through participation in non-formal learning – in particular social, communication and team working capacities – are increasingly seen to be relevant for working life. In addition, the youth sector places high value on inclusion and cohesion, so that the social participation and vocational integration of disadvantaged and excluded young people is of particular interest and concern, including through their participation in non-formal learning opportunities. If the recognition of non-formal and informal learning could contribute to this aim, including improving such young people's employment opportunities, this would certainly meet with broad acceptance amongst



those who are active in the sector's work, whether as educators or in other capacities. This means that the current interest in developing forms of recognition for non-formal and informal learning outcomes brings two sectors into a closer dialogue than has been the case for some time, which may forge new alliances and foster worthwhile innovations.

The crucial role of non-formal and informal learning has also been recognised at national level in a range of European countries, leading to many different kinds of initiatives². Well-known examples of recognition tools that have been developed to date include the bilan de compétence in France, APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning) and APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) in the UK, Transfer of Credits between institutions in Scotland and Attendance Certificates in The Netherlands. Many more examples might be cited, and several were presented at the Strasbourg Seminar on which this collection reports (see the introductory chapter). There is every reason to welcome a rich variety of such initiatives, given the diversity of needs and demands between contexts, groups and individuals. At the same time, it is also helpful to be able to develop recognition and certification tools and methods that are transferable across different settings. This is not, in the first instance, a simple response to political requirements, nor is it necessarily a component of concerted active labour market policies. It is, above all, a professional question for R&D specialists: to recognise and evaluate learning reliably and appropriately requires that the tools used to do so are coherent with the learning that is to be validated. The digital portfolio developed in the *In. Tra* project, which is the subject of this contribution, is an example of an attempt to create a recognition tool that is transferable, that is, which could be used in other contexts and countries. This is a tool designed for use with the young disadvantaged with low levels of education and qualification.

-----> **Origins and current application of the portfolio method**

The concept and practice of using portfolios to demonstrate capacities and competences is hardly new. Artists have always used portfolios as a means to show what they can do, typically including representations of excellence. Stage artists and models keep a portfolio of photographs and press cuttings, architects and kitchen and bathroom designers maintain a file of plans and photographs of their past work to show to new clients. Dressmakers, hat makers, shoemakers and tailors display examples of their products in shop front windows. Couturiers and coiffeurs are only too pleased when public appearances of famous people act as living advertisements for their capacity to create style. Those who craft weightier and immobile objects, such as artisan furniture makers, always kept one or two particularly magnificent examples of their trade skills in their workshop or front parlour. In some countries, apprentices in crafts trades still have to produce an 'example of best practice' as part of their final assessment, before they are fully accredited as members of their trade community. In all these cases and in many more, *physical representations* of skill and competence replace, or stand for, written certificates.

The current revival of interest in portfolios derives from experimental work in US secondary education (Resnick and Nolan 1995) that aimed to enable students to achieve high levels of cognitive elaboration – or, in other words, to help them develop critical competences. Teachers assisted students who created a portfolio to reflect on their own learning process. Students were repeatedly asked to select pieces of their own work that demonstrated their initial level (the lowest level),



their intermediate level (in which progress can be seen) and their highest level of achievement (the best work they had done). It is also worth noting that the school-teachers who carried out this work were supported by methods specialists, educational scientists and psychologists in order to pinpoint what the students could and should be asked to do and how they might best achieve successful outcomes.

From this perspective, the portfolio is a methodology that refers to a specific concept of learning: *learning as a result of individuals taking part in activities*. Not only the traditional examples described at the outset of this section but also contemporary applications such as that noted immediately above refer to a (re)vitalised understanding of learning. Workplace learning can also be placed in the same conceptual space. These kinds of learning differ from classical school practice, where discipline and consolidated verbal transmission refer to standard evaluation practices, both oral and written.

Current use of the portfolio as a methodology for the recognition of acquired competences and the empowerment of cognitive capacities of students represents an innovation that stems from the recent changes in the theoretical conception of learning. These draw attention to the complexity and pervasiveness of learning as viewed in sociocultural perspective (Resnick 1997), an approach that defines learning as the *result of meaningful activities carried out by people in their everyday life* instead of limiting it to activities carried out in institutional contexts such as school or work (Rogoff and Lave 1984; Lave 1988). This broad definition of learning leads to the view that it is important to overcome the traditional dualism between academic and non-academic knowledge in order to understand and to make visible the different kinds of competences that exist. Consequently, different types of learning are distinguished by the *contexts* in which the learning takes place and by the type of *characteristics* encompassed by the learning in question – such as in the distinction between formal, non-formal and informal learning.

-----> Different types of learning

Formal learning takes place in specific institutional contexts and, regarding its contents, it refers primarily to *disciplines* – such as psychology, physics, Romanistik (Latin-origin languages and their literatures and cultures) or whatever. These typically and traditionally correspond to school subjects and university departments.

Non-formal learning is intentional and it refers to specific activities, such as learning to dance or how to play an instrument. Knowledge acquired through non-formal learning is mainly connected to action. It has an identifiable aims and produces outcomes that are more easily visible and recognisable. It displays different degrees of organisational formality and is more directly connected to the person responsible for the teaching. For example, learning to dance has a clear aim and leads to a precisely identifiable result, but dancing instructors are not necessarily bound to externally structured criteria. They can and do develop their own criteria and standards for the methods they use and the evaluation of the learning outcomes.

Informal learning results from activities related to working and daily life. It is an outcome that is intrinsically connected to participation in situations in which an individual feels completely involved and for which s/he intuitively grasps the sense. The content of informal learning can be described as fluid knowledge –



neither systemised nor organised and displaying fuzzy boundaries. Its essential characteristics are that the knowledge is connected to tailored action and to the solution of problems. Furthermore, informal learning is characterised by strong contextualisation. From a cognitive perspective the analogy is the construction of symbolic representations of experience, whereby individuals establish interrelations allowing them to switch between different episodes that, from their own perception, are connected in a particular way.

Figure 6.1 summarises the differences between different types of learning. The only difference that exists between learning that takes place in institutional contexts and that in non-institutional contexts is that the latter is not certified, while *both are intentional and organised and structured by trainers*. Instead, learning which takes place during daily life activities, including work-related activities, is different from formal and non-formal learning because it is *not certified, not structured and is not intentional*. The aim of the *In.Tra* project was to develop a digital portfolio that could encompass all the types of learning that the young disadvantaged have experienced.

Type of learning	Context and situations	Certification	Intentional	Structured
Formal learning	School, training courses ...	Yes	Yes	Yes
Non-formal learning	Outside institutional educational contexts such as lessons at home, e.g. learning how to play a guitar	No	Yes	Yes
Informal learning	Daily life activities, leisure ...	No	No	No

Figure 6.1 – Different types of learning

-----> **Recognising learning**

The *In.Tra* project faced evident hurdles in developing a portfolio methodology. The young disadvantaged persons, known to have low levels of literacy, were the target group. The tool had to be user-friendly and could not depend on possessing scholastically-acquired skills. Therefore, it was not feasible to create an IT-based test for self-evaluation of competences, which was what the project had originally proposed to do. Furthermore, informal competences are acquired in specific daily life contexts, through interaction with other persons and through participation in activities which are, for the person involved, clear and meaningful, as explicated in Lave and Wenger (1991) and Rogoff (1990). Following Polanyi (1967), such competences are partly tacit in nature, which means that those who possess them find it difficult to offer verbal accounts of the nature of such competences and may not be aware of their acquisition. Thus, it becomes clear that traditional tools – such as standardised tests – for the identification and recognition of cognitive competences are not suited to the recognition of informal competences.



The portfolio is hence a more adequate tool to recognise competences that are acquired outside traditional learning contexts.

Figure 6.2 sets out the aspects that should be considered in advance, moving forward from the need for evaluation through to the certification of competence. Each step in the process specifies who is involved and the extent of institutionalisation that is involved.

The purpose of *In.Tra*'s digital portfolio is to *recognise* competences, not to certify or accredit these. Certification and accreditation require explicit agreement on assessment criteria and standards between the relevant institutions and agencies that award and vouch for formally recognised qualifications. This applies both within countries and across countries, as in the case of the mutual recognition of qualifications amongst the EU Member States.

The digital portfolio is a recognition tool that can be applied rapidly and flexibly, so that it is particularly suitable for those who are looking to find employment quickly and for target groups – such as migrant youth with different language backgrounds – with whom it is not straightforward to use methods that rely heavily on written documentation. These characteristics distinguish the digital portfolio from the *bilan de compétences*, which takes longer to complete and is based on written reports. In the *In.Tra* project, the digital portfolio method was used successfully by the project partners with young people coming from a wide variety of disadvantaged groups, such as those living with disabilities, immigrant youth, young dropouts with no qualifications and those suffering from drug abuse.

Objective of the process of analysis of competences	Kind of activities a person should be able to undertake	Type of proof	Kind of shared criteria for the analysis of competences
To make visible	Activities chosen by those wishing to evaluate their own informal competences	Products and outcomes of activities	Interactive = agreement between the tutor and the person wanting to evaluate her/his formal and informal skills
To recognise	Representative activities selected by the persons that are involved in the analysis of competences	Products and outcomes of representative activities	Inter-subjective = agreement between more than two persons
To evaluate	Emblematic activities selected by the key actors of the system, to be realised in formal evaluation situations	Emblematic products and outcomes	Public evaluation criteria, shared by the key actors of the system (e.g. Ministry of Education, vocational training centres, companies, and so on)
Certification of competences	Emblematic activities selected by the key actors of the system, to be realised in formal evaluation situations	Emblematic products and outcomes	Public evaluation criteria, shared by the key actors of the system and diplomas/certificates that are recognised at institutional level, e.g. by regional authorities, the Ministry of Education, vocational training centres

Figure 6.2 – The process of recognition



A digital portfolio is not only an outcome, but equally a process. The outcome is a visual collection of items that testify competences held by an individual, but at the same time, the video recordings that are made during the preparation of the end product remain part of the full recognition dossier. Evaluation and assessment tools have generally taken the form either of products or of processes. The digital portfolio can enable the recognition of both elements with the same instrument, which is a highly innovative aspect.

-----> **The construction of a digital portfolio**

The basic technique comprises developing a dialogue between the young person and the tutor in a series of meetings and interviews. The dialogue focuses on uncovering and analysing the competences of the young person, which may have been acquired in a variety of learning processes and contexts, and then discovering ways in which these competences can be demonstrated and represented using visual and action-based forms of representation and testimony. This process requires that the tutor can use the following equipment:

- computer
- word processor, html or slide editor (PowerPoint, Quark XPress, ...)
- scanner
- CD player and rewriter
- video input-output device, video captures and editing software
- camcorder (DVD, VHS, ...)
- media player

The tutor should be supported by a technical assistant adept in the use of the enumerated software. The various parts in which the portfolio is structured are: Personal Data, Formal Learning, Non-Formal learning, Informal learning. Ajello and Belardi's (2004) project manual describes the four portfolio construction phases as outlined below.

During the *first phase* the tutor explains the purpose of the process to the young person, describing precisely the nature of a digital portfolio and the extent of the involvement of both tutor and young person in its preparation, therein underlining the importance of mutual collaboration. It is helpful for the tutor to show and discuss an example of a digital portfolio, which assists the young person to understand how such portfolios are structured. At the same time, the tutor can use examples from a portfolio so that the young person gains awareness that formal, non-formal and informal learning are three different kinds of learning that they will all have experienced in some way. At this stage, the tutor can begin to draw information from the young person about her or his vocational and employment interests, thus beginning to see the directions in which the contents of the portfolio could move.

Once the young person has agreed with the idea of creating a digital portfolio, the *second phase* begins. In this phase, the tutor helps the young person to select and analyse the kinds of competences and learning outcomes to be shown through the portfolio. Potential contents will first be accumulated in a paper folder or file, whilst the young person creates a first MS WORD-file to contain basic personal information (name, surname, nationality, civil status, age, telephone number, e-mail address, driving licence ...). This may itself be a learning process for those young people who are not yet familiar with using basic IT tools, and may require support and guidance from the tutor. Gradually, the young person collates information and evidence of attendance at schools, colleges and training centres, including certificates that may have been obtained. Participation in non-formal learning activities and outcomes of informal learning experiences will be actively sought for by the tutor as the dialogue proceeds. The second phase closes with the preparation of a paper list of the contexts



and experiences which, in the young person's view, have provided opportunities for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

During the *third phase* the young person and the tutor together construct the digital portfolio. As needed, they call on technical support for html-editing work. They scan copies of certificates into the section on formal learning. The young person's own list of what she or he 'knows and can do' find their way into the non-formal section of the portfolio. The tutor and the young person will now begin to analyse these skills and competences, using the *two interviews model* that is based on the idea of *situated competence* and derives from Leon'tev's (1977) activity theory and Engeström's (1999) following researches. Using this approach, Ajello (2002) understands professional competence holistically as complex actions carried out in different activity fields. Such a perspective focuses on professional competence as an "activity that characterises itself historically by the tools used for its realisation, on a cultural level by the type of products that it aims to produce and by the needs that it aims to satisfy, and on a political-social level by the type of social relations (also hierarchical) in which the activity takes place" (ibid.).

Each interview model covers a specific context of informal training, that is, work and free time. The models permit the tutor to take notes concerning the data collected during the *semi-structured interview* and systematically to summarise the various activity systems in which the young person is competent. Conducting a semi-structured interview, the tutor asks the young person to describe the activities in which she or he has taken in a range of informal contexts and tries to achieve particular insight into the *methods and sources of learning*, into the tools that the person has learned to use in order to realise those activities and which are the visible results of these activities (products).

Figure 6.3 depicts the process for work-related activities. The tutor asks the young person to describe what kind of work activities she or he has undertaken, how the competence to perform the required work tasks were acquired, what kinds of tools had to be used to perform these tasks and what the final products of the work tasks actually were.

Context: Work

Activity	Methods and Sources of Learning	Tools	Products	Proof
Example: Mechanic: scooters and auto-mobiles repair work	watching the craftsman in charge actually performing the tasks in question and receiving on-the-job instruction from this person on how to do the tasks	List of tools he used to repair scooters, e.g. screwdrivers, screws, electric cables, etc.	the young person has repaired a scooter	photograph of the scooter before and after repair letter signed by the boss of the mechanic shop testifying that the young person carried out the repair
Example: Helping father in family shop	asking father questions about what needs to be done and receiving answers	List of tools he has used while he has been working in the shop, e.g. telephone, computer, calculating machine, lists of the prices of goods, etc.	lists of the materials to buy and the specifications of quantity of each product	list of products ordered and bought photographs of boxes of materials ordered and delivered to the shop

Figure 6.3 – Interview model – work context



Figure 6.4 depicts the process for activities carried out in the young person's free time, such as sports and hobbies. What has she or he learned to do in the home, such as housework and cooking? Again the tutor asks what has been learnt, how learning took place, who guided the learning, what tools were used and what was produced.

The dialogue extract below is drawn from an interview with Marco, who dropped out of school but who possesses many competences that were learned informally on the job, whilst working as a blacksmith and as a builder's labourer. For example, he knows how to carve cork and how to install electrical wiring systems. In this extract, he describes how he installed the wiring in his bedroom:

Marco: Well, since I am crazy about Bob Marley, the colours of the reggae flag are green, yellow and red.

Interviewer: Yes.

Marco: I have a wall full of Bob's posters ...

Interviewer: Uh-uh.

Marco: ... so I put green, yellow and red lamps ... at the background I get the reggae flag.

Interviewer: Aha.

Marco: It's really cool! I get Bob's image on a reggae background.

When the interview draws to a close, the tutor summarises all the activities that the young person is capable of performing, highlighting informal competences and then asking her or him to select which of these are, in the young person's opinion, the most important to be included in the digital portfolio.

Context: Free Time

Activity	Methods and Sources of Learning	Tools	Products	Proof
Example: Painting	watching friends painting and reading books about painting trying out painting oneself	List of tools he used while he has been painting, e. g. different types of paint-brushes, books, instruction manuals, sheet of papers, distempers, etc.	two paintings	photograph of a painting video recording of the young person painting
Example: Cooking	watching family members preparing meals, asking questions and assisting in the tasks	List of tools he used while he has been cooking, e.g. different types of kettles, different types and measures of ingredients, instruction/recipes manual, etc.	cakes, pasta	photograph of a cake video recording of the young person cooking
Example: Repairing the television remote control device	taking the device apart oneself and finding out by trial and error how to repair it	List of tools he used while he has been repairing the TV remote control device, e.g. screw-drivers, screws, batteries, instruction manual, etc.	<i>the device has been repaired and works</i>	photograph and video of the remote control being repaired by the young person

Figure 6.4 – Interview model – free time context



Tutors need to ensure in managing these interviews that young people do *not marginalise the importance of informally acquired competences*. The young disadvantaged are inclined to trivialise and downplay such learning experiences, having internalised the lesser value attached to knowledge that does not fit into the boxes of ‘school subjects’ and the methods that these use. They also tend to have *negative self-images* because they have experienced failure in mainstream education and training contexts. Marco, for example, reports that he learned on the job to knock down a wall, but immediately adds “*but anyone can do that*”. Tutors need to listen carefully for such examples of trivialisation and intervene to re-value the experience and the competence. For example, in Marco’s case the tutor could reply that she or he has never knocked down a wall and “*I really I wouldn’t know where to start or what tools I would need*”.

The process of constructing the digital portfolio can be described as a *scaffolding activity* (Wood, Bruner and Ross 1976), in which the tutor guides the young person through the process, taking on both a cognitive and an emotional supporting role but refraining from making the judgements and selections – these must be made by the young person. The tutor constructs a psychological support scaffold, which is subsequently dismantled piece for piece as the young person becomes more confident to make decisions and to act more autonomously. Tutors offer encouragement and support, but they do not make the decisions on behalf of the young people. They may suggest, for example, what kinds of proof could be sought for the competences the young person claims to possess – such as letters from employers, photographs of products, video recordings of task performance – but the young person must decide on which kind of proof is most appropriate and must actively engage in furnishing the proof.

The *fourth phase* of constructing a digital portfolio involves the young person’s selection of the photographs that will be included and the order of their presentation. She or he may write clarifying comments for each visual entry, where necessary with the assistance of the tutor. The tutor and the young person then discuss which activities will be recorded on video and the video location. They produce the video together, the tutor once more giving encouragement and guidance to “bring the young person out” by asking questions about what she or he is now doing, what tools are being used, and so on. These short videos allow us to *understand the comments* of the person on the activity she or he is performing, to observe *the sequence* of the various actions and thus to *document the elaboration process* which is connected to the informal competences.

Finally, the tutor and the young person transfer the video clip to CD-ROM format, make final adjustments to the digital portfolio that the young person thinks to be necessary, and then they view and review the product. The tutor will ask the young person how she or he plans to use the digital portfolio, which will lead the conversation towards discussing the young person’s future education, training and employment plans.

-----> The tutor’s role

The tutor’s role is crucial throughout the entire process of the construction of the digital portfolio. Tutors need to be fully aware of the characteristics of informal learning in order to be able immediately to recognise the fields of activity in which the young person is competent and being continuously on the lookout for trivialisations. Where tutors are able to validate the personal characteristics and



competences that have not been sufficiently valorised, they will be able to support young people in a self-empowerment process.

The *In.Tra* project worked with target groups whose members are likely to have low literacy levels, both traditional and IT-related. This makes high quality support from tutors vital when it comes to carrying out those parts of the preparation process that require literacy and IT skills. Tutors also need a good understanding of the characteristics of everyday cognition, in order to be able to offer support when the young people encounter difficulties in verbally expressing themselves, as shown in the following extract from Marco's interview:

Marco: Yes, we had to tie the pillars ... wires like this, we had to tie them and also the beams, and then we would put cement on.

Interviewer: And what about the machines that you mentioned, which machines were those?

Marco: Machines? I don't know which machines those were.

Interviewer: How did they work?

Marco: We had to put iron and tie it, we pressed it ... and then there was a measure depending on the way you wanted to tie it.

Marco found it difficult to say which machine was involved in the task he described. This was too abstract for him, but when the interviewer reformulated the question in descriptive terms, asking him how the machine works, Marco could immediately give an answer.

Two characteristics qualify the dialogue for realising the construction of the digital portfolio as a guidance counselling interview, and tutors must be aware of these. The first characteristic refers to the *perspective of temporal dimension* of the dialogue between the tutor and the young person, which must particularly focus on changes and on future plans. The second characteristic concerns the emotive support that the tutor should offer, responding, as Bastianoni and Simonelli (2001) note, to people's expectations of trust and confirmation of the rationality of their decisions. Tutors should be trustworthy mediators and demonstrate that in how they interact.

In.Tra project tutors reported that all the young people with whom they worked in digital portfolios showed improvement in their degree of self-confidence. The young people were flattered to discover that someone could be so interested in what they can do, and what they had learned to do outside the context of formal schooling. They were pleased to be given the chance to show what they can do, as tutors reported:

"He was eager and happy not only to be a part of this project but also that somebody was interested in his diverse and extraordinary knowledge. Taking part in the process of realising the portfolio *helped him to focus on his abilities*, which he can possibly use in order to find an interesting and satisfying job. His self-confidence increased."

"Creating the portfolio helped Nella *to see how many different interests and hidden abilities she has*, and improved her self-confidence."

Improved self-esteem brings determination to "*continue working steadily in spite of her disability*", as in the case of one young woman participating in the project. Marco, too, gained the courage to present his digital portfolio to a computer company where he would like to work. A tutor working with young drug addicts who took part in the project reported that digital portfolios "*can help them to discover that they are capable doing some jobs even better than others. This will contribute to- their reintegration into society and the world of work.*"



The *In.Tra* project shows that it is possible to develop recognition instruments using the advantages of IT technology and fusing visual-creative techniques with counselling and diagnostic skills. These instruments are especially useful and appropriate for validating vocationally-relevant competences that have been acquired non-formally and informally. The process of creating digital portfolios also offers an excellent opportunity for initiating a positive process of personal development for young people who, because of their disadvantaged and marginalised positions, have low levels of self-esteem and confidence in themselves.

