

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION - THE CORE DIMENSION OF THE INSTRUCTIVE AND EDUCATIVE PROCESS

MOLDOVAN ELENA, ENOIU ROXANA, CIOROIU SILVIU GABRIEL, ENOIU RĂZVAN SANDU
Transilvania University of Brasov", ROMANIA

Abstract

We live now the important result of the educational activities' growth. Our study configure that in our time the new educational borders, extended to a new European vision, reach the non-formal education, by the values and principles regarding the building of all three features - body, spirit and nature. The formal education touch also the new quality indicators concerning continuous learning and other European criteria witch relate the complementary education. Acknowledging non-formal education as an essential part of education and stimulating children and young people to get involved in promoting different values and ethical principles: justice, tolerance, peace, active citizenship, respecting the human rights, all of these represent key elements which have determined the importance of elaborating a developing strategy.

Key words: new European vision, non-formal education, body, spirit, nature.

Introduction

1. The twentieth century has marked a turning point in the evolution of the formal and non-formal education concepts, the latter being even more commonly used in the international educational speech. Speaking from an European point of view, the initiative for promoting curricular and extracurricular educative activity belongs to the European Council, more precisely to the Council of Ministers, which has embodied its steps into the recommendations addressed for this particular field to the member states. The most relevant document is the Recommendation from 30th of April 2003 which mentions the effective direction towards the acknowledgement of the equivalent status of the non-formal education with that of the formal education from the point of view of the equal contribution to the young person's personality development and his/her social integration (2001, Joint Employment Report. European Commission).

The continuous education – informal and non-formal, as well as the yielding – is part of the political priorities package within a society of knowledge. The acquisition, the continuous updating and the increasing level of knowledge, skills and habits represent a preliminary condition for the development of all citizens as well as for their participation in all society's domains, from the active citizenship to the integration in the labor market.

The 2000 March European Council from Lisbon draws up the strategic purposes for Europe until 2010. The strategic objectives defined in these documents are meant to influence the development of the educational and yield systems around Europe during this decade. (2000, Lifelong Learning: the contribution of education systems in the Member States of the European Union. European Commission, Education and Culture, Socrates – Eurydice)

The quality and efficiency progress of these educational and yield systems within the European Union refer to: making the access to all educational and yield systems more easy for all the

people to fallow; broaden the educational and yield systems horizon to the world.

According to the conclusions mentioned above, The Minister of Education, Research and Innovation has defined the major purpose of the strategy: increasing the qualitative standard of formal and non-formal education by complementing them in order to value the pupils' potential and yielding as proactive European citizens (2000, Analyzing national politics in the field of education: Romania, OECD; 2002, Compass – A Manual on Human Rights Education with young people. Ed. Consiliului Europei.)

The developing strategy of the formal and non-formal activity designed by the Minister of Education, Research and Innovation starts form the assumption that formal/non-formal educational complementary approach assures a plus to the value of the educational system. Thus, one makes the best out of the defining role the education has in preparing all the children for becoming active citizens within a dynamic and always changing society, nevertheless contributing to the permanent process of improving the quality of life (2002, European Report on Quality Indicators of Lifelong Learning Fifteen Quality Indicators, European Commission.)

The wording of some clear and coherent objectives in the light of the European Constitutional Treaty regarding the importance of respecting the person's fundamental rights, such as the right to his freedoms, to democracy and equality, as well as the compression to the European educational standards, all of these represent the strategic base of the document in question.

Acknowledging non-formal education as an essential part of education and stimulating children and young people to get involved in promoting different values and ethical principles: justice, tolerance, peace, active citizenship, respecting the human rights, all of these represent key elements which have determined the importance of elaborating a developing strategy.

Through its specific forms, the non-formal educative activity develops critical thinking, moulds skills and stimulates the involvement of the young generation in the decisional act in the context of respecting the human rights and of taking social responsibility, thus constructing a certain symbiosis between the cognitive and the behaviorist components. Elaborating the Strategy is

determined by the necessity of propelling the actual non-formal educative system which is situated at an early stage of development, because up to this very moment there isn't a clear concept of non-formal education, there aren't any pre established efficient methods of recognizing non-formal education and a stable financial mechanism.

