



LE GOUVERNEMENT
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG
Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration

Non-Formal Education with Children and Young People

Learning in out-of-school settings





Formal education: which is the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded educational system from primary through to tertiary, higher education institutions

- *Informal education: : which is the process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience, such as from family, friends, peer groups, the media and other influences and factors in the person's environment*
- *Non-formal education: which is organized educational activity outside the established formal system that is intended to serve an identifiable learning clientele with identifiable learning objectives.* (4)

What is non-formal education?

Work with children and young people in day care centres, in youth facilities or in youth organisations, where it deliberately pursues learning goals, is characterised with the concept of “non-formal education”.

With much of what occurs in caring for children or in youth work, the learning function is not immediately recognisable. But even activities like spontaneous playing, simply being together in the group or eating lunch can be used to promote social skills and to teach social values and norms. Youth organisations make it possible for young people to practise democratic processes and become socially active. In youth centres, prevention and counselling work is additionally provided. In that way, these contexts offer a specific space for gaining experience and experiences and insights and serve the general advancement of young people. With its own objectives and diversified contents, methods and ways of working, work with children and young people opens up a broad opportunity for learning.

Non-formal education thus becomes a characteristic element of the work of day care centres, youth organisations and youth centres since they are understood to be places of learning where planned pedagogical intervention takes place.

(4) According to UNESCO (*Youth, Education and Action to the New Century and Beyond*, Unesco 24 July 1998)

Contexts of non-formal education

Non-formal education is characterised by its own methods, approaches and fields of action. It can occur in different contexts and in varying types of activities. Formal, non-formal and informal education complement each other and mutually reinforce the lifelong learning process.

	School contexts (School, university, ...)	Out-of-school contexts (Out-of-school care, youth centres, youth organisations, clubs, public facilities)	Private contexts (Family, leisure, circles of friends, etc.)
Formalised activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School instruction - Academic lecture hours - Vocational training - Remedial help in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocational further training - Training courses in youth work (youth leader, further training, etc.) - Voluntary service ("Service volontaire") - Music school - Athletic training 	
Partially formalised activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School project work - School social work - School trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project work in the day care centre or the youth centre: theatre, role play, nature workshop, etc. - Involvement in a youth organisation - Private music school - Collaboration in youth parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homework assistance from parents - Museum visits - Attending concerts
Non-formalised activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer contacts and friendships in school - Playing in the schoolyard - Informal contact between teachers and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth contacts and friendships in clubs and associations - Being together in the youth centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talks with parents, grandparents, etc. - Hobbies - Play activities - Using computers

- Formal education
- Non-formal education
- Informal education

Table taken from the National Report on the Situation of Youth in Luxembourg



« Anescht léieren »

Features of non-formal education

Proceeding from the image of the “competent child and youth”, it is the task of pedagogical professionals to provide opportunities, to promote independent experimentation and thus make learning processes possible. Some characteristic features of non-formal education are listed here below.

- **Learning by doing.** The focus is on concrete doing such as assuming social responsibility and not learning theory or communicating via the teaching staff. Non-formal education is characterised by a large repertory of activities and working forms.
- **Process-oriented learning.** In non-formal education the focus is on the process. No pre-set degree is pursued and there are no curricula. In that way, the individual path to learning, the acquisition and collection of experience may be equally relevant for the acquisition of skills. Since there is no direct “time constraint” and no “pressure to perform”, the methods of non-formal education can be adapted to the learners and “several paths” or different learning programmes can be tried out.
- **Learning as partners.** Non-formal education relies on active methods of cooperation and on group-dynamic processes. “Educating yourself” is no lonely, isolated procedure. Self-education occurs in an interplay of children/young people as subjects and their social environment. Children and young people learn both from each other as well as with each other.