Endnotes

1. All relevant documents are available via http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html
2. Much information is available through accessing the relevant Cedefop virtual communities via <http://www.trainingvillage.gr>.



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models of informal competences actually in use at a European level. The second phase developed a model for a digital portfolio that would enable the analysis of informal learning of the young disadvantaged. This included the development of an instruction manual to support tutors (guidance practitioners and/or trainers) who would work with young people to construct the portfolio. In the third phase, the tool was tested in the field in appropriate contexts in all partner countries. Evaluation and dissemination followed in the final project phase.



7. Portfolio-building as a tool for self-reflectivity on a micro and a macro level of society – the German case

Rüdiger Preißer

After establishing some of the basic conditions that are conducive to portfolio-building, the evidence shows that Germany still lags behind the state-of-the-art in most other European countries. Nevertheless the shift from qualifications to exploring competences has given positive signs that the necessary elements are beginning to fall into place. In this paper there is a critical discussion of initiatives in the field which is then contrasted with the recent development of a portfolio, the *ProfilPASS*. The portfolio instrument is demonstrated to be systematic and shown to encompass a procedure of self-evaluation of prior experiential learning. Finally, the chapter shows that the interrelation between a portfolio-building approach and the process of knowledge management. The benefits of such an approach are discussed on an individual and on an organisational level.

→ The demand for portfolio-building in Germany

Structural changes

The acceleration of economic and technological structural change has caused alterations in the social institutions and people's behaviour. The linear structure of career pathways constructed by the standard state-run career scheme no longer fits with the needs of the institutions or with the changing patterns of individual life courses. The consequence of this is that the *normal biography* (Levy 1996), as a cultural and normative pattern of behaviour, has been eroded. In addition to these developments there is a trend towards de-traditionalisation of culture, individualisation, de-standardisation and differentiation of life patterns that in total can be characterised as a process of *reflexive modernisation* (Giddens 1991). It is no longer possible for people to follow traditional and linear pathways but at the same time they have to manage their life course and to make choices that will affect their future (Beck 1986). In the process of developing their life course a person must learn to conceive of themselves as the centre of activities – increasing their abilities and making their choices. Individualisation in the modernity means that a person must face an increase of freedom to decide upon their life. There is no choice - they are forced to do so: the alternative not to decide, especially upon their own life course, becomes more and more impossible (idb.).

The management of the life course is a competence which people need in order to organise their life. The question remains what are the competences needed for this and what kind of new knowledge is required? Above all the recent structural



changes increasingly force the individuals to invest personal contributions in organising their *de-structured life course*. To accomplish this there is a demand for self-management, self-regulation, self-organisation, self-directing, self-control and self-responsibility. The key characteristic of these exemplary words of life management is that they all refer to the self. This is particularly noticeable towards education activities where people are expected to learn in a self-directed and life-long manner. Thus the individual develops a self-realisation of their learning needs and takes the necessary action to gain the skills and competences so that they can fully participate in the knowledge society.

Not only do the individuals have to gain new and additional qualifications in terms of a quantitative accumulation of technical knowledge they also have to develop the ability to select and structure the relevant knowledge. In other words they have to manage their knowledge. This is even more dramatic since the future is unpredictable and which skills you need to be trained for are not clear. What, however, is clear is that people need to increase their training efforts in order to adjust to the changing needs. At the same time education has progressively become the most important preconditions for social promotion or at least assuring one's social status and yet the knowledge acquired is increasingly insufficient for the changing needs of the job market. Thus, their education activities must be based on the ability to establish what knowledge and skills are needed and the ability to permanently learn.

Challenges for the “dual system” of vocational education and training

In Germany the concern with all forms of assessment and recognition of prior experiential learning (competence portfolios, bilans de compétence, APEL) is in its *first steps* compared to the situation of many other European countries. The reasons for this time lag are at least partly due to the success of the specific German “dual system” of vocational education and training. Vocational education and training is highly formalised and based upon regulation by the Federal Government and the States. They provide certificates that are based on officially accepted qualification profiles. The qualifications profiles encompass the levels and standards of qualification, the examination requirements, the duration and the contents of the training programmes. The benefits for both the individual and the labour market are the quality assured uniform standards of the professional education offers and qualifications gained. In addition to this, the system develops a public private partnership and joint responsibility with part time training in the work environment and part-time in the vocational training school.

The “dual system” of vocational education and training has for a long time provided the required qualifications for the society in a quantitatively and qualitatively satisfying manner. However, in view of the outlined structural changes in the economy and the increasing need for a high mobility and flexibility of the work force the above system has started to be understood as too restrictive. Further developments are required that take into account:

- the transition processes between education and occupation sectors by individuals
- the recognition and integration of non-formal and informal competences gained through the life course
- the integration of migrant labourers



In addition there is some evidence that the results of the traditional systems of examination both in the school and in the vocational education and training system are not accurate and valid enough measures to allocate jobs in the labour market.

The main educational and social systems in Germany are related to professions as it is still one of the most important foundations of a civic life as it conveys one's standing and status in society. However, the times are inevitably over, when somebody - normally a man - remains after his vocational training in the same profession or even in the same company until he goes into retirement. If one is aware, that three out of four job offers are not officially advertised in Germany - roughly 300.000 per month - it becomes clear how dramatic the situation is.

The crisis of institutions

The vocational education and training system in Germany is characterised by a management philosophy that follows input-criteria. This is particularly applied for the word "qualification", where teaching and training inputs are expressed in terms of learning targets and transferred to the content of the curricula in a highly detailed and specific manner. The consequence is the standardisation of the training offers. According to this philosophy, the legitimate paths the individuals are allowed to chose, and the means for the achievement of objectives are very precisely defined by the system. However, the quality of the output are not standardised or measured. This absence of output control fostered some proudly cherished illusions about the success of the German education system that was shattered when the PISA-results were published.

In the scientific discourse, though to a lesser extent in the vocational training practise, there is a shift from learning targets to competences and to competence based education. The concept of competence is closely related to the constructivist idea, that people when they learn construct their meaning and through this approach develops knowledge for themselves. Learning does not only happen in formal settings it also happens to an even greater extent in informal and everyday life situations. Therefore, when designing learning targets it becomes necessary to focus on the individual as a learner, not on the subject-matter to be taught. This is a distinct turning away from the traditional concept of qualification, which is central for the vocational education and training system in Germany. Furthermore, the concept of competence – in contrast to skills or to qualification – encompasses cognitive, motivational (White 1959) and fluid aspects. In addition, competence is a holistic concept, which is subject oriented and referring closer to the individual than qualifications do. In contrast, qualifications are related to specific requirements or to the demands of the society. Competences are the disposable or learnable cognitive capabilities and skills, which have been acquired in order to act self-dependently and to solve problems (Weinert 2001).

-----> **Portfolio initiatives in Germany – a grass roots development**

In contrast to Germany many European countries have a tradition of focusing on learning outcomes, skills and competences in the context of modularity, credit accumulation, transfer schemes and flexible approaches to learning and assessment. These tools provide an appropriate basis for structural changes which were initiated to give more importance and recognition to prior experiential learning. In Germany, however, there had not been such systematic and purposeful structural changes and the existing activities to acknowledge prior experiential learning are



still very poorly developed. It seems as if each of the new initiatives tries to reinvent the wheel. This is the main result of a feasibility study, which has recently been conducted by a consortium of three research institutes – German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF) (project office) in Frankfurt am Main, German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) in Bonn, and the Institute of Development Planning and Structural Research (IES) in Hannover – on behalf of and funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Its objective was to prepare a decision about the development and implementation of arrangements, methodologies, and procedures for the identification, assessment, and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Germany.

The project showed that since 1995 some 50 initiatives have been founded in Germany having the objective in common to make the outcomes of prior experiential learning visible. Due to their character as predominantly bottom-up initiatives that have been designed in isolation from each other there is in no way systematic and comprehensive approach. This is manifested in the abundance of nearly 90 different names for the respective activities. It seems as if each of these initiatives tried to reinvent the wheel. In total they represent a wide variation in their policy and in their practice thus they can not be combined or integrated. None of the above initiatives is accompanied by a framework of advice or guidance. There is no thought to exploring competences with regards to career counselling for occupational or educational matters. Finally there has been no evaluation of the activities which means that there is no data available rating the success of these initiatives.

The procedures, in particular, for collecting, recognising and acknowledging biographic data are very different and range from learning certificates with self written descriptions to competence lists. The competences in these initiatives are hardly described at all. They are characterised by a low scientific standard and a rather naïve concept of competence. In general, in the education and further training practise the concept of competence is being used quite vaguely and without a full understanding of the concept. Informally achieved competences are - in a notably difference towards the scientific and the political debate - almost irrelevant as a matter of subject in these initiatives. Thus, the vast majority of them have not been designed to measure competences, although the initiatives themselves – following the recent fashion – prefer to speak of “competences” in a similar way, than in the past it was spoken of “key qualifications” or soft skills. There is also a great diversity of procedures as regards to describing prior experiential learning. Many initiatives - especially in the voluntary sector - provide mere descriptions of activities in a specific field of experience, which is related to the respective institution, which delivers the document. By making this public, they try to give value to the performed services. From the perspective of assessing experiential learning, such a documentation of activities is not equivalent to competences. The reason for this is that participating in an activity is not the same as achieving a learning outcome in the sense of developing a competence.

Other initiatives, which are typical for the occupational sector, are limited to the documentation of the attendance in training courses complemented by a short description of the syllabus. This is the reason why they are called “further training passports”. There are some examples of initiatives that also include a basic form of self assessment of the users’ competences. In some cases this is implemented by asking for an assessment of the personal strengths which were observed during activities having been carried out by the owner of the *passport* or by



another person. In most cases the evaluation of competences is done by self-assessment and performed on the basis of a default lists in which the items, however, are often selected quite arbitrary and not being based on scientific research. In addition to this, the selected items are often biased through social desirability. In some cases, especially in the context of in-company “qualification passports”, these default competence lists represent vague reformulations of training schemes or qualification requirements.

There are only four initiatives which reach beyond a mere descriptive dimension and apply scientifically based approaches for recognition and validation of competences. There aim is an inventory of the prior experiential learning in terms of a portfolio-approach.

-----> **ProfilPASS: Implementation Project**

As a result of the feasibility study the Federal Ministry of Education and Research gave the mandate to the above mentioned consortium to develop a reference model that should provide a systematic and comprehensive approach concerning a procedure for the identification, documentation, assessment and recognition of (formal), non-formal and informal acquired knowledge, skills and competences. It should be combined with a system of professional guidance and coaching, which supports the users by making their competences visible and assists them with the individual arrangement, planning and decision making of the educational and occupational dimensions of their life course. Such a reference model - the *ProfilPASS* - is has now been tested and evaluated in more than 30 regions and different institutions on the basis of a sample of nearly 1500 users. The evaluation is based on the analysis of approximately 500 standardised questionnaires of users of the *ProfilPASS* and of 60 questionnaires with guides and coaches who accompanied the users. This investigation is designed to lay the ground for a decision about whether and how to establish the *ProfilPASS* as a general framework model of portfolio-building all over Germany.

The Philosophy of the ProfilPASS

The starting point for the *ProfilPASS* are well approved findings from social research that suggest that most people do not know what and how much they know. The knowledge which people have is “tacit knowledge” that is incorporated in routine and experiential actions. As a consequence the process of the recognition of competences has to first start with a careful exploration and making visible people’s experiences, potentialities and competences for themselves. Therefore fundamental to the philosophy of the *ProfilPASS* is an approach that follows the constructivist theory of learning and knowledge and the paradigm of biographical research. According to this research, each individual generates knowledge for herself by constructing meaning in the course of acting. In this context the construction of meaning is understood as learning. This meaning, which is based on personal experiences, is accumulated and more or less arranged and structured during one’s life course - generating a person’s biography. Thus, biographies can be understood in term of retrospective shaping of knowledge that is linked to the social environment (Jost 2003). Therefore, the individuals do not only learn based on external stimuli but their own lives function as a source of learning.

However, most of the experiential learning remains implicit, because it is not consciously been analysed and interpreted by people in a similar way it is not necessary



to analyse the structural rules of the mother tongue in order to speak. This is a phenomenon, for which Livingston used the metaphor of an “iceberg” where the largest volume is covered. However, if you do learn the structures, one gains more control and strategic knowledge which helps to speak in a more elaborated and differentiated code. In a similar way the effort to gain control over the personal future by establishing a stable and future-oriented time perspective implies an exploration of the personal past. This includes the rescuing and making visible of the so far undetected and often lost potential. This work must be followed by a realistic accounting and a self-reflective evaluation, which must integrate personal successes as well as experienced losses and defeats. There needs to be a biographical balance that does not idealise the past nor, perhaps because of feeling shame, depreciating it. Thus, the exploration and making visible a persons own biographical structures is the subjective prerequisite for acting reasonably.

Consequently, the *ProfilPASS* is rather directed to helping people to become aware of their experiences, knowledge, skills and capabilities and to make them visible for themselves rather than making an objective and valid assessment of people’s competences. If the goal was to assess and allocate people for the sake of a better matching of human resources and economic requests, the right methodology to choose would be an external assessment. This would provide a high standard of validity and accuracy that could be relied upon by the labour market and the occupational system. Furthermore, if it was focused on labour market considerations like employability – admittedly the most striking worry of many people – there is the danger of excluding dimensions of competences that do not at first glance fit into these systems. Thus, the consequence might be to fail to identify the whole potential of the users and thus neglecting experiences they have gained in areas like voluntary, social work or sports.

In contrast to this, the *ProfilPASS* is focused on empowering the users to plan, organise and manage their life course, which may also include the special application of employability. An important implication of this philosophy is the principle of a process-orientation instead of a result-orientation. The *ProfilPASS* places emphasis on the journey of self-exploration and self-reflection as the true reward rather than on the results of valid competences although the *ProfilPASS* does not prevent this from happening. However, the *ProfilPASS* is to a lesser extent an instrument providing an exact measurement instead rather a process to discover and explore what people have learnt from their various experiences throughout their life-span and to identify the respective competence elements. Otherwise the system risks excluding those people with bad experiences in the formal education system due to external assessment being an unpleasant reminder of the school examinations. Only if the fundamental principles of self-assessment are established through utilising self-exploration procedure might it be useful to utilise more traditional and external methods of assessment that will ensure a higher standard of validity and reliability of the results and increase acceptance by enterprises, education and training institutions. As long as the validity is relatively low there cannot be an institutional link to the formal systems of education.

Another reason for this “soft” approach is that the notion of competences does not only comprise a cognitive dimension but also a motivational and a fluid one. Considering this, it might be more important to lay emphasis on empowering the individuals by helping to improve their self-esteem and self confidence that is a basic requirement for motivation than to apply exact measurement. This means that the process of recognition has to first start with a careful exploration of their



experiences, potentialities and competences. Thus, an important dimension of the philosophy of the *ProfilPASS* is the interactive and discursive approach. The process should be accompanied by professional advisors and counsellors, who inform the users about the philosophy and guide them through the procedure of the *ProfilPASS*. They should support them to become aware of what they have learnt from their experience and give them advice for their decision making as regards to educational or occupational questions. What is crucial is that the user leads the process.

Procedure of recognising competences with the ProfilPASS

What kind of experiences, learning outcomes and competences should be taken into consideration? Although the point of interest clearly lies on experiential learning the efforts to recognise competences must not be restricted to informal ways only. For the individuals these differences may not be relevant anyway because they usually do not differentiate between formal and informal learning and therefore might not even be fully aware of the respective definitions. Furthermore, even in highly structured contexts like the school people learn in informal ways as well as the formal. Learning outcomes should thus be identified from what ever action or environment it occurred (school, vocational training, work life, family life, political or social engagement, voluntary area, hobbies, sport, personal interests, and special situations in life).

The first step in the *ProfilPASS* is the biographical approach. The users are stimulated to narrate activities and episodes of successful performance that have happened during their life. This method refers to the everyday life expertise of narratives in conversations that have had a long tradition globally. People create, maintain and revise sets of narratives, most of them being of biographical relevance as implicitly they express who they are, and how they came to be where they are now. The logic, which rules the selection of the narrated episodes, often is unconscious to the users and is closely related to their preferences and motives. In contrast to descriptions or reports, narratives are defined by the framing of time and space, which can be considered as validation criteria of what was narrated.

This is a crucial phase for working with the methodology of portfolio-building and needs to be accompanied by the careful work of approved professionals in the field of biographical interviewing. The professional in the field can successfully encourage the opening up of the potential portfolio user in an atmosphere of confidence, mutual trust and respectful communication.

The next step to proceed is to extract the competences, which are implied in the episodes. It is not usual for people to perform this task and they are likely to become overwhelmed in the process in such circumstances they should be given professional advice by a coach. An alternative to doing this is to work in small groups where there is a close relationships and high cohesiveness among the members thus creating a trustful atmosphere. In this environment it may be possible that they can mutually stimulate and evaluate each other. The advantage of this interactive assessment is that it provides a *discursive validity* that could be seen as relatively high.

Thereafter the users need to determine, on what level of performance their identified competences are. This self assessment of competences is defined on four different levels in the *ProfilPASS*. The lowest level describes the simple ability to act in a specific context on the basis of being instructed. This competence level



is equivalent to unskilled workers who are trained on the job. The second level is defined by the ability to act independently but still bound to a given context. The next level is achieved, when people are able to act independently and to transfer their knowledge to a different context. The person achieves the highest level, when they can also prepare their actions based on work plans.

In a subsequent phase of working with the *ProfilPASS* the perspective is being directed towards the biographical future. Most people are not used to hand-picking occupational or educational opportunities based on their wishes, ambitions or aptitudes because they have had to adapt to the restrictions of a given labour market. They do not know what they want to learn or to work. At most they know that they are suppose to learn or to work. In this perspective it is important for them to develop a vision about their personal future, which comprises their own preferences and that they need to integrate these with the competences they have detected.

The personal benefits of the ProfilPASS

The direct personal benefits of working with the *ProfilPASS* are an enhancement of self-awareness of their own potential and resources. They gain an expansion of knowledge and consciousness about one's own competences so that they are at hand for activities such as job applications. This is a highly desirable result especially for people with hardly any formal certificates. The users do not only benefit in a cognitive sense but also with an increase of self-esteem and self-confidence, which is an important condition for being motivated to apply their own competences. This empowerment dimension is only provided by a self-evaluation procedure – there is no external assessment. The benefits suggested are all important prerequisites for planning a reintegration into the labour market, an eventual occupational or personal re-orientation or future educational plans.

There are direct and indirect benefits to using the *ProfilPASS*. On a meta-cognitive level, analysing one's own biography results in an enhancement of skills to know which knowledge you have, self-management competence and decision making ability. Furthermore, the ability to generate plans for the future is in itself a significant competence of action. By doing portfolio-building people *learn to learn* as they learn. This side effect means that they learn a methodology for self-reflexivity and self-regulation in the process. The core element of such a process of biographic learning contains an active reconstruction and arrangement of the own life course, which is equivalent to a process of biographic self-organisation. This is in accordance with the concept of identity being “the reflexive project of the self”, in which the self is constructed through a biographic process (Giddens 1991). Identity only exists, if structured experience based on a personal retrospective activity can add to the presence. Thus existence is being made accessible backwards and the perspective for the future is opened up. In this sense, the *ProfilPASS* is a special application of a general tool to learn self-reflexivity by exploring and analysing one's own biography.

-----> **Portfolio-building as knowledge management**

The same structural principles that have been demonstrated so far in this paper as being used by the *ProfilPASS* can be transferred to other contexts. First, they might as well be applied as a methodology for monitoring a current process, for example, a person' ongoing education and training process. In addition, beyond



the micro-level of the individual the same tool can also be applied for the macro-level of organisations.

Knowledge management at the workplace: organisational learning

There is no doubt that knowledge management is recently one of the most important challenges in the reorganisation of companies. This understanding of knowledge management is similar to the notion of competences. The objectives of creating a system of knowledge management in organisations are to transfer the individual knowledge to the organisation (from the knowledge which has resulted from the work in that organisation). In management literature it is mainly the technical dimension of this problem that is addressed. The usual suggestions refer to technical solutions by computer based information technology: how the data is best collected, recoded, documented, structured, and processed. However there is another problem, the motivation of the employees. It is these people who have to transfer their individual knowledge to the institution. Since it might be a source of personal competitive advantage this demand causes severe difficulties.

There is another problem, which is hardly acknowledged in the management literature. A lot of the knowledge of the employees is embodied in routine and experiential actions so that they do not know how much and what precisely they know. Livingston illustrated this phenomenon with the metaphor of an iceberg – where the smallest amount is seen above the water surface, however, by far the largest amount is hidden below it and it is this that needs to be retrieved. Portfolio-building gives an answer to this demand because they are the missing link in systems of knowledge management. It can be used as a tool for processing knowledge.

Knowledge management in education: learning self-regulated learning

The knowledge society is characterised by the cycle of knowledge becoming shorter and the amount of knowledge increasing. Facing these developments the traditional instruction-based teaching and accumulative learning methods seem to be inadequate. Moreover, the constructivist theory of learning and knowledge shows that traditionally learnt knowledge – surface learning – is kept in mind and is understood by the learners only to a very small extent. Above all, it remains inactive, and is therefore unusable for the learners. Nevertheless in the German education system – at the primary level as well as at the secondary and in the higher education system – the teaching methods are the most deficient. Self-directed and self-regulated learning still play a minor role as opposed to the mere accumulation of knowledge. The learning environment is still characterised by formal educational experiences such as teacher-directed courses.

The prerequisite for lifelong learning is the competence to organise, regulate and steer one's own learning process. This self-directed learning has been described as a process in which individuals take the initiative "to diagnose their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, select and implement learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes" (Knowles 1975). This notion is also in accordance with the literacy concept of the recent large scale assessment studies that refer to an activating dynamic knowledge acquisition - in which self-regulated learning is the core element. Self-regulated learning is regarded as a targeted process of active and constructive acquisition of knowledge, which is based on the reflective and controlled interplay of cognitive and motivational resources of a person. The overall objective is to develop knowl-



edge, skills and the ability to order knowledge that facilitate future learning and can be transferred onto other learning settings and situations.

