

A pathway for discovery under the label of non-formal education

written by:

Ljupco Efremov
(efremov@mail.com.mk)

student at:

University of Ss "Cyrills and Methodius"
Skopje,
Republic of Macedonia

5 August 2002

Content:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Introduction | 3 |
| 2. Benefits of the “non-formal education” | 4 |
| 3. Contrasts between “formal” and “non-formal” programmes | 5 |
| 4. In conclusion | 6 |
| 5. References | 7 |
| 6. Notes | 8 |

Introduction

Non-formal education is defined as any organised educational activity outside the established formal system - whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity - that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives.(Coombs with Prosser and Ahmed 1973). Therefore, non-formal education is linked with community groups and other organizations despite formal education that is linked with schools and training institutions and informal education which is linked to interactions with friends, family and work colleagues. The distinction made between them is largely administrative.

Non-formal education became part of the international discourse on education policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It can be seen as related to the concepts of recurrent and lifelong learning. Tight (1996: 68) suggests that whereas the latter concepts have to do with the extension of education and learning throughout life, non-formal education is about 'acknowledging the importance of education, learning and training which takes place outside recognized educational institutions'. Fordham (1993) suggests that in the 1970s, four characteristics came be associated with non-formal education:

Relevance to the needs of disadvantaged groups.

Concern with specific categories of person.

A focus on clearly defined purposes.

Flexibility in organization and methods.

In many northern countries the notion of non-formal education is not common in internal policy debates - preferred alternatives being community education and community learning, informal education and social pedagogy.

Benefits of the “non-formal education”

The non-formal education provides many aspects of cultural learning. It creates active learning environment, that no teacher could ask for better. The organization of non-formal schools is based on democratic principles in decision making processes, so that's why it is recommend it to anyone who looks at learning as a lifelong pursuit.

Non-formal schools are place where a lot of interesting, nice, outgoing, easy-to-talk-to people can be met. It is a place where great friends can be made – which may be the best part of all. There is a live discussion on different issues about the world around – about what happened before, what is happening today, where things are going and about differences. As the discussion among participants expands and their individual knowledge and self-world expands. They share different values, ideas and philosophies and in the same moment they create new (common) ones. New perspectives are discovered about people, society, institutions, traditions, objects and about others everyday routine of life. From all this participants of this schools gather a great experience through mutual dialogue. Actually, perhaps that is the primary aim of the college. It is a unique possibility to start down a path of lifelong learning – learning that will travel with you to any destination and through any career or life style change.

About the topic, there is a need to emphasize common issues. This can be seen as one of the ways to locate problems that could occur in the years that follow. Also another benefits that can be achieved is the accent of the common approach on finding possible solutions which will result with building close connections between activists, organizations and groups that are doing good things for the society and the culture.

Described as above, the non-formal education becomes an eye-opener, and starts to serve as a new different pathfinder that creates knowledge through teaching and transparent dialogue.

Contrasts between “formal” and “non-formal” programmes

Simkins (1976) analysed non-formal education programme in terms of purposes, timing, content delivery systems and control, and contrasted these with formal educational programmes. The resulting ideal-types provide a useful framework - and bring out the extent to which non-formal education initiatives, while emphasizing flexibility, localness and responsiveness remain located within a curricula of education (in contrast with those forms driven by conversation).

Ideal-type models of normal and non-formal education

| | Formal | non-formal |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Purposes | Long-term & general Credential-based | Short-term & specific Non-credential-based |
| Timing | long cycle / preparatory / full-time | short cycle / recurrent / part-time |
| Content | Standardized / input centred Academic Entry requirements determine clientele | individualized / output centred practical clientele determine entry requirements |
| Delivery system | Institution-based, isolated from environment. Rigidly structured, teacher-centred and resource intensive | Environment-based, community related. flexible, learner-centred and resource saving |
| Control | External / hierarchical | self-governing / democratic |

(Adapted by Fordham 1993 from Simkins 1977: 12-15)

In conclusion

The notion of non-formal education has been a significant feature of policy debates around education. It has drawn attention to the importance and potential of education, learning and training that takes place outside recognized educational institutions. There are questions about usefulness of the notion when looking at the process of education.

Educational curricula and policies have concentrated on narrow definitions of politics (especially as state-related). Recently, social scientists have stressed work and civil society as domains of life-experience, and explored links between traditional forms of political participation and the personal, private domain. Learning theorists also have emphasised 'situational' or 'contextual' influences on learning. However, the implications of such perspectives for learning have been little explored. The output of the non-formal education is to equip adults with attitudes, skills and behavioural patterns which will enable them to participate actively as equal citizens in the “Global Village”, and also to conduct tasks that will identify and develop frameworks which will be used in planning educational interventions.

Today education suffers from many diseases. In this conditions, when education is faced with strong task to built cosmopolitan community which will positively and constructively meet the challenges of global complexity and interconnectedness, a hidden doubt occurs between the choice of “formal” or “non-formal” education.

Concerning this doubt between formal and non-formal education there is a simple solution that exists in shadow. It's a well-known fact that every medallion has two sides, good and bad, so we should make advantage of this and use the good sides. So that's why I think it's important to have balance in life and to combine these two ways of education because that's the only way to top-notch education.

References

Coombs, P. H. with Prosser, C. and Ahmed, M. (1973) *New Paths to Learning for Rural Children and Youth*, New York, USA.

Fordham, P. E. (1993) 'Informal, non-formal and formal education programmes' in YMCA George Williams College *ICE301 Lifelong Learning Unit 2*, London: YMCA George Williams College.

Simkins, T. (1977) *Non-Formal Education and Development. Some critical issues*, Manchester, UK.

Tight, M. (1996) *Key Concepts in Adult Education and Training*, London: Routledge.

Notes:

This text is based on the authors experiences and knowledge that were gathered during his attendance of two non-formal courses: “Transylvania Community College” (Romania, june-july 2001) and “Schools for Europe” (Danmark, december 2001-january 2002). The author is also a member of the “Association for Community Colleges” (ACC). ACC is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Danmark. It organizes courses in non-formal education known as “Community Colleges”. Its aim is to stimulate a wide debate on common questions and issues shared by the Europeans.

The web-page of the ACC is:

www.acc.eu.org