« *Zesumme wuessen a Verantwortung iwwerhuelen* »

- **Openness.** The openness of non-formal education leads to the necessity of constantly adjusting and re-evaluating one's own set of ideas and leads generally to a plurality of practices. Since both the contents as well as the results are open (but not arbitrary) such openness paves the way for the participants in the learning process to actively share in fashioning it: Children and young people are active co-designers of their own development and learning processes.
- **Learner-centricity.** Imparting and appropriating the learning content are dependent on the circumstances. Methods and objectives are geared in non-formal education to the particular participants and as much as possible adapted to their needs and interests. In this matter, modifications in the sense of setting new priorities can not only ensue in planning but in the course of learning as well.
- **Participation.** Shared responsibility and self-determination are both objectives of work with children and young people as well as also being important pedagogical working methods. As much as possible, decisions are made jointly with the children or young people. The involvement of children and young people in decision-making processes promotes democratic consciousness and commitment.
- **Voluntary nature.** The participation of the child in what the out-of-school care service has to offer is not statutorily mandated, but the parents can accordingly freely decide to take advantage of what is offered or not do so. This voluntary nature plays an essential role in the youth field since participation here is crucially dependent on the decision of the young people themselves.

Non-formal learning contributes to personality development, social integration and active citizenship. (5)



Fields of action

The focus in non-formal learning is on imparting social and personal skills as well as involvement in social and political processes. Even though the methods may differ, there are still many possible subject clusters that can be found in activities with children and youth work.

- **Feelings, social relations.** Keywords: Emotionality and interaction, sexuality, conflict resolution strategies
- **Body-awareness, motion, health.** Keywords: Perception of the body, motion, wellness, food, eating habits, health promotion
- **Gender-sensitive work.** Keywords: Gender identity, work with girls, work with boys, gender mainstreaming, role perception
- **Language, communication, media.** Keywords: Language acquisition, language skill, multilingualism, interpersonal communication, information and communication technologies, media learning, media skills, safer internet
- **Creativity, culture.** Keywords: Graphic and plastic design, music, dancing, theatrical play, theatre, film, photography, graffiti, literature, cultural learning, youth cultures
- **Environment, technology.** Keywords: Nature, ecology, sustainable development, experimentation, technology appreciation
- **Value orientation, democracy, participation, interculturality.** Keywords: Values and norms, children's rights, participation, democracy, self-determination, assuming responsibility, decision-making structures, political education, international mobility, intercultural competence, diversity, intercultural opening

(5) "recognise that non-formal and informal learning can enable young people to acquire additional knowledge, skills and competences and contribute to their personal development, social inclusion and active citizenship, thereby improving their employment prospects" (EU 2006: Resolution on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field).



« *Méi wéi Jonker just vun der Strooss halen* »

Quality management in non-formal learning

Quality management, as it to some extent already exists in youth work and as it is being phased in the out-of-school care field, is based on the following pillars:

- **Education and training of the staff.** General minimum standards apply in regard to the training of the staff. Regular participation in ongoing training courses is mandatory.
- **Concepts of the institutions.** The pedagogical work of the services is based on strategies that are being elaborated in accordance with a national master plan for learning.
- **Self-assessment.** The services reflect their own pedagogical practice and work on constant further development of their work.
- **External scrutiny.** The pedagogical work of the services is open to scrutiny by external experts. The latter regularly issue reports which, among other things, include suggestions for improvement.
- **Academic support.** An additional evaluation of the entire quality control processes by academic institutes as well as analyses of specific aspects of children's and youth work supplement the measures for quality development.



« *Méi wéi Kanner just versuerger* »

The changing children's and youth field

Both in the field of out-of-school care as well as in the field of youth work major changes have occurred in Luxembourg in recent years.

The supply of services for young children and out-of-school care services (crèches, foyers de jour, maisons-relais) was considerably expanded and could thus in barely ten years increase more than fourfold. This trend has continued and with the introduction of "chèque-service accueil" music instruction, sports activities and holiday camps were included in the childcare offer. While in the past the focus was on taking care of children, services for young children and out-of-school care services are now perceived as learning venues.