Self-directed as well as self-regulated learning are both modes of competence-based education (Descy and Thessaring 2001). They basically apply the same elements and methods for monitoring the learning process, than portfolio-building does – i.e. it is in the form of an ex-post instrument. The crucial elements are meta-cognitive discussions of self-assessment of the learning progress, the self-reflection of the learning history, the ideal of a facilitator providing guidance for self-directed efforts and the notion of individuals taking personal responsibility for their learning. However, the necessary active role of the learner has to first be supported by a coach. The function of a traditional teacher must change into the one of a professional educational guide. In contrast to mere knowledge transfer the guiding, counselling, encouraging, facilitating functions of the teachers must increase in favour of educational guidance and coaching. In this approach the personal interchange becomes more important. The learning facilitators will have to perform the task to teach the learners how to consciously and systematically recognise and steer their own process of learning and to acquire the respective learning strategies for this purpose.

Endnotes

1. The ProfilPASS can be downloaded under <http://entwicklung8.saarland.de>



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Intermezzo iii: from participants to professionalisation

Lynne Chisholm and Bryony Hoskins

The youth sector as a whole is strongly committed to supporting personal development and learning opportunities for the young disadvantaged. The digital portfolio example (Ajello and Belardi, this volume) therefore plays an important role as a demonstration of how such commitment can be coherently translated into practical tools for validating learning. It is an interesting example of how the documentation of skill and competence can open up access to employment for individuals and groups who have few or no formal qualifications and have so far been unable to secure work experience. No less importantly, such methods and products serve to raise confidence and self-esteem, a key problem area for both young people and adults who are educationally and socially disadvantaged. This should mean that youth workers working at grassroots level would welcome this kind of recognition instrument unreservedly, since it was developed for and has been shown to work well with precisely those young people most in need of positive support and affirmation. Non-formal educational principles place open access for all to democratic, symmetrical learning processes at the centre of its aims and methods. There can be little doubt of the integrity of commitment to these principles – yet, as Sogaard Sørensen explores in the next chapter of this collection, close analysis of non-formal learning encounters reveal that these, too, are framed by structures of normative power and selection processes, albeit of a more implicit nature than those in formal settings.

The explicit personal commitment of those who work in the youth sector to the development of civil society through promoting human rights, democracy and intercultural understanding is beyond question. It is, moreover, well evidenced by the personal and professional investment they make. Youth workers and non-formal youth trainers work long hours across the day and the week, including many weekends. They receive poor remuneration and are often employed on part-time and temporary contracts; depending on the national context, a variable proportion works on a voluntary basis. Many trainers are self-employed, but certainly do not enjoy the secure affluence of high-flying business consultants – although the majority travel extensively to courses and meetings across Europe and beyond. Establishing a satisfactory work-life balance, even family-building itself, is typically a fragile juggling act. Over time, it becomes increasingly clear to the young adult practitioners of the trade that career prospects for progression to higher-level and more stable employment positions are very limited.

Interestingly, this could be an account of contemporary youth transitions with respect to education, training, employment and career, and not specifically and peculiarly a description of the life circumstances of non-formal youth trainers. In



important respects, this group and this occupation, taken together, represent an exemplar of changing life course patterns in today's advanced societies. Life-phase features (most non-formal youth trainers are under 35 years old) and generational features (today's practitioners are entering a well-populated trade where the few senior figures enjoy – informally, of course – monumental stature) fuse to produce a personal and professional “*cul de sac*”.

One current consequence is that the sector increasingly loses experienced practitioners to other, more lucrative sub-sectors of the labour market for trainers, especially to private sector companies. This “leakage” can be seen as a positive feature, insofar as it enables individuals to secure greater financial security and to widen career development opportunities. It should also lead to greater exchange of experience and expertise in non-formal training methods between different sectors of practice. On the other hand, the youth sector has to replenish the loss of expertise, which means a greater initial training investment at the recruitment and expertise-building end. It is reasonable to argue that the major employers of non-formal youth trainers, most of which are in the public sector and, at European level, largely comprise the European Commission and its agencies, the Council of Europe and a small number of European-international NGOs and charitable foundations, would do well to pay more attention to providing better training, qualification and employment opportunities and conditions in this field.

Non-formal youth trainers working at European level do not, for the most part, themselves come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The informal recruitment requirements for this trade include high levels of cultural and social capital, amongst which multilingual competence. Economic resources also play a role, for most of these young adults will have been able, at some point, to afford not to have to focus utterly on securing full financial independence at an early stage of their lives. And yet sooner or later, having entered the trade, they will perforce realise that their longer-term employment and career horizons are less secure than they can feel secure about. Leakage of expertise is one consequence, as noted above, but another is the emergence of a kind of occupationally defined “them and us” *counter culture*. In this worldview, “them” are those who participate in formal education and training (university studies; continuing vocational training), who work in the formal sector (schoolteachers; university teachers; vocational trainers in colleges and companies) or, quite simply, those who have moved into stable, mainstream careers.

This inevitably tends to reinforce the sense of felt distance and difference between learning facilitators in the non-formal sector and those working in formal settings and institutional environments, and in the process, some important issues can recede from collective view. In the process of being *committed to the cause*, practitioners in the youth sector have paid too little attention to providing sufficient evidence of individual learning, developing a process for certifying practice, and setting up and monitoring agreed professional quality standards. These would all help to establish a firmer basis for occupational and professional recognition; Kovács’ chapter in the upcoming section offers some starting points in this direction.

As Bechmann Jensen (this volume) has highlighted, both employers and admissions staff in formal education and training contexts are relatively unpractised when it comes to recognising non-formally and informally acquired expertise as an alternative to formal qualifications. Non-formal youth trainers with plenty of professional experience but nothing “on paper” will find it relatively difficult to



secure employment at a genuinely appropriate level in other sectors of the labour market – yet it is not uncommon for people in this trade to have begun higher education studies and then to have drifted away before completion. As Bechmann Jensen notes, not only non-formal credentials but also formal credentials are increasingly insufficient *on their own* to secure reasonable employment prospects in Europe’s competitive labour market. A given level and kind of formal qualification may get someone onto the interview shortlist, but this is not what counts at the interview itself, where personal, communicative and social skills are crucial. Once at work, a range of competences will be needed to do a good job, many of which will depend on experience of a quite different kind than *just* possessing the cognitive, subject-based knowledge that makes up formal curricula and syllabi. The “counter culture” referred to earlier may here be tempted to argue that non-formal youth training should not be regarded as a trade, an occupation or a profession in the first place. Rather, it is a means of active participation in socio-political life; employability and career prospects are not of real moment in the quest for valorisation of non-formal learning as a field of practice. The intrinsic value of education – whether formal or non-formal – is not in dispute, but it remains the case that active participants also need to earn a living, and there is every reason also to valorise the contribution of those who also earn their living as non-formal youth trainers.

From this perspective, understanding the nature of the trainers’ trade as a professional activity in the broad sense of “*doing educational work*” now begins to take shape as an applied research topic. Søggaard Sørensen’s contribution to this collection takes an ethnologist’s social interaction-based approach to exploring the nature of “*doing non-formal youth training work*”. This draws on the evaluation study of the European Commission/Council of Europe Youth Training Partnership Programme’s pilot course ATTE (Advanced Training of Trainers in Europe), focusing on implicitly structured power relationships between the learning facilitators (the team of trainers) and the learners (the course participants). The analysis poses uncomfortable questions to a community of practice that is genuinely committed to democratic, symmetrical pedagogy. Facing up to and productively managing the tensions and contradictions of the structured and structuring dimensions that characterise all social relations, and hence all learning encounters, is also an important element of professionalisation processes. The chapter by Kovács that follows on provides an example of beginning to do so, based on an analysis of changing learning styles and developing methods that can support these. This account confronts the contradictions in which non-formal youth trainers are entangled in their everyday practice by seeking to make the methods that trainers use in their role as “teachers” visible in a practical way. The aim is, of course, to open up non-formal training methods to wider scrutiny in the interest of improving the quality of professional practice. This is an essential step in trading up: from documenting and exchanging good examples of practice towards fostering and supporting the reflective practitioner modality.





8. Ritual performance and language in non-formal learning

Marianne Søgaaard Sørensen

The social worlds with which people are familiar and whose norms and values they have learned to accept and display in their own behaviour generally come to appear and are treated as natural, unremarkable facts of life. In the everyday, members of cultures know how to “behave properly” and they can make sense of other people’s words and actions. Much takes place routinely and not everything needs to be explained on each occasion. Strangers – those who are new to a particular social world – will find at least some things strange – unfamiliar – and will not always know what they should be, say and do. They will not necessarily understand the reasons why things are done in given ways and they will not be able to interpret the meanings that underlie how cultural insiders conduct themselves on all occasions. With time, communication and experience, strangers become part of the cultural family: they learn to behave as members and, sooner or later, will also begin to see themselves as members, thereby developing a sense of cultural identity. This is what socialisation generally achieves during the early years of life, and it comprises a process of active interaction between the self, the community of significant others and the social environment. This is also what acculturation generally achieves over time for those who migrate to live in other countries. These processes do not end at a certain age or stage – such as reaching the status of adulthood – and they do not produce passive subjects that simply “do as they are told”. Learning to become a member of a culture is an active learning process: questioning, critique, opposition and resistance are essential to taking on sets of norms and values, and it is these dimensions of socialisation that ensure social innovation and change as well as personal growth and development throughout life.

Non-formal youth trainers know all about these processes. They use this knowledge routinely in their professional work, as they design and carry out intercultural learning activities and programmes. Some well-known exercises are direct simulations of cultural creation and exchange. For example, course participants are divided into groups and given a certain length of time to create their own societies, each group in isolation from the others. They then engage in local “voyages of discovery” to meet up with and negotiate rules of communication, international relations and cross-border mobility with the other newly-created cultures. Afterwards, facilitated by the tutors, participants discuss what they have learned about how to live together, and how categories of insiders and outsiders are rapidly established in everyday social life. The ultimate point, of course, is to consider ways in which people can come to understand and appreciate each other



more readily, learning to cope with difference and gaining the capacity for ambiguity tolerance (Otten and Treuheit 1994).

People usually think of cultures in the sense of identifiable ethnic groups sharing customs, mores, ways of life and language. For some two centuries or so in the western world, cultures have become closely identified with nations, who, in most cases, live in nation-states. However, anthropologists and sociologists understand and use the term culture at multiple levels and in more complex ways. It is perfectly possible, for example, to speak of “occupational cultures”, which refer to the shared worldviews and practices of those who do the same kind of paid work, or of “corporate cultures”, which focus on the ways in which company employees learn to identify with their employing organisation and behave accordingly. Youth cultures, for their part, profile generational and age-based communities, which are generally ephemeral in nature – that is, specific varieties of youth cultures come and go as time passes – but which express the autonomy of young people from the social and cultural worlds created and lived out by their parents and grandparents. The study of subcultures – by no means only youth subcultures – also draws attention to the existence of groups acting at some distance from or on the borders of mainstream social and cultural life, but still in some way part of the broader scene, albeit often regarded with circumspection or disapproval. In sum, the concept of culture is highly adaptable to a broad range of social phenomena, and it is especially useful for understanding how people shape, sustain and amend their local environments.

The world of non-formal learning in the youth sector working at European level can also be understood as a culture and analysed in these terms. When an observant outsider comes into this community, as I did very recently, the extent to which it is characterised by an amazingly professional and almost seductive use of ritualised performance and language, including a very sophisticated use of metaphors, is striking. The expert practitioners of this community culture use these features deliberately to develop and apply appropriate methods of non-formal learning. In doing so, they socialise aspiring members of the community of practice into its norms and values, and they affirm their commitment to these by their own behaviour and their expectations of the “neophytes” or “juniors”. As indicated above, there is nothing unusual or suspect about these processes. However, the case described below is a particularly interesting example, partly because of the intensity of the use of ritual and language and partly because it holds a key position in the current development of the non-formal youth training field as a whole.

The ATTE (Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe) course ran over a two-year period between 2001 and 2003, as a pilot project funded by the European Commission and Council of Europe Partnership on Youth Training.¹ This initiative is also unique because the Partnership commissioned a formative evaluation study that accompanied ATTE across the whole of its lifespan (Chisholm et al. 2005). I joined the evaluation study team for the last six months of the ATTE course to conduct field observation and interviews at team meetings and course residential seminars. As an ethnologist, the evaluation study process and its methods were very familiar to me. As a specialist in educational studies, I am also well accustomed to the task of describing and analysing educational innovation. On the other hand, this was my first encounter with the world of European non-formal youth training and with the community of European youth trainers. On this territory, I was a complete stranger – and thus in a classic role for an ethnologist,



whose specialist skill lies precisely in trying to document and make sense of the strange and unfamiliar. Working on the ATTE evaluation study was a fascinating professional experience. On a personal level, my sincere thanks are due to the ATTE community for welcoming me into their circle. My appreciation is genuine, yet, as we shall see below, the choice of the word “circle” is by no means accidental.

This contribution, then, considers and discusses how the non-formal youth training field uses ritual performance and language to create and sustain a certain kind of learning environment on the basis of implicit rules of social and professional interaction. It draws on the observations, field notes, interviews and discussions that I conducted and took part in during the latter part of 2003, together with material from and discussions with other members of the evaluation study team. This more reflective phase took place alongside the fieldwork and in the early months of 2004, as the data were analysed and the study’s final report was being prepared.

-----> Features of teaching and training as ritual performance

It is possible to define “ritual” in many different ways, and accordingly cultural analysts have done so. Rothenbuhler’s (1998) concept of ritual in general and his approach to ritual as a form of communication together with Langen’s (2002) characterisation of ritual as a locus for the negotiation of power relations act as key anchors for the analytic understanding of the ATTE fieldwork material presented here. In this theoretical context, the following points are crucial:

- Ritual *is performance*, which is “an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience” (Bauman 1989: 262).
- “Ritual is never invented in the moment of its action, it is always action according to pre-existing conceptions” (Rothenbuhler 1998: 9), even if the conceptions are quite new, and including in cases where a special ritual is invented for a special occasion.
- “Rituals often occur in the subjunctive mood – that is, they are often not about what is, but what could be, might be, or ought to be” (Rothenbuhler 1998: 15).
- Ritual performances can be recognised through the “keyings” of a frame: “Alteration of things such as word choice, tone of voice, style of dress, and rules of attendance are keys to the entrance and exit of a social frame. Such keys are reflexive symbols that both mark a boundary in social action and offer information about the other action within that boundary” (Rothenbuhler 1998: 9).
- “Ritual possesses a *dynamic quality*, where the dispositions and strategies of both the individuals and those in power interact in creating relations of power through the ritualisation” (Langen 2002: 31, my translation).

Where ritual is performance, then ritual is equally communication. This analysis hence approaches ritual and ritual behaviour as a form of communication – a performance with symbolic content in which both practitioners and “audience” participate actively. Active participation might also simply mean presence, which of itself signifies acceptance of the ritual (and its associated meanings). As such, this is part and parcel of social practice.

It is possible to approach teaching and training as forms of communication with strong performative and ritual aspects. Teachers’ questions and students’ answers form ritual patterns in traditional school teaching. Here, the teacher has the right to speak and the right to distribute this right to others in the communication



process – which in reality is a one-way communication process. The educational field is full of rituals that mark personal status or significant events. The examination, for instance, is a ritual in which the pattern of questions and answers is elevated to a veritable *rite de passage*.

The ATTE course also made use of rituals and ritual behaviour, both to mark special moments and to facilitate learning. These rituals and their associated behaviours created recognisable settings, such as generating the sense of belonging or inclusiveness through the generation of a specific kind of *ambience*. ATTE rituals, however, are quite different from those typically played out in formal educational settings, and they carry different kinds of symbolic messages. The two examples immediately below serve as concrete illustrations.

Example 1: The ATTE café

Every residential seminar opened with an “ATTE-ritual” in order to get together and recreate the community. This was important, because there were always several months between each seminar. Likewise, each working day at the seminars began with a smaller-scale ATTE-ritual. With a twinkle in the eye, participants actually referred to these occasions as “rituals”. The rituals were performed very well; frequently they were very amusing and they created a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere of being together. The amusing content of these features was in fact underlined by calling them rituals, since in everyday life people tend to imagine rituals as being heavy, serious and boring.

The ATTE café was one of the seminar “opening ritual sessions”, taking place on the evening before the official start of the final residential seminar in November 2003. Some members of the ATTE community had not yet arrived, so the session had the air of an informal, voluntary get-together arrangement. The participant-trainers (this was the term used in ATTE for the course participants, that is, in formal learning contexts the students or trainees) were invited as guests to a café on the top-floor of the European Youth Centre Budapest, a space with a beautiful view of the city skyline and open doors onto the balcony. The space was set up with small café-tables and chairs, and with a piano in the corner. Candles and music completed the setting. The team members (this is the term used in ATTE and in the non-formal youth training sector at large for the learning facilitators, that is, in formal learning contexts the teachers, tutors or lecturers) and the course directors wore white shirts and black trousers. They welcomed the guests with a folded tea towel on one arm, inviting them to sit down and order something to drink.

It quickly became evident that the café waiters were quite clumsy and impolite, fumbling with the candles, bringing the wrong drinks or forgetting to bring anything at all, talking, quarrelling and flirting in between serving and so on. The participants caught the idea at once and played their roles as very demanding customers. This created a very pleasant atmosphere altogether, where newcomers as myself felt very welcome and accepted. An hour or so later, once those present had had the occasion to say hello and engage in smalltalk with fellow participant-trainers, the “waiters” formed a choir around the piano, singing and playing an ATTE song. Then the doors were opened to the next room, and everybody went in to see an ATTE video. This, too, was an ATTE ritual artefact. At each seminar, pictures and films were made of selected activities. Between the seminars, one of the team composed a video, which was then shown at the beginning of the following



seminar. After the video show the ritual opening session was formally over, but people stayed and talked by the tables or at the balcony for some time.

Example 2: The “Me as a trainer” session

This session took place on one of the last days of the final seminar. It was not referred to as a ritual, but nevertheless it had very strong ritual features. As all sessions, its structure and course were pre-planned. It incorporated heavy symbolic loading and demonstrated certain “keyings” such as orchestrating voice tone and volume, and physically organising the space as identifiably distinctive. Signals were given in advance that this session would be something special, including the information that it would not be open to observation and participation by everyone (at the final seminar, a number of additional people were present for specific reasons, but who were not members of the ATTE community in the standard sense in which this term had come to be used). One of the external evaluators and the ATTE documentalist (a respected non-formal youth trainer) were invited to join the session (on the same terms as the participant-trainers). Once those invited had arrived, the doors were firmly shut. After the session had begun, one person (a member of the ATTE community, in fact) opened the door to come into the room. He very quickly understood that something special was going on and withdrew with an explicit facial expression of apology.

Beforehand, session participants had been asked to prepare five sentences, beginning respectively with the words “I can...”, “I know...”, “I feel...”, “I will...”, “I have become...”. They knew that they could expect to speak out their sentences to the group, but did not know quite how this would take place. All were also asked to bring their pillows from their bedrooms. In the break before the session was due to begin, people were lying around on the floor, talking, drinking coffee and hugging their pillows in a very relaxed atmosphere. As the doors were closed, the atmosphere immediately changed to one of palpable concentration. Almost automatically – that is, indicating that participants knew the behaviour expected of them – people turned onto their stomachs with their elbows on the pillows, together forming a circle which drew in on itself until all were positioned shoulder to shoulder.

One team member invited us to share a word in our own language with this community (as a European-level course, participants came from many different language communities). Concentrated silence followed until one person began by voicing a word, which set the chain in motion as one after another, going round the circle, each person followed suit. It was evident that everybody wanted to find just the right word to give to the others. One person did not utter a sound, but instead made a silent gesture of gratitude. Another sang a short beautiful song in her own language while all listened with closed eyes. Only one participant “*chose not to share*” a sentence, as he put it.

This feature was only the opening launch of the session, which had the effect of creating the right atmosphere for speaking out the five “me as a trainer” sentences. The team member leading the session underlined that people should not utter their sentences until they felt ready to do so. After a moment of silence the first participant spoke out, then the next and so on – this time, then, not in consecutive order around the circle. Intermissions of silence interposed themselves between the individual contributions. These pauses enhanced the sense of the significance of the contributions, whereas participants were attuned to a rhythm that prompted a just-in-time break to the pause by the next speaker. The sentences



were quite short and simple, such as “*I feel encouraged by you*”, or “*I have become myself more*”. The content of the sentences voiced great commitment, uttered with high concentration. These two qualities expressed just how serious this experience was for most of the participants.

After all had spoken out, a short silence followed before the team member leading the session brought the activity to a conclusion with the words “*So here we are, able to look forward in different ways*”. Another team member then proposed a break, which “*we all need*”.

-----> **The symbolic organisation of space in teaching and training**

Ritual performance necessarily involves a “stage” – a way of organising space that underlines the symbolic load of the performance and renders visible the status and roles of the different participants.

In formal education settings, space is used in distinctive ways with which most people are so familiar that they neither reflect on nor question it. In the case of the university auditorium or lecture theatre, the very names tell a story: these great rooms are places to listen to those who may speak, that is, professors – people who “profess”, those who give public witness of what they know and, historically more pertinently, believe. They are places of performance, with a raised platform, lectern or large desk – in other words, with a stage from which to speak to the audience. The seating is arranged, and is usually firmly fixed, in rows, as in a dramatic theatre, all facing the centre-front, where the professor will deliver the lecture. Traditional classrooms, such as the one in which I spent my schooldays, also saw pupils’ desks placed in rows facing the teacher’s desk, which was placed on a platform together with the blackboard. The platform made it easier to overlook and control the whole classroom, but it also created added value to the specific location. Symbolically speaking, the teacher possessed the true, higher knowledge and had the responsibility to pass this on to the pupils. Pupils sitting close to the teacher acquired status through proximity and had the opportunity to see and hear first what the teacher was passing on and what they were now supposed to do with this information. The further towards the back of the room pupils could secure a desk, the greater the opportunities for avoiding the teacher’s eye, instructions and control in general. It was an unwritten rule in my schooldays that the quickest and brightest learners could be found in the row closest to the teacher, whereas those with learning difficulties were invariably to be found in the back row. The space itself indicated a certain hierarchical order, and pupils understood this without words.

The above example should not be taken to mean that things are still the same today. In today’s Danish classrooms, for example, pupils’ desks are placed in groups of three or four all over the classroom, with the teacher’s desk in a corner. Teachers take care that children who need special attention are placed in the group nearest to their own desk in order to support them as much as possible. Today, the spatial order in Danish schools indicates that children are encouraged to work both independently and in teams, whereas the teacher’s role is much more one of advice, guidance and support. However, the point remains that in all educational settings, the use of space and objects creates and recreates cultural meaning with real social consequences. This is no less so in non-formal than in formal settings.



To step into the non-formal youth training world is to step into a circle. The two examples included in this contribution in fact represent two elementary ways of organising space in ATTE. The ATTE café exemplifies the first organising principle, that of surface chaos. Here, participants choose their own spot in the space; uncontrollable, criss-crossing energetic action is constitutive, which facilitates innovation and creativity. The “me as a trainer” session exemplifies the second organising principle, that of the (*closed*) circle. This provides the framing for a huge concentration of energy, and it is noticeable that ATTE activities with more formal content or holding a special value took place in different kind of circles or ellipses. Even panel discussions were organized in circles, with the panel members dotted around between the participant-trainers – in effect, ATTE practice did not recognise the organising principle of the panel, which is an elaboration of the “lecture theatre” concept (a small group of speakers discussing between themselves, to which the audience listens). The circle was organised wholly intentionally – team members would arrange the chairs in advance of a session for instance. At the same time, this was obviously also the “natural” way of organising space in the ATTE community. Participants formed circles of their own volition across a range of contexts and activities, and this organising principle is, it seems, part of the spatial representation of the norms and values of non-formal youth training in general.

The circle has obvious symbolic – almost spiritual or even religious – connotations, such as equality, eternity, entirety and perfection. It is a perfect form, and is much harder to break than a rectangle; it indicates a whole, and is the symbol of equality. Every point of the circle is identical to the others, which means that there is no symbolic space for a leader. Hence, the circle obliges everyone to take a position of symbolic equality within the community – not only course team members but also course directors, European Commission officials on visits, invited members of panels and guest lecturers – indeed anyone who enters the community, even for a short while.

-----> **Ritual language**

ATTE training practice – the “training performance” – routinely employed sophisticated symbolic metaphors. For example, the terms “ATTE train” or “ATTE ship” were used to envision the whole process and project. Juggling was the metaphor for a key competence of non-formal trainers-in-action, who must keep lots of balls in the air. However, the way in which certain linguistic modes created a ritual language is of more fundamental significance. For instance, the team very keenly stressed the principle of equality between themselves and the course participants by referring to them as “participant-trainers” or “colleagues”. The verbs “to invite” and “to share” were used very frequently, both in formal (that is, in the course sessions) and informal (that is, whilst socialising with each other in breaks and in the evenings) situations. Everyone in the ATTE community made a practice of “inviting” each other “to share”, or expressed their own wish to share thoughts or ideas with others. This was a ubiquitous interactive modality in all ATTE activities. On occasions when the value connotations of “sharing” might be seen to be at risk, community members reminded each other of the values underlying their professional practice. For example, when the whole group was discussing feedback (from other trainers) as a method for supporting critical reflection on training practice, one of the participant-trainers remarked that “I prefer to call it sharing”. This interjection indicates that the word to share is deeply embedded in and contributes to shaping understandings of learning in the non-formal training milieu.



Similarly, no-one ever gave explicit instructions or told anyone to do this or that. Instead, community members would “invite” others to undertake particular tasks or to adopt particular behaviours. This makes sense against the background of the equality principle, which decrees that no-one in the community holds a position that legitimates giving orders or expressing demands. An invitation, at least in theory, is an open proposition that one can accept or reject. Furthermore, by definition, an invitation connotes that one is being asked to participate in something agreeable and welcoming. It signalises a space free of conflict. But – as we all know – it can be difficult to refuse some invitations, as expressed in the old Chicago gangster film scripts by the phrase “I’m making you an offer you can’t refuse”. From this point of view, the symbolic idea of invitation also connotes a form of repressive tolerance.

The verb “to share” has the same kind of positive sound about it. To share means to give something to others, but just as with the invitation, sharing has a repressive character. It is difficult to refuse gifts without being rude, and as Mauss’ (1969) classic account demonstrates, gifts automatically bind the receiver with obligations – s/he stands in debt to the giver. Sharing – whether views, values, meals, possessions or money – is one of the main means to reinforce a community’s sense of itself through creating and sustaining membership by relationships of reciprocal obligation.

-----> **The dimension of power**

All social relations and social practices carry an aspect of power, and the ATTE community was no exception. Inviting and sharing may overtly express the value of equality and belonging. However, as Rothenbuhler (1998) points out, rituals are frequently not about what is, but what could, might or ought to be. The extensive use of the word ‘to share’ in the social arena of the ATTE course can hence be understood as a wish to create a firm community with shared ideas and values.

Langen (2002) has also described the dynamic quality of rituals as strategic cultural practices that comprise a continuous process of the construction and negotiation of power relations. In this sense, everyone participating in a ritual is taking an active part in this process, since the very fact of participation implies approval of the symbolic messages carried by the ritual. The ATTE café and the ‘me as a trainer’ exercise can also be analysed from this angle.

Example 1: The ATTE café

In this informal evening session the course team and directors were the waiters and the participant-trainers were the customers. This *mise-en-scène* carries an obvious symbolic message, that of service. The course team and directors conveyed their understanding of their role in ATTE: they serve the participant-trainers in the sense of support and facilitation on their ATTE journey (another ATTE metaphor). The distinction between teachers (those who possess truth and power) and trainers (those who support and facilitate) is central in the non-formal education milieu. By serving the participants, the team stressed their role and their position as professionals on an equal footing with the course participants.

However, this is only the surface layer of the message. The European macro-cultural tradition is suffused with the values and images of Christianity. In this cultural frame, the most vibrant image of service is that of Christ washing the disciples’ feet before the last supper. On the surface level of meaning, this signals an act of humiliation, but in this context it conferred still more status on the performer as



the true master. The ATTE café be viewed analogously. At a deeper level of meaning, taking on the role of the clumsy waiter connotes that the team members – as true leaders – can afford to humiliate themselves, thereby gaining still more respect by serving their followers. The ATTE participant-trainers entered positively into the ritual, playing their role as customers with aplomb. From this standpoint, then, the ATTE café was a ritual celebration of the master-disciple relation.

Example 2: The “me as a trainer” session

The heavy symbolic loading that this activity carried signals its function as a rite de passage in the classic sense of the term. The five sentences constitute the trainers’ creed and the session as a whole comprised the initiating rite of the fully developed advanced European trainer. Several features underlined the importance of the event, acting as keyings: the perfect circle on the floor, the moments of silent concentration, the leading team member speaking in a low intensive voice, the pillows indicating privacy and intimacy.

The atmosphere of the session was one of inclusiveness and belonging. All participants made an effort to give of their best. A good indicator for this strength was that the member of the evaluation team invited to take part – an outsider – clearly sensed the honour implied in the invitation into this community experience. Once taken into the frame of the circle, all participants remained tied to it by the bonds of (self-) discipline. In the opening round only one person was strong enough to reject the “invitation to share a sentence”. As the enunciation of the creed proceeded, round by round, pressure built up for those who had not yet uttered their statements, culminating with everyone staring at the last person to speak. The tension was released as someone smilingly asked: “Are you feeling a certain pressure?” Everyone laughed and the last participant spoke. The human circle generated a psychological circle with a huge energy of inclusion. Simultaneously, it was a circle that did not really permit break-out. Nobody “chose not to share” their five statements.

Uttering the final statement – “So, here we are, able to look forward in different ways” – signalled that the participants had passed across the threshold and were welcomed as equal colleagues in the non-formal youth training world. This closing statement was later mirrored in the very last ritual of the ATTE course. Everyone came together in a circle with their arms crossed and holding the hands of their neighbour on each side. The session leader told everyone to turn around in order to stand with the back to each other, then to let go of the hands and – in silence – take an individual step on their own out of this last ATTE circle.

-----> **Dilemmas and questions**

Rituals together with ritual language and behaviour were strong formative traits in ATTE. Their symbolic substance underlined a holistic view of the person within the community and of learning as such. This substance created and communicated belonging, inclusiveness and strength within the community. In this way, it was used to facilitate a specific kind of learning environment – one which was very much defined by being different from a traditional formal educational environment. In the formal system, the pupil’s role is one of tensioned suspension between learning from the teacher and avoiding the teacher’s control. In ATTE, participants learned by and in a community of fellow participants. In the formal system, the teacher is in power and in control – at least in principle. ATTE used



internalised control and self-discipline mechanisms to ensure appropriate socialisation and learning.

The way in which ATTE – as an example of a non-formal educational setting – approached learning and created its learning environment is largely appealing. Many of those who work in the formal educational system, too, are aware of the non-formal sector's potential. What, then, might one want to question about it?

Rituals pose a fundamental problem: their very purpose is to reinforce the prevailing order. As pointed out earlier, rituals are about what could or should be, not about what is. They express a kind of moral truth. Langen (2002: 34) takes the view that rituals express emotions rather than meaning. Yet rituals do express meaning – however, that meaning is communicated through emotions. It is very difficult to argue with emotions, and that is why rituals carry a certain air of truth. In this way, they turn the ideals they express into reality, including the power relations that go along with it. One of the ways in which this is accomplished is through the power of repetition. Even where ritual is conceived as a locus for negotiation, such negotiation processes require quite sophisticated skills. First and foremost, those who wish to negotiate must be able to communicate in the “language” or the “keyings” of the ritual. Effectively, this means that ritualising activities in any community functions to reconfirm and reinforce the social order of that community. Recalling the one participant, who did not take part in the opening round of the “me as a trainer” session, it can be seen that even those standing out against the ritual are obliged to use its vocabulary and value system in order to express resistance: this person said “*I choose not to share*”.

Analysing ATTE in this way evidently raises some dilemmas, and therefore this contribution closes with three questions for those who will design and carry through non-formal training courses in the future:

The external evaluation report (Chisholm et al. 2005) concludes that ATTE combined a range of elements of non-formal and formal learning features. To what extent does the ritualisation of ATTE-in-process formalise learning in the same way traditional educational systems do – and accordingly make it just as difficult to challenge and to change?

Creating inclusiveness simultaneously creates exclusiveness. To what extent does the importance of belonging, as created within ATTE-in-process, result in creating a closed community, one which takes under its wings only those who sympathise with its views and values?

One of the most significant issues in all kinds of education and training practice today is developing the capacity to transfer knowledge, skill and experience across different contexts. To what extent will the ATTE participant-trainers, as members of a relatively closed community, be able – and enabled – to transfer what they learned back into their everyday working worlds and across into other professional contexts? More generally, how can the implicit pedagogies of non-formal training practice as clearly identified and described in the external evaluation report be disseminated more widely in other education and training sectors, perhaps most especially into more formal contexts?

Endnotes

1. Information on the Partnership Programme can be accessed via: www.training-youth.net.



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9. Individual learning in non-formal education: interaction between trainers' and participants' views on individual learning

Erzsébet Kovács

The non-formal education of young people is one of the essential areas for laying the foundations for continued learning by providing motivation and skills through tools that make learning attractive. Lifelong learning is not only an unparalleled opportunity and requirement of our age, but it is also a serious challenge for young people. What is important to understand is that learning is successful not only in the school system but also in non-formal education, for example, if people have skills and competences other than those demanded or accredited by the school system or simply profit more from non-formal methods of learning.

This chapter is written from the perspective of a European trainer of trainers and youth workers and the experiences described are from professional experience in the field. From this perspective, it will explore the learning process used in youth non-formal learning to help young people become lifelong learners. The pedagogical methods of youth non-formal learning are rarely analysed or explained as those in the field do the training rather than reflect on conceptual processes. This chapter is a start towards professional reflection, in this case, tracing the recent changes in focus in training from group learning to the focus on the individual learner. The focus for the analysis will be the development of a toolset for assuring the quality of individual learning experiences and the changes of the learning concept in European youth training. It will highlight further questions that need to be analysed. These questions would profit from being examined in future research projects with collaboration between researchers and practitioners in the field.



Historical shift from the group to the individual learner in training

A laboratory for non-formal education

Training the trainer programmes, especially the long-term courses, can be seen as a laboratory for non-formal education. This is due to the fact that the team of trainers work in partnership with the participants to test and develop new pedagogical methods and techniques. The participants, in this case, are learning to become trainers and therefore are often experienced in education and training. What makes this process so special is that personal experiences and observations get integrated with European and American pedagogies, mostly reform pedagogies combined with new approaches and the results from research. This freedom and variety is less possible and less evident within traditional and formal education structures.





Some initial pedagogical work has been carried out on training courses by actors involved in the non-formal learning field (such as participants, trainers, invited experts, documentation writers and external evaluators) that has led to the enhancement and development of non-formal education in new ways. These actors have had a common attitude: the respect for freedom and responsibility of the independent and voluntary learners, openness and support in learning, sensitivity to social and economic changes, permanent professional self-development, and above all the intent to continuous development and quality improvement. What, however, is clearly missing are research results on youth training and the training of trainers. This publication and the seminar for which the chapters were originally written are a first step in this direction. Research in this field could contribute to the development of learning capacities for young adults that would have a defining impact on their intent for lifelong learning by enabling trainers, mentors and youth workers to design, facilitate and evaluate processes that are better suited to their learning in non-formal education. Strangely enough, in the era of lifelong learning, we still do not know much about the learning processes, motivations, goals, different (yet very effective) learning processes and difficulties in young adult learning. For trainers, this became obvious when we started to explore the characteristics of individual learning in non-formal education. Before this point individual learning was understood only in the context of formal learning or informal learning.

“What do you mean by the concept of learning in this context?” – a participant’s question

The dynamic development of European youth training is well demonstrated by how quickly improving learning skills, motivation and quality learning as a precondition of lifelong learning became the focus of professional interest and pedagogical development.

When in 2000 at a training of trainers I asked participants at the final evaluation of their training project practice:

“What kind of concept of learning did you follow when designing your training programme and methodology?”

The reply I received was: “It’s a very good question ... but we haven’t thought about learning. What do you mean by the concept of learning in this context?”

Learning became a hot topic for discussion and by 2003 all training the trainers programmes in the international and national youth scene tackled the process of learning. They have explored learning objectives, effective ways for learning and how to assess the learning processes and learning outcomes. It could have been possible that a clear learning concept was identified before these programmes took place, but “learning” and “learners” were not previously part of European youth training terminology. This was largely due to the fact that trainers and participants wanted to differentiate the training that they were involved in from formal education. However, alternative terminology such as “participant”, “group work”, “activities”, “project practice” “follow-up networking” already described learning processes which focus on an intentional and active participation, interactive involvement in a group development that result in belonging to the group, shared experiences, shared values and practices. This language then infiltrates all fields of the participants’ lives.

The fact that learning is always an individual and internal process was acknowledged in youth training courses in the way that trainers developed and applied



varied and complex learning situations, for example, simulations or project practice. These methods give the opportunity for participants to learn at their own pace. However, the understanding of these individual differences was not considered by the trainers or the participants to be as important as the focus on group learning. Trainers related to the group as a whole, all participants shared the same processes, exercises and discussions, and when they gave different evaluations to the course, the conclusions were understood in the context of the group and the training process as a whole. There was no development of the concept of differentiated, parallel processes from which people can choose. *Thus individual learning often meant informal learning taking place in non-formal educational settings without acknowledging the different degrees of success of the individuals in the learning process.* The individual learning that took place in the training course was understood only retrospectively by trainers through the reflections of the participants. For example, some participants stated that they had learned a lot during the training course and what they had learned was different from what they had expected. Other examples of participants' statements on individual learning were that they had learned from uncommon experiences such as rather difficult situations from an unforeseen social circumstance. This learning was, at this time, understood to be *outside* the structured learning of the training course.

It was the participants themselves who first made the trainers aware of the individual aspect of learning in training courses. The next section will highlight how this transpired.

At times participants made use of free time and informal space to complete their learning process, to share and discuss their personal dilemmas. They discussed this with trainers and supportive participants, and at those moments dared to pose questions they did not understand well enough. Participants also drew this to the trainers' attention at the final evaluation when they emphasised the importance of personalised consultation or support as an integrated part of the training course. This, of course, was not so clearly articulated by all participants who were accustomed to learn by themselves in formal education settings. The trainers teams responded quickly to such needs, first by integrating optional individual consultation time in the process. The individual consultation was aimed at supporting individual needs which were different from those of the majority of the group. The purpose of this was to keep the person in the group. At this stage, the understanding of learning, the methodological approach and the programme as a whole did not change.

The concept of experiential learning as the most effective adult learning, or at least one of the most effective adult learning processes, has had a significant impact on youth non-formal education in terms of studying theory and practice. This can be seen through the mastering of David Kolb's (1983) learning cycle and its related learning styles models. However, this did not provide the necessary breakthrough on individual learning. There are several reasons for that: experiential learning was applied to groups so the four learning styles (so-called activist, reflector, theorist and pragmatist learning habits) were acknowledged to balance out through the activities and experiences in the training programme. It has to be said, however, that the balance was not always detectable in terms of allocation of time for training units. After all the so-called reflection groups (groups of 4-5 participants, facilitated by trainers at the end of every training day) gave more space and time for sharing and comparing than individual experiences. The focus



was on the “sads” and “glads” of the process rather than the different learning preferences.

The question was then raised as to who plans and structures the learning processes. From 1999/2000 training of trainers included the concept of developing competences in the practice of youth training. This made it necessary both to take account of and give due attention to individual characteristics and to actively involve participants with trainers in planning what social and professional competences should be developed. It was also possible to schedule time for this in the programme. Trainers wished to involve participants as equal and responsible partners in the development of competences for training. This, however, was not at all easy as it was not enough to regard them as equal partners; they also had to be given support to become that. While trainers intended to give participants a larger role in planning and assessing their own learning, participants, on the contrary, would have preferred to be given greater support in such circumstances. Then trainers had to face, and get prepared for a new reaction, as participants began using this freedom to organise their learning process differently from how their trainers had imagined or planned ...

-----> **Experiences of planning individual learning by the participants**

The first time we introduced a learning plan in youth training we used the term “personal development plan” to signify our intent for individual learning. This showed how trainers interpreted learning as training. Thus individual learning was directed towards developing existing skills and competences, existing knowledge and reflection on earlier experience. Yet what the participants mainly expect from trainings are *new* ideas and approaches, *new* practical solutions (methods and tools), *new* partners and *new* friends. At the beginning the competence development oriented approach was new to participants, who now had the freedom to design their learning process, for example, what learning, when, with whom and for what purpose. Many of them, including the participants of training courses of/for trainers, were first given this opportunity at European training courses and – in spite of the practical guidelines given by the trainers – found it difficult to make realistic plans. The conclusions to be drawn is that *most young adults finishing their studies in either high school or even universities are not prepared to plan and programme their own learning even though they are willing to learn, open to new challenges and they benefit from informal learning experiences*. Participants thought that pedagogical expertise is required for this, and so it was natural that the teachers or trainers should plan their learning processes. Trainees very often express their learning needs as their training needs, which are when they or their organisations find it necessary for them to learn. As a result of this need, they apply for organised learning and do not choose self-study or planned individual learning in informal setting. In this situation the “personal development plan”, “individual learning plan” was given another, much more important, function than that originally intended by the trainers.

The primary intention of introducing learning plans was as a supplement to residential training seminars, to make participants prepare plans for the interim period of 3-6 months between the international seminars, which was also part of the training period, e.g. as project learning. This simple tool, however, started to take on the role of making the participants aware of what, why and how they are learning. It also provoked questions of whether they are motivated to learn, what they need in the interest of the success of their organisation and/or how to fulfil



their social role or individual ambitions. Understanding, planning and directing self-learning, and assessing its progress required the development of other, more differentiated tools and methods in addition to the already known means (SWOT-analysis, competence grids) such as self-perception inventory, self-assessment questionnaire, mentoring.

How does one become the self-directed learner of lifelong learning?

- Training courses (the residential seminars) are now regarded as part of a process which starts before and finishes after the contact hours in the event itself.
- The programme and methods chosen by the trainers now alternate between group and individual learning at certain intervals and in a certain rhythm.
- The role of the trainers has expanded to programming and facilitating “learning to learn” and this has now become an integral part of training the trainer programmes. This does not yet mean mastering learning techniques, although from experience this should be added for both e-learning and more traditional areas.
- Participants in training the trainer courses learn through their own experience that voluntary and responsible individual learning based on realistic self-awareness and personal motivation can be just as enjoyable and effective as group learning. This requires integrating individual learning, or if necessary preparation for it, into the training activities they hold in order to gain this individual experience.
- A participant’s awareness as a learner is today the result rather than the starting point of training.

Open questions

How to support learning effectively or the issue of how training can be organised around individual learning is today one of the directions of development in youth training. The Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe (ATTE) 2001/2003 course (see Chisholm et al. 2005; García López 2005) played a major role in this development which can be regarded as the start of the experimental phase. Individual learning, including self-study, distance learning, open learning and self-assessment, became the focus of attention within this course and then other professional forums and training courses. The speed of the uptake was so quick that there has been no time to analyse the factors that initiated it. The question therefore remains: is it simply that professional interest in learning became livelier, irrespective of training for trainers, or was it due to the fact that an exciting, complex and new module was developed as part of a history of enriching and reviving youth training practice? Or is there nothing to analyse as training courses were never an island and were bound to be touched by the waves of increasing individualisation?

Changing and differentiating the former group-oriented training practice and creating a balance of group and individual learning processes involve numerous debates and temporary contradictions. The largest debates were provoked by the place and organisation of individual learning. However, it also infiltrated the debates on the topics of assessment, as these aspects in many respects also determine whether there should be any assessment and if there should, what its purpose, method and who should do it.