Many youth organisations arose with the idea of facilitating the learning experience for young people; in addition one of the priorities of youth centres is to promote the development of young people. For a long time now youth work has operated with the concept of education. In order to have more effect, in recent years quality control measures have been increasingly introduced into youth work and the range of functions of its institutions has been considerably expanded.

Education lasts a lifetime, and is not tied down to any particular institutional venues.



Our understanding of learning

Generally, learning means the dynamic process of a human being coming to terms with himself and his environment. Learning cannot be limited exclusively to formal processes taking place in schools and universities. Learning goes on in those institutions as well as in daily life and also comprises, besides the formal ones, non-formal and informal processes. Learning is not bound to a specific age but starts at birth, lasts a lifetime (lifelong learning) and is not bound to any particular venues.

There are three requirements placed on a modern concept of learning:

- Self-determination
- Participation in societal development
- The individual's assuming of responsibility ⁽¹⁾

Tasks of learning, education and childcare have nowadays been re-divided between the family, leisure time, childcare structures and schools: The intermeshing of learning, education and childcare as well as the vision of the “competent child and youth” thereby influence a modern and extended understanding of learning.

(1) Wolfgang Klafki, quoted from “BildungsRahmenPlan für elementare Bildungseinrichtungen” Austria



Learning is the comprehensive process of development and unfolding of those skills that make it possible for humans to learn, develop performance potential, act, solve problems and shape relations. Educating young people in this sense is not solely the task of schools. Successful conduct of life and social integration likewise build on learning processes in families, day care centres, youth work and vocational training. Even if the school is accorded a central status, learning nonetheless extends far beyond school. (2)

Learning venues

Since childcare, education and learning intermesh, modern school strategies not only see the school's tasks in the realm of pure teaching but demand a broad provision of learning options. Even day care centres do not define themselves exclusively as childcare structures and the concepts of day care centres increasingly invoke their own learning functions. They proceed on the assumption that an environment rich in stimuli in the out-of-school environment to a considerable extent promotes learning processes (observation, imitation, exploration, etc.). In youth work, learning has long been a central subject and it is therefore stressed that “non-formal and informal learning activities within the youth field are complementary to the formal education and training system, have a participative and learner-centred approach, are carried out on a voluntary basis and are therefore closely linked to young people's needs, aspirations and interests; by providing an additional source of learning and a possible route into formal education and training”. (3) Instruments for recognition of non-formally acquired competencies (Youthpass, attestation de l'engagement) document and show appreciation of the achievement demonstrated.

(2) *Bildung ist mehr als Schule - Leipziger Thesen zur aktuellen bildungspolitischen Debatte, July 2002*

(3) *Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Government of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field. (2006/C168/01)*

Work with children and young people stimulates learning, in other words, it offers opportunities for learning. In doing so, the interests of children and young people should be taken up and the youth worker or youth carer should provide support for them to take responsibility for implementing those interests. The focus is on self-determination. Children and young people are given support in formulating their interests and actively coming to terms with their environment.



The image of the child or youth

Children and young people are by nature curious and desirous of learning on their own initiative. An understanding of the “competent child and youth” is fundamental for non-formal education. Accordingly children and young people are seen as socially competent partners of adults and adults rely on their sense of responsibility and self-determination. Work with children and young people stimulates learning, in other words, it offers opportunities for learning. In doing so, the interests of children and young people should be taken up and the pedagogical staff should provide support for them to take responsibility for implementing those interests. In non-formal education, the process is a communicative and cooperative activity where children and young people, together with others, acquire knowledge. Children and young people are given support in formulating their interests and actively coming to terms with their environment.

In the youth field, the basic idea of the “young person as an active citizen” is added and the concept of “participation” is a core element of youth work. Here, participation of young people is not only an important goal but also the basis of the pedagogic approach.

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