Current development of useful tools

“It’s great that the participants have made their learning plans – but what should we do with them?” (Question posed at a trainer’s team meeting)

At several training courses of a similar nature participants use the same sort of “Package for Individual Learning” to structure their learning. This package usually contains the following: self-perception inventories, map of learning needs and motivation; learning plan and checklist; self-assessment questionnaires; recording the learning process in some form, e.g. notes about evaluations and personal feedback received, self-reflection, changes and their effects. These offer an important base for participants to plan and assess their own learning at critical points, entering the process, the beginning, the completion of a task/project/phase of the training and at the end. Trainers are continuing to develop package and the ways of working with it differ greatly between them, depending on how they interpret individual learning and the role of training and trainers as regards to individual learning. These differences can have a positive force as a training programme; they can have compatible solutions that supplement each other with varied and or even contradictory solutions. The ATTE 2001/2003 course in particular afforded an opportunity for devising alternative solutions.

-----> **The role of trainers in supporting individual learning**

The trainers’ concepts of individual learning, in the context on implementing the package of individual learning, moves between personal development and social learning with the main focus on self-reflection and then interpretation of individual learning within the group. The question then arises: what will happen to these “learner’s self-portraits”, that participants have created in the course of the learning process? Is it possible to arrange it into a dossier as a professional portfolio? Five options follow:

1. They are made for the participants’ use only. Thus the trainers design, run and evaluate the training with no knowledge of the self-perception inventories and individual learning plans that result. Individual learning and its assessment is exclusively the responsibility of the participants.
2. Individual learning and peer/collegial learning complement each other. Both are autonomously organised by the participants without the involvement of trainers. The trainers provide time-frames and input for the preparation of both the individual and peer learning. The participants form teams, e.g. project teams, task-oriented teams, peer support groups, reflection groups, within the large group and voluntarily decide themselves to what extent they share the self-perception inventory, individual learning plan and self-assessment with each other with the purpose to obtain personal feedback from each other in actual situations. It is important to note in relation to this collegial learning that the organisations sending the participants have not yet taken part in defining learning aims. As a result they are entirely the aims of the individual. However, participants can also plan their own learning in a way as to ask for their colleagues’ help when returning home.
3. The participants can choose with whom to share the individual learning plan and its implementation with other participants and trainers as well as their colleagues at home, friends or family members. The purpose for this would be to plan and assess learning based upon other people’s suggestions. This makes



it possible to organise personal feedback and thus avoids some of the pitfalls of learning and discussing actual professional issues. One-to-one contact is the typical interactive situation.

4. The participants are offered mentoring by the trainers. The trainers choose on the basis of their own competences and capacities which participants' individual learning process to monitor and support, based on the Package for Individual learning. An agreement is made between the participants and the mentor about mutually acceptable ways of support. Yet this support of learning is not initiated by the participant but is decided upon by the trainers. Although this can at first remind one of formal education, the initial experiences of current training practices show that the trainer/participant relation has the characteristics of informal mentoring (one-to-one relation in friendship-style occasionally with high social intensity; based on the individual learning objectives; not structured; not directive; it has indefinite time-span).
5. Within the scope of a general "training agreement" the participants share the contents of their Package for Individual Learning with the trainers team in order to enable the trainers to monitor, support and assess individual learning in different ways and to build on it in the course of training. The group is informed by the trainers about the shared features of the Packages such as learning needs and learning preferences. The final training programme is based on the agreement between the participants and the trainers' team. As trainers, we have the least experience of constructing this type of training course based on a balance of individual/group/trainers team relation.

Experience has shown that participants prefer interactive solutions and combination of peer support and trainers' team support both in the planning, organising and assessing individual learning. We, however, have no information on the participants' individual level about the effect of individual learning plans and self-assessment as they were only used by the participants themselves (as mentioned in the first option above). The development of individual learning support would undoubtedly be improved by research directed at the analysis of the effect of approaches, methods and tools used until now and answering some other crucial questions: How to fill the gap of knowledge of generational and cultural specificities of individual learning? How to keep the balance between the social interaction and individual aspects of learning and to prevent individualisation through individual learning? How to make the individual learning more effective with a special focus on the social skills/social competences development? How to improve the abilities, skills and tools for individual learning in non-formal education? How to work with self-assessment?

-----> Conclusions

This analysis of youth training practice has demonstrated the change of learning from the group to the individual and the simultaneous and interrelated development of supporting and training skills for lifelong learning. These developments, which are closely connected to wider society changes towards increasing individualisation, the need for the ability to constantly learn in the knowledge society and to cope with innovation in new technology, are therefore of interest beyond the boundaries of youth training. It is more important than ever that trainers take the time to reflect and describe their professional practice so that these methods can be improved both within and beyond the youth training profession to support the needs of young people today. Other actors in the learning field who would be



interested in these methods of learning to learn are those in adult learning, vocational education and training and the formal learning sector. The training of youth trainers has formed an ideal experimental site for development of this approach because of the inherent flexibility, creativity and orientation towards the needs and active contribution of the participants in youth non-formal education and the fact that the participants (those on training-the-trainers courses) are already experienced in the field. There will presumably be quick adaptation and transfer of these approaches to the training of youth workers and youth work itself through the people who experience the training (this hypothesis would be interesting to follow up). The approach for learning to learn in a self-directed way would also be ideally suited for adult learning and vocational education and training. The question arises though as to whether the transfer of this approach can be introduced into more formal education systems with different concepts of learning, structures and methodologies which are much less flexible?

In order to improve and make visible learning to learn approaches within the youth non-formal learning sector and enhance the possibility of the transfer of approaches to learning across different sectors, there needs to be professional reflection and written documentation within the youth non-formal learning sector. This reflection should take place in collaboration with researchers and using research carried out on the youth non-formal learning. The research which has taken place so far on youth training is limited and within this chapter I have highlighted a number of areas where this is needed. My hope is that this publication will provide the impetus for researchers to take up the challenge and to work together with trainers on these topics.



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Intermezzo iv: from professionalisation to policy

Lynne Chisholm and Bryony Hoskins

Achieving greater valorisation of non-formal learning, from whichever of the three vantage-points (as a field of practice, in the interests of the disadvantaged, as a professional activity) adopted through this collection, demands action on a number of fronts, as previous chapters have consistently underlined. From the research perspective, as argued by Azzopardi in the next chapter, it is evidence that is required if youth work and non-formal training are to trade up towards becoming recognised professions on the same terms as other high-skill occupations. Kovács (this volume) lays out a basis for starting to document good practice, led by practitioners themselves. As Azzopardi points out, today's formal education and training is grounded on decades of research and centuries of critical reflection about pedagogy, curriculum development and educational practice.

Non-formal youth training, and even more so at European level, is a relatively new departure as a “self-recognisable” field of professional activity. It has largely transferred and developed skills and competences through the medium of *practical performance*. Trainers create a theatre (as in Søggaard Sørensen's example of the ATTE Café, this volume) on which they stage a performance. Participants enter onto the stage and take on acting roles in relation to those of the trainers. At the beginning they watch and reproduce what they judge to be the right moves and utterances. Gradually, as they become more practised actors, they develop their own style of performance. The participants then become the trainers and take the drama to new groups of eager aspiring actors waiting to join the theatre company. In the trade, this process is referred to as creating “multipliers”, that is, people who have been trained and will then train others. *Doing training and being a trainer* is more important than knowing about training in an abstract way, such as one might acquire in a higher education degree course. The *live performance* is the trade's staple commodity and acts as *living proof* of individual competence. It is tempting to compare this to the challenge of the dare, by which individuals prove their mettle under the eyes of their peers.

Unsurprisingly, the classic ‘3R’ basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic), traditionally developed to consummate levels of potential and performance amongst the highly-qualified, do not count for that much in this community of practice. In the first place, good levels of literacy and numeracy are simply assumed to be present amongst all. In the second place, most of those working at European level are working for at least some of the time in (a) language(s) other than the one(s) in which they were schooled. Verbal-communicative, social-observational and empathetic-intercultural competences are highly valued, and these are demonstrated above all through live performance. This is perfectly fine, but, lacking a



comprehensive video archive, the problem of documentation – which is the basis for evidence of quality and good practice – remains unsolved. The compilation of learning resources, curriculum documentation and evaluation of the quality of learning encounters is at a relatively early stage in this field. Yet recognition from outside the community of practice is more difficult to achieve without some form of evidence that can be *read and understood by others*.

Some European countries have already made considerable progress towards greater recognition of youth work as a profession, partly through the creation of quality standards and partly through further and higher education and training courses leading to recognised qualifications. For the UK (Morrey and Drowley) and Malta (Azzopardi), the examples included in this collection show that *greater recognition for non-formal learning does not automatically mean being the same as the formal system*. Both contributions highlight how accreditation mechanisms have been able to carry forward non-formal learning principles into new domains, in particular those of the active learner as co-shaper of the curriculum, the voluntary nature of participation in learning, and a consciously socially inclusive approach to recruitment onto higher education courses. In Britain, there are indications of success: youth workers' occupational status is improving, their employment opportunities in wider labour market segments are rising, and the demand for flexible, open access training and qualifications opportunities is increasing. This is particularly important given the fact that local-level youth workers are rather more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds themselves, so that improved education, training, employment and career prospects are benefiting a wider range of the working population.

Such changes do not take place by magic. Morrey and Drowley report that the professionalisation of British youth work is backed up by political commitment and policy action. It is unlikely that those countries in which such resolve is weak or lacking altogether can achieve success rapidly, if at all. Policy action is not solely about resource allocation, but the institutional structures and professional networks that practice and support non-formal learning in the youth sector require adequate budgets as well as political backing to lend power to the elbow of establishing and maintaining quality standards. The trade needs investment to make the next quality leap forward, and its grassroots practitioners need positive incentives to take up a new kind of “collective dare”.

The policymakers' corner of the magic triangle is essential to the enterprise, and it does not operate in splendid isolation from research and practice, perhaps particularly not so in the youth sector. The Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sports, for example, operates on the basis of co-management with governments and youth NGOs. The European Commission cannot formulate youth policy or action without explicit consultation and agreement with the EU Member States, and it does not initiate specific measures without consultation with young people and their representative bodies, including, of course, the European Youth Forum. The final chapter of this collection (Rzayeva and Carsten) turns the spotlight on Azerbaijan, where NGOs are playing a leading role in shaping youth and social policy during the process of democratic transformation, and in so doing, assemble wide-ranging grassroots experience and competence into a socio-political force. This contribution also closes the circle of this book by taking the discussion back to policy discourse and setting this firmly into the sphere of the importance of anchoring educational practice in the core values of human rights, democracy and social justice. Succouring civil society in a complex, fragile world remains, at the end, the beginning.





10. Quality assurance of youth work initial professional training in England

Liz Morrey and Steve Drowley

In order to work as a professionally qualified youth worker in England one should either already have a higher education qualification in youth work or be in the process of gaining such a qualification. The purpose of this is to ensure that the people who work with young people have the necessary skills and competences to deliver high quality youth work, thus recognising the fact that being a youth worker is a highly skilled profession and not everybody is able automatically to do it. In order to maintain the standards of skills and competences of the youth work profession it was considered necessary to assure the quality of the training of youth workers.

This chapter addresses the way in which professional youth workers' initial training in England is quality assured, which is similar to the arrangements applying in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland but is very different from other countries in Europe where the concept of quality assurance of training is very new. The chapter discusses current issues in England relating to such training and describes potential future developments. It will also explore how the developing policy agenda in relation to children and young people, and changes in demand of skills and competences for youth workers are having impact on workforce development and on the qualifications and training required of those who wish to work as professional youth workers.

A number of qualification routes lead to professional recognition for youth workers in England. The major routes to a professional youth work qualification are by taking either a higher education intermediate level qualification, a university degree or a postgraduate qualification (see box below).

Intermediate level qualifications:

a Diploma in Higher Education – which can be employment-based (the current required level until 2010)

a Foundation Degree – which is employment-based (equivalent to a Diploma in Higher Education)

Higher level qualifications:

a Bachelors Degree, with honours² (not a requirement until 2010)²

a Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma

a Higher Degree – for example Master of Arts, incorporating professional recognition.

Figure 10.1 – Possible higher education routes for professional qualifications in youth work



The National Youth Agency (NYA), which is funded by a combination of local government association and government departments and was established in 1991 to advance youth work, has responsibility for the professional validation, approval and quality assurance of higher education programmes offering training and professional qualification in youth work in England. Validation of higher education programmes is carried out by The NYA on behalf of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Youth and Community Workers. The JNC negotiates salaries, and terms and conditions of service, for youth workers with validated qualifications. Thus with professional quality assurance the JNC has more power to bargain for better working conditions. The NYA's Education and Training Standards Committee also endorses pre-professional Youth Support Worker qualifications, and monitors their fitness for purpose in the adequate formation of Youth Support Workers.

35 English universities and Colleges of Higher Education currently offer around 50 validated programmes leading to a professional qualification. Most workers obtain the professional qualification at the end of their second year in higher education but continue their studies and complete an honours degree. Approximately 2,400 students are currently following youth work courses.

This chapter describes the requirements on institutions seeking to have programmes professionally validated, and the process of validation. It does not cover the academic validation processes, which are the responsibility of the Higher Education institution and the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency. In its requirements and validation process, set out in the recently revised Requirements for the Professional Validation of Higher Education Youth and Community Work Programmes (NYA 2005)³, the NYA seeks to avoid duplicating academic processes. To minimise the burden on institutions a number of joint validation events – combining professional and academic validation – have been held.

-----> **Professional validation requirements**

A submission for validation must set out a coherent rationale for the programme as being primarily for professional formation. It must show how the programme reflects the underlying principles, ethics and values of youth work, how the learning outcomes relate to the National Occupational Standards and how the curriculum and learning outcomes meet JNC requirements. Submissions must also provide evidence that equal opportunities issues are satisfactorily addressed, must demonstrate that the institution will commit sufficient resources for effective delivery, and that there is a sufficient pool of potential recruits.

All validated programmes have substantial fieldwork elements. For two-year programmes, the minimum requirement is for a total of 18 weeks fieldwork practice, of which at least half must be face-to-face work with young people. For one-year programmes, the requirement is 12 weeks fieldwork. Fieldwork placements must take place in at least two different locations, which means that students following an employment-based programme, i.e. undertaking practice in their normal place of work, must undertake a second placement (of 6 weeks in an undergraduate programme and 4 weeks on a postgraduate route) in a location providing a different experience, wherever possible with a different employer. This requirement also ensures that students following faith-based courses undertake one placement in a secular setting, which contributes to equipping them to work in the full range of youth work settings.



Further requirements relating to fieldwork are that it must be supervised by professionally qualified and experienced workers, and be integrated within the overall programme structure. Assessment tools must be used in relation to fieldwork that enables students' competence to be judged in relation to the NYA requirements for professional competence.

The criteria for professional validation include the following key elements:

- formal representation of local youth work employers and regional groupings in the governance of the programme;
- student representation in the governance process;
- effective institution-wide and programme-specific quality assurance processes;
- a clear strategy for the recruitment and selection of students;
- a well-balanced core of staff dedicated to the programme, with an appropriate staff-student ratio, usually no more than 20:1;
- a minimum of one core full-time staff member, qualified and experienced in Youth Work, for each full-time year group;
- staff with a range of specialist skills, knowledge and recent field experience;
- resources, including accommodation and other facilities, at a level and quality to deliver the programme effectively.

Submissions must provide information to show how these requirements are met, including:

- the level of resource the institution will commit to the programme;
- the teaching and learning methods to be employed;
- how fieldwork elements are integrated in the overall programme;
- assessment methods;
- overall staffing levels and the roles of the staff involved in the programme;
- arrangements for establishing and maintaining a pool of suitable fieldwork placements;
- the institution's quality assurance systems and procedures for monitoring and evaluation of the programme;
- the strategy for recruiting students to the programme;
- details of the core and support staff, and of plans for the use of occasional and visiting lecturers;
- details of the accommodation and other facilities to be used.

The Professional Validation and Monitoring Process

There are six key stages in the validation process:

- initial consultation with, and advice from, NYA staff resulting in a decision whether or not to proceed which, if positive, entails entering into a formal contract with the NYA;
- preparing proposal and draft submission;
- consideration of draft submission by the NYA and feedback to the institution;
- revision of submission by the institution;



- consideration of submission by a working group commissioned by the NYA's Education and Training Standards (ETS) Committee (for new submissions, this always involves the working group visiting the institution);
- recommendation by the working group to the ETS Committee on whether or not professionally to validate the programme, with or without conditions.

The working groups, which consider submissions, consist of representatives of youth work employers, other higher education institutions, youth work staff, and are supported by an NYA officer.

Experience shows that the development of a new programme is a lengthy process. The NYA advises institutions to contact them at least 18 months in advance of the intended start date of the programme, and to work to a schedule which allows for the submission to reach the NYA at least six months before the proposed start. Normally, professional validation is granted for a period of five years.

The NYA monitors programmes to ensure that they are operating in accordance with the criteria for professional validation. The monitoring process also provides information for the Education and Training Standards committee on overall patterns and trends in education and training, and ensures that programmes are subject to a process of continuous improvement. To inform the NYA's monitoring function, institutions are required to submit annual returns giving information on:

- numbers entering the programme;
- numbers passing and failing to complete the course;
- first destinations of those leaving the course;
- external examiners' reports;
- other quality assurance reports.

Compliance with annual monitoring requirements is a condition of the professional validation of an institution's programmes. If the information submitted gives rise to concerns about a programme, or an institution fails to provide the information required, the NYA may withdraw validation if it is not possible to secure a satisfactory solution to the issues raised.

The process for re-validation is broadly the same as for initial validation in that a full submission is required. Institutions are required to demonstrate that the programme is well resourced, has the support of local employers and is recruiting suitably qualified entrants. The way in which re-validation is handled depends on the extent to which the submission indicates that significant change to the programme is planned, the operating record of the programme as evidenced in annual monitoring, and the result of soundings with local employers on their level of satisfaction with the quality of recruits from the programme.

-----> **Key issues for the initial professional training of youth workers**

There are two main areas of concern in relation to initial training. First, the policy context of youth work is becoming increasingly challenging, as initially set out in the Government policy paper, Transforming Youth Work (DfES 2001) Government is budgeting for increased funding for the youth service, but is also setting targets for the delivery of recorded and accredited outcomes for young people (DfES 2002). There is increasing emphasis on working in partnership with other agencies, with more youth work taking place outside the mainstream youth service



and/or undertaken by youth workers operating in multi-disciplinary teams. The long awaited publication of a Green Paper (a UK Government policy consultation) on the “Youth Offer” has been delayed until after the General Election in May 2005. With the return of the Labour Government it is expected that the Green Paper will continue the policy direction towards the joining up of services for children and young people, which has significant implications for professional formation.

Secondly, many youth work employers report difficulties in filling vacancies with appropriately skilled and qualified workers. There are particular problems in London and the South East of England, where the public and voluntary sectors in general have recruitment problems because of high housing and other living costs, but staff shortages are by no means confined to those regions. The problem is exacerbated because qualified professional youth workers increasingly find their skills and experience are in demand by other employers in the field of work with young people. The Connexions Service – the Government’s likely-to-be-reformed support service for young people aged 13 to 19, providing integrated advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities to smooth the transition to adulthood and working life – and the youth justice system recruit qualified youth workers. This is positive since it means youth work values and practices are spread into other areas of work with young people. However, it means more youth workers must be recruited to fill the gaps left, increasing the pressure on the training system.

The issues are inter-related, in that recruitment difficulties mean that employers are pushing professional youth workers into relatively senior posts at an earlier stage of their career than previously. There is increasing evidence that the management skills and knowledge of newly qualified workers do not match the demands of these posts.

-----> **Responding to the issues**

The NYA Education and Training Standards committee established a task group to consider possible actions in relation to higher education youth work training. It concluded that the 2001 Requirements for Professional Validation should be revised and provide more specific guidance in terms of curriculum content; and recommended that qualification as a professional Youth Worker should be through the achievement of an honours degree.

One of the primary focuses of the sub-committee was management development within the curriculum. A report by the Community and Youth Workers Union argued that much of the casework with which it dealt was attributable to inadequate training in areas such as health and safety, staff supervision, child protection, youth work ethics and legislation. A report on first line management training by Ford Partnership Management concluded that there are some issues of concern over the provision of management development modules within initial full-time worker training in higher education institutions. This does not appear to equip the new full time youth workers to deliver their management roles. Whilst there is room for development of the delivery of management learning by Higher Education providers we doubt that this will ever fully meet the need. The Department for Education and Skills Green Paper (DfES 2003) talked of the need for joint working by a range of professionals working with children and young people. The sub-committee considered how to ensure that management training and development within youth work courses might cover issues of multi-professional working and use examples of management work in multi-professional contexts.





Evidence was presented that institutions had been finding that the level of some of the material on youth and community work programmes was more appropriate to study at honours degree level. They were also finding it increasingly difficult to fit into a two-year full-time programme all the elements they needed to cover. Some courses were already planned and delivered as three year degree programmes, covering the management elements in the third year, meaning that some students left with a Diploma at the end of the second year, having achieved their professional qualification, but having not covered a significant part of the curriculum.

In recognition of the above evidence and of the increasingly demanding context within which professional youth workers operate, the NYA's Education and Training Standards committee took the decision that it would be appropriate to raise the minimum level of qualification to an honours degree from 2010. The Requirements for Professional Validation were duly revised,⁴ including a timetable for the transition to a degree, and published in January 2005 to be fully operational from April 2005.

In taking this step towards a degree profession youth work is following the example of social work, which recently became a graduate profession. From 2003, the professional qualification for social workers in England (with Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales to follow suit in 2004) has been a degree in social work approved by the General Social Care Council (GSCC). The new degree replaced the diploma in social work. Students on social work courses receive a bursary and institutions delivering youth work courses are concerned that the combined effect of this funding advantage and the status of social work as, now, a graduate profession will attract candidates who might otherwise have entered youth work courses.

Another issue which is being addressed as youth work moves towards becoming a graduate profession is the pattern of recruitment to courses. Youth work programmes have an excellent record in contributing to the Government agenda of widening access to higher education. The part-time route has been particularly effective in attracting mature candidates and those from non-traditional backgrounds. Higher education institutions are working hard to ensure that such students are not put off by the greater elapsed time – up to 6 years in the case of social work – that might be taken to qualify. Some are considering fast-track routes, using periods of the year such as the usual long summer break, to reduce the part-time degree route to 3 or 4 years and the full-time degree route to 2 years. With different services requiring different levels of professional qualification – social workers and teachers (and youth workers from 2010) a degree, Connexions and the Youth Justice Board the equivalent of a higher education diploma – the wider issues of inter-professional parity of qualifications and of pay structures will be central to the considerations of the new Children's Workforce Unit established in the Department for Education and Skills.

In response to the increasing need for professionals to work together, in multi-disciplinary teams or in multi-agency partnerships, qualifying courses are bringing together students from different professional programmes of study. This is done in a variety of ways, most commonly through delivery of a number of joint modules. In some cases the first or third year of a course is common between, say, youth work and social work students. The Department for Education and Skills has funded a pilot in three institutions, to build one of the Connexions training modules into youth work courses.



The NYA has been leading a programme of work (NYA 2003) to address the difficulties youth work employers are having in recruiting sufficient qualified professional youth workers. A key part of the strategy is to increase the routes available for people to achieve a professional qualification, in particular work-based routes. People whose lack of formal academic qualifications can make them feel reluctant to consider entering higher education often have the personal qualities to make excellent youth workers. At present, following a higher education course validated by the NYA is the only route to qualification. These courses are not available universally. The geographical spread is limited with, for example, no course available in East Anglia. Some youth services have reported difficulty in securing places on courses for sponsored candidates because of a lack of capacity in higher education institutions. Other employers, particularly from the voluntary sector, are unable to meet the cost of supporting candidates through such courses. Full or even part-time study is not attractive to some people, particularly more mature candidates with family responsibilities.

More higher education courses are being submitted for NYA validation, so that the availability is becoming more widespread. A number of foundation degrees are either already validated or will be considered soon. Foundation degrees are set up through partnerships between higher education institutions and local employers, and provide an attractive route to professional qualification for people working in the service needing the higher level qualification in order to progress to more senior levels.

Distance learning is another option for those whose learning style is suited to this form of provision. A few of the validated courses are available through distance learning and the Open University is currently developing a foundation degree in which the taught elements will be available on this basis.

To consider an alternative route for those people who do not wish to, or cannot afford to, enter higher education, the NYA established a working group on the potential development of a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 4, which would be the vocational equivalent of an intermediate level higher education qualification (a diploma or foundation degree). There was strong interest from employers who saw it as a potentially valuable addition to the alternative routes to professional qualification. However, with the move to a degree in 2010 a National Vocational Qualification would have limited viability as a professional qualification, and development has not been taken forward thus far.

Another work-based alternative, intended to encourage 16 to 25 year olds to gain vocational qualifications as youth support workers and access to professional qualification, is apprenticeship in youth work. This has been developed and piloted in six centres around the country. Two awarding bodies intend to have fully approved apprenticeships available from the autumn of 2005.

Consideration is also being given to how pre-professional vocational qualification as Youth Support Worker may be gained as part of a higher education programme. This presents some technical issues in relation to the different assessment processes that obtain in vocational and academic programmes, but is a challenge the NYA, employers and higher education partners are in the process of addressing.

Providing alternative ways of achieving a professional qualification will only prove effective in addressing current recruitment problems if people are attracted to a career in youth work. In support of the workforce development strategy, the NYA



intends to work with other partners, such as Lifelong Learning UK (the Sector Skills Council of which youth work is part) and the Children, Young People and Families Workforce Development Council, to develop publicity materials to raise public awareness of the role of youth workers. In support of this, good quality careers guidance material will need to be developed showing clearly the alternative routes into the profession, and the scope for developing a career in work with young people.

-----> **Summary**

Professional recognition for youth workers in England results from successfully completing a higher education programme validated by the National Youth Agency. In order for programmes to be professionally validated, higher education institutions must meet a set of stringent requirements laid out by the agency, the key elements of which relate to:

- staffing and other resources invested in the programme;
- fieldwork arrangements;
- involvement of local employers in programme governance;
- quality assurance processes;
- meeting annual monitoring requirements.

There are two major areas of concern regarding the initial training of professional youth workers, namely the increasingly challenging context within which newly qualified workers are operating and the difficulties employers have in recruiting and retaining appropriately skilled and qualified workers. A range of work is in hand to address these issues, including the move to a degree profession for youth work from 2010, the ongoing review of guidance on youth work professional training curriculum content, and the continuing development of more routes to professional qualification.

Endnotes

1. A bachelor degree with honours refers to graduates who are awarded either a First Class, Second Upper Class, Second Lower Class or Third Class Honours degree. Those students who do not obtain this level may pass the degrees without any honours classification.
2. From 2010 professional qualification as a youth worker will require an honours degree – i.e. all programmes that start from 1 Sept 2010. Any qualifying programme beginning before then will still be recognised as such, as will qualifications gained before that date.
3. Professional Validation – The National Youth Agency’s Requirements for the Professional Validation of Higher Education Programmes which are Recognised by the Joint Negotiating Committee as Conferring Nationally Qualified Status as Youth Worker – revised and updated January 2005 – see the Training and Qualification section of the NYA website (<http://www.nya.org.uk>)
4. cf. endnote 3



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11. Recognition of non-formal learning outcomes at the University of Malta

Anthony Azzopardi

'Nothing is so powerful as an idea whose time has come'

Victor Hugo.

The debate on the importance of non-formal education as complementary to formal education and as an integral part of the learning process is almost exhausted. However, its recognition, validation and accreditation are still matters of grave concern mainly because of the “fear” that the non-formal may be easily formalised and that its inherent values of voluntary participation and experiential learning will be lost.

The main purpose of this paper is to make a contribution to the ongoing discussion on what strategy is best suited for the creation of quality standards and assessment procedures that could lead to the formal recognition of non-formal learning.

A process for accrediting non-formal activities, in the form of an Extracurricular Credits (ECC) system, was officially launched at the University of Malta in 1997 a short time after the establishment of a Youth Studies Programme (YSP). The experiences gained from the combination of formal and non-formal elements that constitute the functions of the ECC system and of the YSP are discussed and analysed in an attempt to identify which obstacles first need to be overcome in order to be able to make a solid claim for the accreditation of non-formal learning.

The availability or the creation of a favourable environment is one of the first issues a researcher needs to consider before embarking on a research initiative. If the researcher happens to be in the right place at the right time, then, equipped with all the basic research ammunition, action must be taken quickly. If this is not the case, then action rests on the creation of an environment which shows that it is accepting of challenges in arenas which, at the time, may have been considered forbidden territory.

The following “research adventure” finds its genesis at a point in time when the proposal for setting up an Institute of Youth Studies (later renamed “Youth Studies Programme” [YSP]) at the University of Malta was made in 1992 by the then Minister of Youth and the Arts. The University responded with such alacrity that, in a short period of six months, a Director (the author) was appointed with the remit of establishing a degree course in Youth and Community Studies.



Equipped with thirty years of teaching and youth work experience and a research background up to Master's level, the opportunity to attempt to bridge the incongruence that arose from experience within the formal system of education and the non-formal learning experiences through youth-club, sport, social, philanthropic and cultural activities could not be missed. Within a short period of time, reality struck:

- within a formal system, curricula are developed by experts with the exclusion of those who matter most, that is, students – not so in youth and community work;
- within a formal system, students' achievements are posted on notice-boards, published and ceremoniously acknowledged – not so in youth and community work;
- and within a formal system, departmentalisation, time-tabling, compulsory attendance, registrations and committee meetings are the order of the day – not so in youth and community work.

How could one traditional solid system, brimming with compulsory components and revered as the essence of intellectual development, amalgamate with another system thriving on voluntary and experiential engagements? Or, how could one avoid formalising the informal and “informalising” the formal? Can youth researchers and educationalists ever join forces and admit to one another that formal and non-formal learning are intrinsically complementary, non-divisive and equal partners in the lifelong learning perception of knowledge societies?

Fortified with the conviction that theorised practice (praxis) can ground one's actions, an exploration of possibilities was launched.

-----> **Stage 1**

The immediate requirement was for a clear distinction to be made between “Youth Studies” and “Youth and Community Work”. While youth and community work is seen to involve the worker playing a number of roles which can be responsibly assumed following a course of training, youth studies seeks to understand the social, economical and cultural importance of young people in the moulding of society, both through research studies and practical engagement with the world of youth. The function of youth and community workers falls within a wide range: from administrator to organiser, from educator to counsellor and from social worker to provider of entertainment and sport activities (Jeffs and Smith 1987, 1990a, 1990b). On the other hand, youth studies implies the study of youth as a resource rather than as a problem (Evans and Haffenden 1991); their spending power as consumers of welfare goods, travel, entertainment, food and clothes (Frith 1986; Furnham and Stacey 1991); their family life and sexuality (Jones and Wallace 1992; Griffin 1971); the impact of mass communication on young people's behaviour (Kline and Clarke 1971); issues and methods of social education (Marsland 1993); the role of informal education (Smith 1988); leisure and lifestyles (Furnham and Stacey 1991; Hendry et al. 1993; Fornas and Bolin 1995); and youth policy (Poole 1993; Coleman and Warren-Adamson 1992).

Neither “youth and community work” nor “youth studies”, as defined above, was a component of the Maltese context before 1992. Apart from a formal system of education, youth and community work in Malta had been generally left to voluntary organisations with a religious, leisure or political orientation.



Consequently, it was deemed essential to set out to find a unifying principle among a number of variables that constituted the local scenario. The main debate had to centre around the functions of “youth studies” as located within a formal educational institution and the stated situation of youth and community work in Malta. The curriculum of youth studies needed to satisfy the discipline-based approach expected within a university and the process of participation/inclusion of the key players, that is, course participants and young people themselves. Some of the restrictions laid down in the regulations establishing the youth studies programme turned out to be of benefit to the view taken. The youth studies course could only be run as a part-time, evening course. The argument prevailing at the time was that only “adult” students would register for the course since opportunities for regular employment in youth and community work were not really available. It had to be conceded that, in all probability, the first cohort of students would be made up of practising voluntary workers eager to improve their practice and to enhance their academic qualifications. Their contact with young people was to a large extent ensured, and, therefore, young people’s participation in a youth studies curriculum development could be translated into assistance with the actual production of the “official” version.

-----> **Stage 2**

A two-year part-time, evening course of studies leading to the award of a Diploma in Youth Studies was established. In brief, the training course comprised an array of theoretical knowledge base derived from biological, physical and social sciences. These included physio-psychological theories of development, sociological knowledge, political and economic bases, an ethics and philosophical content and a skills and technical base. These core elements were contextualised within and reflected upon by youth and adult participation in direct encounters at university, by on-going evaluation procedures and by the resulting collaboration that these activities created. As a result, in two years’ time, the original course gradually developed into a five-year, first-degree general course which was recently upgraded to Honours level. A Master’s degree will be introduced in February 2005. In the meantime, two other prominent elements emerged:

- the substantial and significant relevance of fieldwork placements that course participants were experiencing through the diversity of non-formal activities they organised and/or participated in;
- the increasing interest university students from various faculties were showing during the discussions/seminars organised by the youth studies programme.

-----> **Stage 3**

Working at close quarters with the student body at university, particularly the Students Representative Council (SRC), a wider perspective of the youth studies programme’s vision developed. The decision was taken to organise a university-wide survey of students’ attitude to life on campus. 800 questionnaires were distributed requesting of respondents their expectations from University life besides the purely academic. Notwithstanding the presence of a vigorous programme of activities organised by the SRC, the large majority showed preference to activities outside of campus, activities described as “of personal choice”, “for personal fulfilment”, “something I always wanted to do but could not find the time for”, “a talent I know I can develop but that has been gradually lost because of assignments,



tests and research projects” and “jealous of what young people outside university are gaining through activities organised by your students”.

Six months of preparatory and consultative work with a number of stakeholders led to a formal proposal to University Senate for the setting up of an Extracurricular Credits (ECC) System. The general concept was agreed to with the proviso that academic standards would not be diluted in any manner. Following a two-year piloting process, the Regulations for the Award of Extracurricular Credits (see Appendix I) were approved by Senate on January 17, 1997. During this two-year period, stock was taken of those issues that could contribute to the value of the activity undertaken. The two main concerns were (a) the availability and competence of the activity’s supervisor and (b) the method of assessment of the students’ contribution and their learning experience.

Concurrently, participants at the youth studies course were in full engagement with various organisations during their fieldwork placement. Apart from the continuous refinement of logistical details, the need arose for considering what young people were achieving through the method of non-formal education adopted. Encouraged by a string of requests from youth organisations and “unclubable” youth groups for an extension of the “youth worker’s” contract, course participants were then requested to include, in their final report, young peoples’ own confidential evaluation of the worth or otherwise of their participation. The stage has now been reached where the Youth Studies Programme, in conjunction with the Faculty of Education, representatives of youth organisations and the Maltese Association of Youth Workers, are working on a proposal towards the accreditation of non-formal learning outside the formal system.

-----> **The data calls...**

Four categories of data have been selected for commenting on the learning experiences gained from the workings of the ECC system and the YSP.

Board meetings

The ECC system is administered by a Board appointed by Senate. The Board is representative of each Faculty and Institute of the University. Two students are nominated by the SRC. At the beginning of each academic year, during Freshers’ Week, an information meeting about the ECC system is organised by the Students Representative Council. The first such meeting held in October 1997 attracted 60 applicants. This number grew to around 500 by the academic year 2002/3. The first Board meeting, held soon after the closing date for applications for each of the two semesters, considers the validity of each application in terms of the activity proposed, the time schedule, the proposed supervisor and the registration of each application with the applicant’s respective Faculty. A second Board meeting is then held for the purpose of discussing any discrepancies that may appear in the applications submitted. The most contentious issues usually regard the competency of the supervisor proposed by the applicant and the extracurricular nature of the activity. Applicants are then informed of the acceptance or otherwise of their submission. At the end of each semester, the final reports submitted by applicants are assessed, with a 50% weighting, by individual members of the Board. The other 50% are assigned by the supervisor. A final discussion on the results obtained then follows. The ECC Board, therefore, meets at least six times every academic year. A total of 36 Board meetings have been held



between 1997/98 and 2002/3. The final Board meeting of each semester (a total of 12 Board meetings) has been selected for the following commentary.

1. All the Board members are full-time lecturers. The prevailing point of discussion usually centres around the usefulness or otherwise of activities that involve sports and gym activities. It is very often pointed out that a credit for such activities does not do justice to academic work. Philanthropic, political and drama activities, for example, are looked upon in a more positive manner.
2. Concern is also raised with regard to the strict adherence to deadlines, to the often generous assessment given by supervisors and to the student's presentation of the report (a sample of the supervisor's assessment sheet is shown in Appendix II).
3. A problem facing the Board is the regular absence of some members from meetings usually as a result of having to give a lecture at the time of the meeting or because of absence from the island.
4. The composition of the Board changes fairly regularly since some appointees to the Board feel unable to cope with the added workload. Lack of continuity is a matter of concern.
5. Clerical assistance to the Board for the purpose of taking down minutes, receiving applications, distributing work to the members, publishing results and dealing with student and Faculty officers' queries is only offered on a voluntary basis by the executive officer at the YSP. Administrative support is lacking.

Activity reports

Activity reports are assessed according to criteria established by the Board in consultation with the students' representatives. The latter, however, do not involve themselves in the assessment procedure (the set of criteria used are reproduced in Appendix III). A sample of 300 reports was chosen for analysis – a random average of 50 for each of the six academic years under review. The reports were grouped according to the five categories listed in the Regulations, namely, cultural, philanthropic, political, sporting and research. The analysis concludes:

1. Cultural activities included, among others, dance, drama, presentation of radio and television programmes, environment awareness projects, youth exchanges and self-enrichment courses.
2. Philanthropic (social support) activities centred around assistance in children's homes, literacy programmes, manning of support lines and care for the homeless.
3. Political activities included assistance in political parties' publications, debates, radio and television presentations, and the organisation of youth parliaments.
4. Sporting activities showed a variety of purpose: from specific training programmes in preparation for participation in national and international events, such as, the annual marathon, swimming and athletics competitions, martial arts festivals and the Small Nations Games ... to attendance at health and fitness centres.
5. Research assistance for university lecturers and for national survey agencies formed the bulk of the category of "research".

Reading through the original proposal made by students and attempting to assess each individual's performance through the final report yielded the following general comments:

1. The majority of students embark on a project as a means of diversion from what they term "routine university work".



2. Improving performance in a particular pastime, such as, playing an instrument, dancing, martial arts, athletics and swimming is another very common form of impetus for taking up an activity that further enhances the individual's university course transcript.
3. Recognition of talents and potential participation in events of national or international stature prove to be strong sources of motivation.
4. The overall presentation of activity reports is of a high standard considering the criteria set for assessment, criteria which are similar to those required for purely academic work. A relatively small number of students fail to reach the standard expected mainly because of lack of evidence of thoroughness and because of a clear minimalist approach. Such a performance is very difficult to assess in terms of non-formal learning especially so when the supervisor's assessment is high.
5. Remarks to the effect that "this is the second [or third] time that I have decided to apply for an extracurricular credit ... although it involves work over and above that required by my course" are commonly found in the applicant's final report. When such a remark is followed by statements, such as, "I have now been engaged by ... to take on a part-time appointment" or "I shall continue with this work although the original plan has been fully satisfied because I find my participation very enriching and valuable both for me and for the people I am working with", there is a fairly clear indication that the learning obtained may have a lasting effect on the individual concerned.

Assessments

The assessment sheets of each one of the chosen 300 activity reports were used for the production of the statistical information in Figure 11.1 (below). Briefly, this information elicits the following remarks for the sample of reports chosen:

1. 6.4% of the applicants failed to honour their commitment, thus forfeiting the award of an extracurricular credit. The implication here is that the individual concerned needed to opt for an optional credit that could be obtained from a list of "optionals" offered by any one of the Faculties/Departments of the University. Extracurricular credits may be applied for in lieu of an optional credit.
2. Motivation and effort are generally rated very highly by the supervisors.
3. More than half of the supervisors (58.5%) failed to add comments to their assessment. There could be a number of reasons for this situation. Perhaps one needs to look into this matter, more so when a review of the "Comments" section, reserved for the "Board Members" use in assigning the 50% weighting for the final report, showed that 70% of the Markers left this section empty.
4. Although supervisors are chosen as diligently as possible, ensuring in the process that they are fully qualified in their field and that they agree with the concept of learning outside the university environment, there appears to be a serious lack of commitment in substantiating the assessment they give to students.



Attendance	Regular (max. 15)	Not Regular (max. 7)	Never attended (0)	Total eligible
N	220	62	18	282
Av. mark assigned	13	5	—	
Motivation / Attitude	Very good (16-20)	Good (11-15)	Fair (6-10)	Poor (0-5)
N	194	70	9	9
Av. Mark assigned	17	13	7	4
Effort	Very good (13-15)	Good (10-12)	Fair (5-9)	Poor (0-4)
N	201	55	18	8
Av. Mark assigned	14	10	6	2
	Comments		No Comments	
Comments by supervisors	117	165		

Figure 11.1 – Results of the activity reports

Fieldwork placements

Course participants at the YSP are required to undergo 300 hours of fieldwork placement as part-fulfilment of the course requirements. A team of fieldwork placement supervisors together with the tutor in charge at the YSP visit students “on the field” at regular intervals. The team is made up of qualified youth and community workers who have gained experience through youth agencies, mostly in Malta but a few also in England and Scotland.

Most of the work is often carried out during university vacation periods (that is, outside term-time) and a good number of students extend their placement to a much longer period. For assessment purposes, extensions are not taken into consideration although the message is being given that the experiences gained by the young people involved and by the students themselves are a reliable source of enrichment. It is estimated that one out of every eight students has been engaged by the youth agency with which the placement was contracted. They were asked to take on a more visible role in the organisation of activities or in the overall administration of the agency.

Apart from the report which students present at the end of their fieldwork placement, a personal logbook is kept throughout the five-year course for presentation at the end of the second year and at the end of the fifth year. For the purpose of this paper, a sample of 60 logbooks – ten for each of the six academic years under review – was used to collate comments about the placement experience.

A general tone of humour prevails whereby lecturers, assignments and tests bear the brunt of the participants’ venting of relief. However, some very useful sug-



gestions also emerge. The following is a small, representative selection of comments about the fieldwork placement experience:

1. "300 hours of hard work ... I would never wish to repeat this experience."
2. "May I suggest that at least half of the lecture periods be replaced by practical sessions in the field – what a joy to be thanked by young people rather than assessed by lecturers!"
3. "My teaching experience came in very useful during the fieldwork placement. However, I felt that I had rather help students to learn, than to teach them what is laid down in the National Minimum Curriculum."
4. "The Youth Studies Programme should consider introducing a two-track course of studies. I, for one, would rather take the academic track. My experience with ... was very difficult."
5. "Thank you for the opportunity you gave me to work with young people. I never realised how eager young people are to cooperate and to contribute towards their own learning."
6. "When will the authorities realise that learning is not confined to classrooms! I mean both for me as a teacher and for young people at school."

The six comments reproduced above are very selective. They are only meant to convey a general trend of reactions by potential youth and community workers and also to show that a few more lessons need to be taken from what is being offered.

-----> **From practice to theory**

An important dividend in generating theory is the "real life" character of working in the field (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 40). The lengthy, yet strongly condensed, description of the research adventure being presented here may at first appear confusing. However, grounding a theory in the data collected starts off with observations, intuitions and the partial explanation of events which do not necessarily occur in any predetermined order. Theory is "a set of inter-related propositions or statements that explain a fairly broad range of research findings" (Leslie et al. 1973: 9).

At the outset of this chapter, the need for a favourable environment in which action could be taken was discussed. As matters developed, concurrent developments became an opportunity for attempting to answer the three research queries that were challenging the idea whose time had come.

Formal education has made a name for itself. It has developed throughout the centuries, supported by great thinkers, theorists and practitioners. It has produced exemplary and committed exponents and it has even developed a language of its own. Notwithstanding the fact that formal education has borrowed many terms from the discipline of economics – terms such as, "educational enterprise", "curriculum product" and "education as consumption" – education terminology is now understood without much, if any, difficulty. "Curriculum", "timetable", "syllabus", "compulsory", "mid-term", and "semester", for example, are all instinctively associated with what constitutes some of the functions of an educational institution. However, the link with economics does not stop at this level. The formal system of education has also taken on some other basic components of economics that include investment, returns, demand and supply, forecast, and others. Educational surveys are as popular as economic surveys, while exchange of practices, corporate initiatives and investment in research are also common components.



As evident as such a “partnership” may appear to be, it also goes a long way to show that the formal system is firmly grounded in organisation, in efficient and effective management and in awareness of the needs, expectations and aspirations of its clients.

Education legislation, leading to reforms and to better service provision, targets the wishes of an ever-growing array of categories of social actors: from kindergarten, to primary, secondary, post-secondary, post-compulsory, vocational and adult levels. Thank goodness for all this because more and more people are now able to add to their cultural capital by extending their learning/schooling passage beyond the age-specific compulsory stage – much in the same way that economic capital may be increased by having a second job whether part-time or full-time.

Unfortunately, like all good things, the formal system has to face its own pitfalls. Drop-outs, illiteracy, exclusion from mainstream schooling due to special needs, lack of personal skills, absenteeism and lack of technological skills are some of the challenges that keep nagging education policymakers and practitioners.

Perhaps that is the price one has to pay for focusing on the integration of social actors into a formal system. Formal systems tend to organise so well that they do not allow space for their “live” components to think for themselves and become proactive and free to choose. Formality tends to hinder the development of attitudes and aptitudes of individuals causing, in the process, the loss of skills much needed for social integration, skills such as diversity of competence, genuine and active participation and lifewide learning.

Some of the evidence produced by the information collected for the purpose of this paper shows how valuable the contribution of formal education has been. At the same time, evidence has also surfaced with regard to university students’ desire to have space in which to manoeuvre outside of the walls of purely academic limits. The non-formality of the ECC system has been generally understood not only as a source of choice but also as a source of learning and personal satisfaction. Youth and community workers in training, on their part, have reacted in a corresponding manner. Some of them did not hesitate to comment that youth and community work is not their piece of cake, while others have come to realise that learning outside the formal system is, after all, learning as well. The combined comments of both sets of students succinctly highlight the fact that formal learning and non-formal learning do not replace each other.

The two strands of education under review provide a basis for the need of flexibility and for rigour at one and the same time. Neither of the two forms can flourish without those ingredients that make a profession out of the practice. A sound and solid body of knowledge and a particular form of competency are fundamental and indispensable requisites.

The high esteem accorded to formal education has not just happened. It has been earned. The need to gain recognition, validation and accreditation is an undeniable element of concern for non-formal education / learning. *It does not seem fitting that the opportunities for non-formal learning are offered/provided by practitioners whose preparation does not match that of educators in the formal system.* If equality and complementarity are to be considered as fundamental to the dyadic relationship between the formal and the non-formal, then youth and community workers, the major providers of non-formal learning, cannot be seen to lag behind in their preparation.





Both formal and non-formal educators share a concern for an adequate learning environment. However, while formal educators have a number of constants, such as structural commodities in the form of schools and universities, non-formal practitioners generally find themselves working in settings which are as informal as they come. Unless activities are limited to a youth club environment or to residential programmes, the non-formal educator may be found engaging with young people in the street, in a shopping centre or in a bar. Consequently, the diversity of methodological approaches required demand of the worker the possession of personal, group, communication and helping skills, and as clear an understanding as possible of youth-related issues such as, popular culture, delinquency, the media, sexuality and addiction.

But youth-related issues also go beyond the micro and the local. For if non-formal education has young people's personal, social and political development at heart, other far-reaching concerns emerge. The voluntary participation of young people in non-formal education does not exclude them from being provided with opportunities to engage in the politics of active citizenship and its ancillary components, such as, social justice, intercultural understanding and tolerance. A tall order indeed for the non-formal educator whose training cannot be limited to short-term courses or to dependence on occasional encounters with colleagues or experts in a particular field.

The vast number of opportunities that allow for non-formal learning cannot be left to chance because non-formal learning is circumscribed by awareness, the raising of questions, the seeking of solutions and taking action (Kolb 1983). *Consequently the need for a curriculum of planned and spontaneously-occurring learning opportunities should not be beyond the remit of youth and community workers.* The argument has often been made that such a stance would lead to the formalisation of the non-formal. But, if learning is the essence of the process, one cannot deny the need for clear objectives, for relevant methods of delivery and for the use of performance indicators that a curriculum of work provides.

The distinction needs to be made between the concept of curriculum as a product and that of curriculum as a process. While formal educators are to a large extent bound by a set of "subjects" and "topics/themes" to deal with at particular periods of time in a young person's passage towards reaching a pre-determined stage/level of achievement, the non-formal educator is bound by the learner's specific needs at any point in time. Participants in non-formal learning may need to explore areas which relate only to their personal interest and which they consider relevant at the time. This situation calls for careful preparation on the part of the educator when prescription is anathema and when the educator's method of intervention is so critical.

A process curriculum, as its name implies, would gradually translate into a framework for making decisions based on the evaluation of both previous and current experiences of the worker and the participants. However, such a curriculum would also include a thematic catalogue of planned activities which link to "the basic values advocated by non-formal learning" (CDEJ 2002: 12). Some of these are conflict resolution, human rights and gender equality. An indication of the quality of performance achieved could then be extracted from the records of the evaluations made. Performance indicators would consider, for example, the extent to which young people have become aware of an issue by taking responsibility in looking up information and in setting up a project relevant to their particular situation and to that of a larger audience or other youth groups.



The case for non-formal education cannot be made as strongly as one desires it to be unless it is evidence-based. Just as formal educational processes and developments have rested on the results of research studies so non-formal education needs to be underpinned by research evidence that has been primarily produced by its own exponents and not by others for their consumption. *Trainee workers in the field of non-formal education need to be conversant with research methods and to be able to carry out research in their own arena of work.* Young people's unique, ever-changing demands, characteristics and skills, and socially-driven changes that affect their life course are increasingly demanding the recognition of specialisms and expertise. Criteria for accrediting non-formal activities should be established within a structure that is staffed by personnel knowledgeable in participatory techniques, assessment and evaluation procedures, and in research methodology. The "occupational identity" (Banks 1996:13) of non-formal educators tends to remain obscure until the light shines through informed and committed practitioners.

-----> **Conclusion**

The main purpose of this contribution was to contribute to the debate on the need to look into the recognition of non-formal education/learning as an integral part of the learning process. The Extracurricular Credits system in use at the University of Malta has been projected as one model for the implementation of a system of recognition and accreditation of non-formal learning. The fact that the system is located within an educational institution highlighted the need for solid structures and for the need of a status that is seen to have been acquired through a professional approach, thus ensuring quality work. Furthermore, the presence of the Youth Studies Programme, within the same educational institution, has also added to the unveiling of obstacles that tend to hinder outsiders' perception of the worth of non-formal learning.

Non-formal educators' training, values and skills can become the beacons which guide policymakers, teacher trainers and employers, among others, to come to terms with the additional, though different possibilities, that young people have in terms of adding value to their curriculum vitae.



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Appendix I: Regulations for the award of extracurricular credits

(reproduced from: University of Malta (1997) Handbook: Regulations, Guidelines Education Act. Office of the Registrar, pp. 13-15)

1. All undergraduate students are eligible for credits (hereafter referred to as extracurricular credits) for activities done over and above the curricular requirements of the diploma or degree course they are following and satisfying the criteria stated below.
2. (a) Not more than three extracurricular credits shall be taken into consideration for the award of a degree, and not more than one extracurricular credit shall be taken into consideration for the award of a diploma.
(b) Extracurricular credits may be awarded in fulfilment of the optional credit requirements of a degree or diploma course.
(c) In those courses that are not structured on the Study Unit Credit system, each credit awarded for extracurricular activities shall be weighted as 0.5% of the final global mark that is considered for degree classification purposes.
(d) A student may not be awarded more than one extracurricular credit in any one academic year.
3. (a) Students following a degree course, who are awarded more than three extracurricular credits may have the fourth and any subsequent credit gained recorded in the transcript of their academic record, although such credits are not taken into consideration for the award of the degree.
(b) Regulation 3(a) above shall apply mutatis mutandis in case of students following a diploma course, who are awarded more than one extracurricular credit.
4. The Senate shall appoint an Extracurricular Board, hereafter referred to as the Board, with the function and powers to consider which work is acceptable for the award of extracurricular credits, to assess such work and to award credit for it.
5. The Board shall be composed of the Rector or his nominee as chairman, the Registrar or his nominee, an academic member nominated by each Faculty and each Institute where there are students following a degree or diploma course, and two students nominated by the K.S.U. (Kunsill ta' l-Istudenti Universitarji).
Provided that the students' representatives on the Board shall not participate in the assessment of work submitted for the award of extracurricular credits.
6. The Board may appoint, and work through, sub-committees whose quorum shall be three members, one of whom a student, not necessarily a member of the Board.
7. An extracurricular activity (including activities organised by Bodies outside the University) may be considered for the award of an extracurricular credit, if the activity:
 - (a) involves not less than 50 hours of work on the part of the student, and
 - (b) requires the student to show such qualities as initiative, perseverance, leadership or organisational skills,
 - (c) is of a cultural, philanthropic, political, sporting or research nature.



8. An extracurricular activity may not be considered for an award on more than one occasion.
9. On accepting an extracurricular activity for consideration for the award of credit, the Board may impose on the student such conditions as the Board may deem necessary, in order to ensure that credit is only awarded where it is merited.
10. Students may ask for an activity to be considered for the award of an extracurricular credit by applying to the Registrar by not later than:
 - (a) mid-October if the activity is to be undertaken during the first semester; or
 - (b) mid-January if the activity is to be undertaken during the second semester.
11. The application shall include a detailed description of the activity and the name of a proposed competent supervisor (not necessarily a member of the academic staff) who has agreed to monitor the work, give advice to the student when necessary, and report to the Board at the end of the activity.
12. The Board shall consider the application in terms of Regulation 7 above and assign a supervisor who shall not necessarily be the person proposed by the student.
13. At the end of the activity, or the part thereof which is being considered for the award of an extracurricular credit for the current academic year, the student shall be required to present to the Board a report of the activity, including his contribution to it, and the supervisor shall be required to present to the Board a confidential assessment of the student's participation in the activity.
14. The Board shall consider the supervisor's assessment report and award a grade A, B, C, D or Fail in descending order of merit depending on the degree and quality of the student's participation in the project / activity.

Last amendments approved by Senate on 17th January 1997.



Appendix II: Extracurricular credits board -supervisor's assessment sheet

Student Details:

Name:..... Surname:.....

Faculty:..... Course:..... Year:.....

Activity:.....Semester: First / Second

Assessment: (Total: 50 marks)

Attendance: (max. 15 marks)

Regular:.....(15); Not Regular:..... (7); Never attended:.....(0)

Motivation / Attitude: (max. 20 marks)

Very Good:.....(16-20); Good:.....(11-15); Fair:.....6-10); Poor:.....(0-5)

Effort: (max. 15 marks)

Very Good:.....(13-15); Good:.....(10-12); Fair:.....(5-9); Poor:.....(0-4)

Comments:.....

.....

.....

Supervisor's Mark (out of 50):.....

Name of Supervisor:.....

Signature of Supervisor:.....Date:.....

N.B. The Board reserves the right to award a mark independently of the above if the assessment sheet is not filled in the appropriate manner.

For Official Use Only

Board Member's Mark (out of 50):.....Overall Mark: (out of 100).....

Grade:.....Comments:.....

.....

.....

Name of Marker:.....Signature:.....

Date:.....



Appendix III: Extracurricular credit report

The extracurricular credit report carries a full 50% of the assessment.

The report should have a clear structure:

- Title page – Credit (ECC code), title, name and course group / year, supervisor's name, date.
- Introduction – including aims and background.
- Method – describing what was done during the duration of the activity.
- Results or end-products – what has been achieved in terms of performance, enhancement of skills, material / cultural production.
- Discussion – have you reached, exceeded or fallen short of your expectations? What was your learning experience? Any plans for the future?
- References – which books, journals, magazines of repute, reports, etc., have been consulted?
- Appendices – texts, visual material (photos, pictures, etc.), certificate of attendance, of level of achievement, ...

Presentation:

- Avoid incorrect language use (ungrammatical constructions, bad spelling, wrong choice of words)
- Pay special attention to punctuation
- Length: about 1500 words
- Format: 12-point font size, 1? - 2-spaced typing, standard margins, sequentially numbered pages.

Deadline:

Your report, together with the supervisor's assessment sheet, should be handed in at the ECC Office, Room 114, New Humanities Building (use appropriate mail box if office is closed) by not later than

Late and incomplete submissions will not be accepted



12. Civil society building in Azerbaijan

Sara Rzayeva and Andreas Karsten

To educate is to believe in change.

Paulo Freire

This paper illustrates both context and conditions for the work of non-governmental organisations in Azerbaijan. It especially looks at NGOs dealing with civic education and describes two different attempts to establish co-operation between NGOs, donors and international organisations. By means of these cases we argue that civil society development cannot be imposed but has to be developed from the bottom up if it aims towards meaningful structural change.

Education has become a key to the re-construction of civil society in a democratic context in Azerbaijan, a major project and a continuous process relying on lifelong learning in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Democracy cannot be taught without being lived, and in that respect non-formal education programmes, understood as “organised and semi-organised educational activities operating outside the structure and routines of the formal education system” (Sahlberg 1999) play an increasingly important role.

As a space to learn and live democracy, non-formal learning programmes are essential to address and respond to change and to foster progress and development. Furthermore, their priorities offer accurate reflections of society’s problems. Educational programmes are put forward and organised to address specific needs or problems of the society as they are perceived; they exist in accordance to social demand. If non-formal learning programmes in a particular region are concentrated around conflict-resolution and ethnic tolerance, we can realistically assert the perception of youth problems and needs in that region to be centred around ethnic conflict and its repercussions.

In the light of the current political situation, it is not surprising that civic education activities occupy a giant portion of non-formal learning programmes in Azerbaijan. This is not just a post-communist country; it also has far-from-democratic government (Namazov 2003) with the monopoly of the executive over both legislative and judiciary (Ismayilov 2003). At the same time democracy is seen as the preliminary condition for solving society’s problems by independent experts (ibid.), international donors and non-governmental organisations (Temnikov 2004), and consequently the best part of non-formal training programmes are carried out countrywide for the sake of civic education.





Non-formal civic education programmes in Azerbaijan are almost exclusively non-governmental initiatives, offered by more than 1500 NGOs (ibid.). They cover a wide range of topics such as human rights, tolerance and respect, gender equality, citizenship and identity, the work of and co-operation with local and regional authorities, youth participation in and beyond elections, electorate education and democracy education, to name but a few.

Despite the absence of formal research and numerical data on the issue, it can be stated that civic education (and as part of this, civic education for children and youth) is the first and most important priority of the NGO sector in Azerbaijan; it certainly is the area where most of the inflowing donations seem to go.

Despite the considerable amount of financial support, it is also true for NGOs working in the area of civic education as much as for any other NGO in Azerbaijan, that their existence, and hence their work, is largely unknown to the general public. According to a survey on “NGOs and their role in Azerbaijan” conducted by ISAR-Azerbaijan in 2002, only 16% of the country’s general public is aware of the existence of institutions called “Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)”. While there is an improvement in the public’s level of awareness about NGOs as compared to 2001 and 2000, when 11.3% and 7% of the population respectively indicated they know or have heard about the term NGO, public awareness and general recognition is still very low (ISAR-Azerbaijan 2002).

A very heavy dependency on donors is another reality of Azerbaijan’s emerging civil society. Many NGOs plan their work to fit the priorities and programmes of international or national donor organisations. It is largely due to the policies of some of these donating structures that the NGO sector is seen as a bazaar for money much more than a platform for change. As a result it is not very surprising that many NGOs are not bringing about any social change – they do not even aim at it. They disappear as soon as the financial support stops, or they continue just “on paper”. One example is the rural NGOs network programme, into which the UNDP office has invested about 1 million US dollars – yet there are currently no functioning rural NGOs nor is there an operational network (Radjabov and Aliyev 2004).

So far, however, most of the more permanently active NGOs work in isolation as well. There is only a weak, if any, co-ordination between them and their work lacks sustainability. This is true for the third sector as a whole as well as for NGOs working in specific fields. There are fewer than 20 NGOs in Azerbaijan working for civic education of children and youth (Borsotti, 2003). Each organisation has a different approach – one uses debate clubs as the method for civic education, a second adopts Internet discussions and online projects and a third administers special student exchange programmes. The outreach of each organisation is very limited, and co-operation between them has been weak.

In summer 2003 two international organisations – the Open Society Institute-Assistance Foundation (OSI-AZ) and the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) – suggested to form a “Civic Education Coalition” to co-ordinate non-formal civic education activities in Azerbaijan.

The main focus of CRS’ work in the Caucasus region had been on humanitarian assistance, primarily in Armenia. Only recently have they included educational programmes in their work and started to extend the geographical scope of their activities. In 2001 the organisation opened a small office in Baku.



OSI-AZ was established in 1997 to develop and promote the concept of an open society in Azerbaijan. The NGO has become the main donor and initiator of several major programmes supporting free access to information, education and civil society development. Its education programmes have focused on education reform, teacher training, history textbook development and reform of curricula. While the organisation itself operates in the sphere of non-formal education, their main experience lies in working with educators in formal learning environments.

The suggestion to form a coalition was therefore based on the needs of the two organisations to enlarge both scope and impact of their work. But the need for such a coalition goes far beyond organisational considerations. All available research shows that only very few people are familiar with the concepts of civil society, active citizenship, democracy and human rights, and among those few hardly anyone knows what to do with their knowledge (Kazimzade et al. 2003). Learning about these issues is – when it takes place at all – mainly passive and neither interactive nor engaging (ibid.). Between the different stakeholders of civic education there is no shared understanding on contents or approach of their work. On the basis of these observations, the involvement of non-formal learning NGOs as well as the development of shared concepts and standards is both needed and logical.

Subsequently, OSI-AZ and CRS invited international trainers to train local NGOs on coalition building and co-operation skills. During the workshops funded and organised by the donors the structure and decision-making mechanism of the coalition was drafted. However, the coalition structure drafted during those workshops never worked, and as soon as the donor-led workshops finished, each NGO went back to its regular activities and specific audience – despite the international NGOs' expectations of a working mechanism.

This failure was a major disappointment for every partner at the time, but looking at it with the distance of time it cannot be surprising. Sara Rzayeva started to work as Education Programme Coordinator at the Open Society Institute in September 2003; her responsibilities included following up the Civic Education Coalition set up by the institute earlier that year. Thinking back to her first days, she remembers that

“the dominating, directing position of the OSI with regard to the coalition was already evident in the language used when describing the earlier phases of the project. I was told that the OSI together with the Catholic Relief Services organised and funded a week-long training for a group of local civic education NGOs in coalition-building skills in summer 2003. These Azerbaijanian NGOs “did not know how to co-operate and had to be taught”. For this purpose the OSI funded a visit of “the experts from the USA” – Garth Katner and his team from *Global Learning Works* – to teach local NGOs “how to co-operate”. The training was extremely fruitful as the participants had to prepare a structure and founding documents of the future coalition by the end of the training.”

The approach adopted by the two leading initiators OSI and CRS towards the Civic Education Coalition represented a clear hierarchy and a strong power relationship, a relationship of one-sided dependence. The top-down attitude did not allow for an equal partnership. The local NGOs did not feel that they had either power or control in the decision-making; they were not given much agency of their own and consequently felt no ownership of the plans for collaboration. The nationwide call for interest to join the coalition states as a reason for the coalition's existence “the need to achieve a sustainable educational and attitudinal impact for teachers and students of civic education” (OSI-AZ 2003), which reflects the donors' work



with formal education institutions, but entirely ignores the NGOs' work in non-formal education.

For Sara Rzayeva, who had been working for a small and local NGO herself before starting at OSI, the assumption that local organisations are not capable to work independently and successfully seemed amiss from the start. But on the basis of this wrong assumption it was easy to blame the local NGOs for the failure of the coalition: These local organisations still had “not learned how to co-operate and work independently”. OSI's approach at that time not only turned a blind eye towards the falsity of made assumptions and applied methodology, it especially legitimated home-grown failure.

When she, sceptically, attended her first meeting with former coalition training participants, she was deeply surprised to see so much experience and dedication within the very people blamed for the coalition's failure. “I was ready to see members of some new and inexperienced NGOs. Instead, an ocean of experience and practical wisdom opened to me in this meeting. Despite severe financial, infra-structural limitations – of the 20 organisations present in the meeting may be 5 had an office of their own – these organisations were carrying out incredible educational projects that had a real impact on their communities. Why should they not be able to co-operate?”

During that meeting it quickly turned out that the local organisations did not consider the call for a nationwide coalition as a commonly developed co-operation agreement. First of all, different organisations meant different things by “civic education”. Secondly, when reminded about the organisational structure prepared during the summer training, some immediately remarked an inherent un-workability of the structure. Thirdly, and may be most importantly, they did not feel their share in the project. A participant of the meeting said:

“It was your project. You funded the meetings, you called us to the meetings, you told us what you expect us to do and you set our deadlines. That is as much top-down as is possible... How are we supposed to be equal partners in this?”

Through the following meetings and discussions with the local NGO leaders and members Sara Rzayeva started to see coalition-building as an exercise of negotiations between independent stakeholders with their different agendas, projects, priorities and organisational limits. They had to decide if they wanted to co-operate, and how their co-operation could look like. The NGOs themselves had to define what they wanted to do.

Sharing her position with the Director of Education Programmes at OSI, she got, unwillingly, an agreement to “experiment” with this approach of equal partnership and undertake a second attempt to establish the Civic Education Coalition. OSI would continue to provide logistical and financial support to meetings without insisting on any predetermined result. The initiative and full responsibility for deciding whether or not to co-operate would be left to the local NGOs, which also had the responsibility for deciding the vision and terms of co-operation. International organisations like OSI-AZ, CRS, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Project Harmony could participate in the discussion on an equal and voluntary basis.

The change of approach by one of the major donors brought about a renewed positive approach and motivation on the side of the local NGOs. They suggested starting with creating a common understanding of “civic education” before attempting any structure-drawing for the future umbrella organisation. Online dis-



discussion space was provided by Project Harmony, and the NGOs, local and international alike, worked together to define what civic education for children and youth should be like in Azerbaijan.

Two characteristics distinguished this process from so many others: *true volunteerism and equal co-operation*. In the context described above as a “bazaar for money”, voluntary contributions of one’s time to an idea that does not promise money or prestige in the near future is not very common at all. The discussion process was a test to the level of commitment of all involved organisations and, at the same time, a prerequisite for the sustainability of the project. Given the competitive atmosphere for quick money, NGOs do not tend openly to share their ideas and plans (that can be translated into projects and funds by other discussion partners).

The participants of the Civic Education Coalition discussion went beyond these worries and decided in January 2004 to co-operate on an equal level and with equal commitment in order to

- share information for the most effective mobilization of resources and more powerful and enriching educational programmes;
- define common quality standards of civic education and act as the surveillance mechanism in the country to ensure these standards are kept;
- lobby the government for prioritising civic education in formal education curricula.

This second attempt to create a Civic Education Coalition was the first case in Azerbaijan, when a group of local NGOs initiated discussions on the quality of non-formal learning programmes and the systematic impact of NGO activities in the field of civic education for children and youth. The same group also prepared a strategy of working with the government structures – with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Youth, Sport and Tourism in parallel – and other organisations and networks working in the area of civic education of young people.

However, the condoned policy of “equality” did not last long. OSI’s Education Programmes Director and the Education Programmes Experts Committee wanted quick results. They wanted a joint project without the obviously necessary investment into collective work and serious co-operation. While the group of local NGOs was working on first project ideas, a timeline of activities and an organisational structure for the coalition, the Open Society Institute changed its mind and its approach. In June 2004, the donor passed on all papers and reports of the Civic Education Coalition discussions to *Innovations in Education* – a former OSI sub-programme outsourced as a separate NGO – and asked for a quick project “along these lines”. The project was written up really quickly and submitted harumscarum, after which OSI simply lost its interest in the “unfruitful” discussions over the creation of a Civic Education Coalition. The conclusion by the Programme Director was that the “local NGOs” had once again proven their “inability” for co-operative work and the donor needed to work with individual organisations (meaning *Innovations in Education*) from now on.

This sudden denial was a disastrous blow to the work done so far and the morale of the organisations interested in the Civic Education Coalition. The group was deprived of the results of its work done so painstakingly over 10 months, and was blamed for it on top of it all. It was “their own fault” as the collective work was not “fast enough”. The second attempt to establish an overarching co-operative body in the area of civic education for children and youth was abruptly cut off.



And while the experience and memory of those months lives on in bilateral and multilateral projects and the theoretical need for a co-ordination of civic education activities remains as undisputed as the practical advantages, Azerbaijan remains without a platform for the organisations dealing with civic education, continuing to seriously limit the impact of the work done.

The experience of failing twice to establish a Civic Education Coalition in Azerbaijan is just one example for donor-initiated projects, which are too often forced to produce quick and tangible results and turn out to be completely unsustainable. In consequence, the representative case study has one important lesson to offer to organisations and institutions in Azerbaijan and beyond with regard to civil society building and the relationship between donors and local NGOs – a lesson that many international organisations and donors operating in Azerbaijan still do not take seriously enough:

Civil society development cannot be imposed. It should come from the bottom up after being internalised by local stakeholders. Any donor/international NGO cooperation with local initiative groups and NGOs should be on an equal basis and not hierarchical. A top-down understanding of civil society building denies independent agency of local NGOs and assumes that they are incapable and incompetent. Many local NGOs are underdeveloped merely because of the dependency-based donor policies towards them. Subsequent problems in civil society building are not a result of inept local organisations, but of confusion between empowerment and indoctrination. Because of their limiting and restrictive impact on civil society *present donor policies need to undergo a radical change.*



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13. Conclusions

Lynne Chisholm and Bryony Hoskins

The structure of this book has proposed a circular pathway of knowledge that maps the world of non-formal learning in the youth sector, accompanied by signposts (intermezzi) between the interlinking territories of policy, practices, participants, and professionalisation. This knowledge map includes research and development case studies (Ajello and Belardi; Azzopardi; Gerzer-Sass; Morrey and Drowley; Preißer), professional development issues (Kovàcs; Rzayeva and Carsten), applied research (Colley; Søgaard Sørensen) and conceptual analysis (Bechmann Jensen; du Bois-Reymond). The concept and practice of non-formal learning as a distinctive set of principles and performances is the pivot around which all contributions rotate. The pivotal actors in this world are non-formal youth trainers and youth workers active in a contemporary European context, that is, working their trade transnationally and interculturality.

This orientation and focus does not automatically imply that one set of principles and performances – those characteristically found in contexts and processes defined as non-formal – are intrinsically, necessarily and always better than are others. Learning by diverse groups and individuals takes place in a variety of contexts and uses many different methods for a range of purposes – and hence it is more helpful to speak of a formal–non-formal–informal continuum, recognising that different real-life examples may display different combinations of features and ultimately occupy different positions along the continuum (Colley, Hodgkinson and Malcolm 2003; Chisholm et al. 2005; Colley, this volume). At the same time, learning that takes place beyond the bounds of formal education and training institutions and whose outcomes are not generally expressed through accredited paper qualifications deserves greater visibility and wider recognition. Such opportunities and the individual and social benefits these bring complement and enrich the scope and reach of provision and participation in education and training as a whole.

Du Bois-Reymond argues that non-formal learning accretes greater relevance in knowledge societies and economies, as the skills and competences they require both for the labour market and for active participation in civil society include those for which non-formal content and method are particularly suited to foster. Non-formal educational curricula and process can also respond more flexibly to changing needs and demands, simply because they are not “fenced in” by legal and institutionalised prescriptions and provisions. Life management skills, social-communicative competence, ambiguity tolerance and the capacity for problem-solving in team-based environments take on a prominent role in non-formal learning settings, unfettered by the subject content overload that increasingly



afflicts school curricula. No less importantly, non-formal education in the youth sector is firmly rooted in commitment to democratic and solidary values, which are explicitly reflected in the purpose and content of many of its learning activities. This in turn supports processes of renewal in European civil society, in particular through encouraging critical reflection on the forms and meanings of youth participation in democratic polities and through equipping young people to approach cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity positively.

Despite the evident need for and the clear benefits of non-formal educational provision in the youth sector, levels of political and budgetary commitment remain comparatively low. Competition for a slice of the available resources is predictably fierce, whilst widespread lack of clarity about what constitutes good quality provision and practice can make it too easy for “star-spangled cowboys” to ride in and rush the corral. To argue that non-formal learning and its outcomes are not susceptible to measurement and assessment as understood and practised in formal education and training environments and courses is indisputably legitimate, but it does not follow that the non-formal sector and its practitioners do not bear the responsibility to find valid and reliable means to demonstrate the learning value of their work. Moving towards building an evidential basis to support the further development of non-formal education in the youth sector was the rationale for holding the research seminar that led to this publication. These conclusions therefore focus on mapping what kind of evidence currently exists and what kinds of gaps remain to be filled in the future.

Defining non-formal learning remains a subject of discussion and debate in the youth sector, although the common ground between different standpoints is now probably greater than it has ever been and is probably more significant than the divergences between them. An explicitly values-based definition is of great importance both to practitioners and to youth NGOs and their representative associations. For many, drawing a firm borderline between non-formal/informal education on the one hand and formal education and training on the other is seen as both essential and desirable. Concerns are regularly voiced – including at the Partnership Programme’s research seminar – that introducing notions of quality criteria, quality standards, evaluation and recognition instruments are likely to “formalise the non-formal” and thereby neutralise or actively counteract that which makes non-formal learning a distinctive and positive alternative. The sector’s actors and its political and professional supporters have worked long and hard to stake out an independent terrain, so the prospect of incorporation into a large-scale education and training “empire” is bound to look uninviting and unrewarding.

The very openness, flexibility and frequently innovative nature of non-formal learning practice are among its most valuable characteristics; the question is, then, how to ensure that these remain firmly anchored as the sector “trades up” to gain added value over and above what it already offers and achieves. In order to trade up, the sector’s value must not only be visibly recognisable to those beyond it, but also become internally transparent and communicable. Sharing of good practice has increasingly taken place within the community, but much more is needed to provide a rich evidential basis for explication and valorisation. External observers unfamiliar with the way in which curricular and pedagogic principles are translated into and expressed in non-formal educational practice have difficulty to decode and understand what is happening and why. Søggaard Sørensen’s analysis (this volume) of rituals in non-formal learning practice and



their underlying codes of meaning is an example of how research-based approaches can contribute to greater transparency. Kovács' account (this volume) illustrates how non-formal learning methods could be professionally documented in the future, whereas García López' (2005) course documentation for ATTE (Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe) serves as an example of a comprehensive curriculum description that begins to build a serious archive of resources for the sector. For its part, Rzyeva and Carsten's contribution focuses more closely on the "why", by detailing the political impact of non-formal learning in transformation societies. Such work should and must continue, but there are gaps to be bridged

- in explicating the skills and competences that participants in non-formal education courses have acquired and refined;
- in designing and trying out transparent ways of recording and evaluating learning outcomes; and
- in developing agreed quality criteria for provision and professional practice that are open to monitoring and evaluation.

Skills and competences acquired informally in everyday life can be documented and assessed, as contributions to this volume show (Ajello and Belardi; Gerzer-Sass; Preißer). Such tools hold much promise for recognising the capacities and achievements of members of disadvantaged, marginalised and excluded groups. Follow-up and longer-term impact studies would provide the evidential basis for their social and economic benefits. This is a task that the YOUTH Programme with its National Agencies could very usefully undertake in the coming years, and most especially in practical alliance with initiatives that have already been launched in specific national contexts – of which examples are also offered in this volume (Azzopardi; Morrey and Drowley). These examples both relate – in different ways – to the higher education sector, by trying to "lock on" non-formal learning principles and experiences into courses that lead to formal qualifications. At a European level, the Partnership Programme on Youth Worker Training between the Council of Europe and the European Commission has supported a pilot advanced training course (ATTE) and a short-term training course on European Citizenship. Currently, work is being undertaken at the Council of Europe to develop a youth workers' and youth leaders' portfolio, which, in order to create a viable tool for assessing their skills and competences, must also develop occupational profiles for them.

Perhaps the most obvious research and development gap lies precisely here: What does it mean to be a "non-formal youth trainer"? How does this differ – if at all – from being a "youth worker" or a "youth leader"? What is the relationship and where are the significant differences between voluntary (unpaid) and professional (paid, whether employed or self-employed) practitioners? This is compounded by the fact that there is no clear picture about

- the overall pattern of initial and continuing or further training courses;
- which courses focus on which skills and competences;
- the level of experience and expertise that is assumed by a given course;
- the extent to which training provision matches the needs not only of potential participants but also of course funders and stakeholders in general;
- the quality of particular courses and the agreed standards to which they should adhere;



- what would be appropriate and effective evaluation of learning outcomes in such courses;
- where individuals seeking to enter the field as paid professionals might seek vocational and career guidance on what they need to do and what opportunities might be available under what kinds of circumstances.

All this is reflected in the fact that the occupation of “non-formal youth trainer at European level” is under-recognised and its practitioners enjoy relatively poor employment and working conditions. The commitment of the field as a whole to humanitarian and solidary values militates against vociferous complaint on these grounds, since many young people are much worse off and those who choose to work in the sector are not likely to prioritise materialist values. Nonetheless, the uncomfortable side of the coin also needs to be addressed. Who should be able to work with young people on highly complex and sensitive topics? What counts as bad practice and what ought to be done about it when it takes place?

It is certain that some progress will be achieved in the coming years. At a European level, there will be a push towards the recognition of non-formal learning with the possibility of a European Council Resolution on this topic in 2006. Under the latest Partnership Programme in the youth sector between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, launched in early 2005, the European Centre for Youth Policy will take shape as an internet-based knowledge-management-based databank on non-formal learning¹. This resource can and will be stocked by material from throughout Europe that already exists, but it can also be fed from applied research projects funded through European research, education, training and youth programmes, including directly through the Partnership Programme in the youth sector. Plans for a specialised “Bologna” Master’s degree in youth studies, on a European partnership model, are also underway, which should facilitate a positive interface between the non-formal learning sector as an occupational location and formal qualification routes.

- What needs to be done in applied research terms?
 - Non-formal youth training as an occupation and profession
 - What is a non-formal youth trainer as an occupation and as a professional community of practice, and how might it best be “marketed”?
 - What are the anchoring skills and competences of non-formal youth trainers, and how can these be appropriately and effectively transmitted, acquired and evaluated – and against what kinds of standards?
 - What do the youth sector’s diverse stakeholders want and need from non-formal youth trainers and from non-formal learning for young people (= conducting a 360°evaluation of provision and demand), and what needs to be done to respond proactively and critically?
 - What does the terrain of current provision at European and national levels look like (= a mapping exercise), and what are the navigation routes towards competence and qualification in the sector, for whom, where and under what circumstances? How can tailor-made options of equal value and recognition be devised and linked up with each other?
- Non-formal learning in the youth sector as a distinctive field of educational practice
 - What constitutes the conceptual and definitional “skeleton” of reference for the sector (= creating a European glossary)?



- What are the central guiding ethical, philosophical and educational principles of non-formal learning in the youth sector, and how does the activity and its purposes differ from (for example) social work with young people?
- How are non-learning curricula structured, what is their informing pedagogy and where can distinctive didactics be identified that serve specific purposes?
- What is the economic scale of the sector as a labour market segment and what are the economic benefits of the work it does for society as a whole?

Endnotes

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Andreas Carsten currently lives in Berlin and works as a freelance trainer, writer and consultant for national and international NGOs, foundations, political parties, companies and governmental institutions. Between 1998 and 2000 he worked in the Brussels headquarters of the European Youth Forum with responsibility for formal and non-formal education and training affairs. His areas of specialisation



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Lynne Chisholm holds the Chair for Education and Generation at the Leopold-Franzens-University of Innsbruck in Austria and is Director of its Institute of Educational Sciences. A widely published specialist in education, training and youth affairs in comparative and intercultural context, she is also regularly involved in undertaking European and international studies and reports in these fields for the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the European Economic and Social Committee, European Parliamentary committees and the United Nations. After two decades as a university teacher and researcher in Northern Ireland, England, Canada and Germany, she previously worked between 1996 and 2001 at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture in Brussels on prospective policy development, followed by three years at CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training) in Thessaloniki (Greece) working on lifelong learning, combining this with research professorships at the University of Newcastle (UK) and then at the Danish University of Education in Copenhagen, Denmark. She is also actively involved in international professional associations and policy groups, including holding elected office [1998-2002 President of ISA RC34 (Sociology of Youth)]; 2003 nomination to the scientific advisory board of the German Youth Institute; 2004 nomination to the scientific advisory board of the Austrian Youth Research Institute; honorary lifetime member of the Nordic Youth Research Society.

Helen Colley, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Fellow at the Education and Social Research Institute at Manchester Metropolitan University, and Fellow of the National Institute of Careers Education and Counselling. Her research on mentoring for young people (published as *Mentoring for Social Inclusion*, RoutledgeFalmer: 2003) has won two national awards. She co-authored a theoretical review of formal, non-formal and informal learning for the Learning and Together with colleagues, she recently prepared a literature review study of non-formal and informal learning for the Learning and Skills Research Centre, on which part of her contribution to this collection is based. She is currently studying learning cultures and transitions through the learning life-course as part of a project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council's Teaching and Learning Research Programme.

Steve Drowley, who started his professional life as a teacher of French in South London, is today Quality Standards Team Manager at the National Youth Agency (NYA) and also works for Ofsted as an Additional Inspector of Youth Services. His specialist fields are workforce development, education and training standards, the youth services Quality Mark, quality assurance and quality processes, innovation and development in youth work. He moved to the NYA following five years as Head of Youth Services for Devonshire, having earlier been County Training Officer and Coordinator of Voluntary Youth Services for Devon and being a youth worker in London and Torquay. At the MYA he places particular importance on validating youth work programmes in order to advance the development of a workforce fit for working with young people in the 21st century.



Manuela du Bois-Reymond is Professor emeritus of education and youth sociology at the University of Leiden (NL). Her research and publishing interests are focused on family relations, youth transitions into the labour market, and new learning theories, all of which she considers in intercultural-comparative perspective and on which she has published widely. She is a member of the European Research Group EGRIS, actively contributes to the European debate on youth policy and is a highly respected expert on youth and education affairs. She recently completed a study on the links between formal and non-formal education for the Council of Europe (published in March 2003 and downloadable at http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/Youth/ST2003_non_formal_education.pdf).

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Christian Glahn holds a Master's degree in educational sciences and informatics, having studied in Berlin and Innsbruck, where he is now working on his Ph.D. He is research assistant at the university's Institute of Educational Sciences. Previously he also worked as researcher at ARC Seibersdorf Research GmbH as well as for advertisement and e-commerce companies in Athens and Berlin. His research interests are e-learning, knowledge management and ICT in non-formal learning environments. Alongside his academic work he actively contributes to and coordinates the development of open source software projects.

Bryony Hoskins is the Research Officer responsible for coordinating youth research in the framework of the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe on Youth. Thus she is responsible for organising research seminars and publications including this book and the seminar in which this publication is based. She was the creator of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy <http://www.youth-knowledge.net> and runs the Partnership European Youth Research Network. Previously she worked as evaluator for youth non-formal training programmes including the Youth Partnership Advanced Training of Trainers in Europe and for the European Commission SALTO training courses. Prior to this she completed a traineeship at the European Commission, Youth Unit. Bryony completed her PhD at Brunel University, UK in Sociology and Social Psychology where she first entered the European world of youth by attending a young researcher's seminar organised by the Council of Europe in Budapest.

Erzsébet Kovács works as a trainer and educational advisor in the field of non-formal education and as a trainer of cultural tourism managers at the Budapest Business School. She has a background in adult education and worked at different levels of Hungarian youth structures for several years, from local youth work up to the governmental youth department. Since 1992 she has been invited to be part of educational teams for long-term training courses for European youth projects. She has also been involved in training the trainer programmes, training courses of multipliers and in-service teacher training activities at European level. She is President of the Hungarian association of trainers, educators and researchers active in adult education and lifelong learning.



Liz Morrey is the acting Chief Executive of the Children's Workforce Development Council. A civil servant, Liz is on secondment to CWDC from the Department for Education and Skills. Her career began as a member of the Government Economic Service in the Departments of the Environment and Transport. She moved to the (then) Manpower Services Commission in 1985. She has held a variety of specialist economist and policy posts in what is now the Department for Education and Skills, including evaluation of the Youth Training Scheme, developing the Department's relationship with employer-led bodies in a range of sectors including IT, rail, land-based industries, animal care, road haulage; project managing the Connexions Summer Plus programme. Before taking up her post at CWDC in October 2004, Liz was on secondment at the National Youth Agency, responsible for taking forward a strategy to address recruitment, retention and training issues in youth work.

Rüdiger Preißer is now at Germany's Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB) in Bonn, having previously worked at the German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF) in Frankfurt and the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) in Bonn. Following university studies in sociology, economics and political science in Germany, the UK and the USA, he completed his Ph.D. in educational sciences in Berlin. His specialist areas of research are social stratification and educational exclusion, the life-span and educational development and sociology of the life-course. This led to his recent R&D projects, both national and European, to develop, monitor and evaluate instruments for the recognition of non-formal and informal skills and competences, especially for the low-qualified and the unemployed.

Sara Rzayeva studies at Cornell University in New York for her masters in social studies at the department of development sociology. Analysing social changes in the former Soviet Union as these areas are transforming into market economies is one of her main interests. Azerbaijan, where Sara comes from, is a country rich with oil, caviar and ... refugees. Its economic progress, internationally marked by the opening of a new main oil pipeline, goes hand in hand with dramatic increases in poverty, rise of ethno-nationalisms and conflicts, enormous forced and voluntary migration, and a general transformation of cultures, societies and communities. Counteracting some of these developments and supporting others had been Sara's motivation in working for Azerbaijan's Open Society Institute and still is her motivation to pursue her studies and continue working for, with and about Azerbaijan and particularly its youth.

Marianne Søgaard Sørensen spent many years working, studying and travelling in France, Poland and the Faeroe Islands. She gained her MA in European Ethnology at the University of Copenhagen in 1998 and worked in the Development Centre of Adult Education in Copenhagen. Her specific field is research within the non-formal educational sector, especially the Danish Production schools. In 2002 she was appointed as Research Officer in the Department of Pedagogical Anthropology at the Danish University of Education in Copenhagen. Among other projects, she worked on the evaluation study of the ATTE course in 2003.

Mark Taylor (<http://www.angelfire.com/mt/Roomfire/mt.html>) is a freelance trainer and writer. Involved in non-formal education since he was six years old, his life was changed by a simple one week youth exchange at the age of 14 with his hometown's twin in Germany. Without that experience he says he wouldn't be here today. In terms of European youth work, he has contributed to developments in intercultural learning (see the *all different-all equal* campaign's Education Pack,



now in its second edition) and training youth workers and leaders (he helped set up the Balkan Community Youth Work degree course – accredited by the University of Jönköping – and he was a member of the team which created and ran the Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe [ATTE] course which lasted for two years). He is a founder member of the Coyote training magazine editorial team; animator of Cedefop’s Young Researchers in VET virtual platform and is currently working on developing the European Portfolio for Youth Workers and Leaders. Born in Brazil, he has lived in Britain, Germany, France and Serbia and has recently moved to Brussels with his family.



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