Acknowledging non-formal education as an essential part of education and stimulating children and young people to get involved in promoting different values and ethical principles: justice, tolerance, peace, active citizenship, respecting the human rights, all of these represent key elements which have determined the importance of elaborating a developing strategy (2003, Implementation of the "Education and Training 2010" programme. Commission of European Communities, Bruxelles).

Through its specific forms, the non-formal educative activity develops critical thinking, moulds skills and stimulates the involvement of the young generation in the decisional act in the context of respecting the human rights and of taking social responsibility, thus constructing a certain symbiosis between the cognitive and the behaviorist components. Nevertheless, the approval and the implementing of a national strategy regarding non-formal education:

- will establish the complementary connection between all three types of education (formal, non-formal and informal)
- will integrate the non-formal educative activities in the action plans of education and young generation
- will coordinate the process of efficient using and professional yielding of the human resources within the non-formal education domain
- will establish a clear financial mechanism of the non-formal educative activities for the nongovernmental organizations specialized in the field in question, depending on the configuration of the beneficiaries' needs
- will ensure non-formal educative activities according to the qualitative standards and unique mechanisms so as to provide quality and efficiency in the social and educational services

Non-formal education offers a set of necessary social practices useful for every child, youngster or grown-up, complementing the other forms of education by making the best out of free time from the educational point of view and by promoting life experiences through the voluntary, individual or group involvement. Non-formal education will offer children and young people opportunities of choosing different activities depending on interests and preferences with an emphasis on developing skills for becoming active citizens. (2002, Education and training in Europe: diverse systems, shared goals for 2010.

The work programme on the future objectives of education and training systems, European Commission. Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Bruxelles). Furthermore, non-formal education will create better opportunities of developing organizational capacities, self suggestion, time management, critical thinking in taking a decision or solving a problem, assuring the respect for the fundamental human rights and the equality of genres.

The strategy follows the qualitative improvement of the absolutely necessary educational level in the context of complex changes within family life, work force, community, multicultural society and globalization. Good quality education presumes applying the diversity model through the differentiate approach, initiating different projects which involve pupils, faculty, educational partners, as well as parents, civil society, media and community.

In the Romanian educational system, the non-formal educative activity frame represents the space capable of answering the contemporaneous challenges of society, in the sense in which its flexible conceiving allows a continuous updating of the educational content and the didactical methods centered on the pupil, as well as a quality monitoring and evaluation of the educational results. Nevertheless, the specific characteristics simplify the implementing of the new didactical approach through which the pupil becomes a resource, a producer, an opinion leader, therefore an active participant.

To stimulate the cognitive, spiritual, interpersonal and social development, the curricular and extracurricular educative activity always bears in mind the need to adapt to the diverse and individual necessities of the children, to their potential and interest in knowledge. The contexts created by the diverse ways of materialization to what this type of education is concerned, that is projects, punctual manifestations, thematic applications, all of these offer the possibility for interdisciplinary, cross-curricular and trans disciplinary approaches, exercising life capacities and skills in an integrated manner, for example the holistic development of the personality.

The strategy emphasizes the importance of multiplying the positive experiences registered in the curricular and extracurricular educative activity and imposes the extension of the intervention space in the educational curricular process, in order to make the best out of all the educational content valences, all in the best interest of the child.

Principles and values

The curricular and extracurricular educative activity strategy is designed according to the following set of principles:

- the principle of priority education, as an assumed responsibility by the Romanian government
- the principle of equal access to education – according to the Constitution and the UN Convention on the Rights of Child, every child has the right to education
- the principle of intercultural
- the principle of activity continuance which has a permanent character and is based on the previous experience
- the formal/non-formal complementary principle

- the principle of organizational and informational flexibility
- the principle of decentralizing educational authority and of assuring the unity of the local educational steps through coordination
- the principle of global, unitary, multidisciplinary and integrate approach
- the principle of transparency while implementing the strategy with the participation of the civil society along with the governmental institutions as to accomplish the objectives
- the principle of cooperation – implementing the strategy is based on the institutional cooperation both at the national and the international level

Along with respecting and promoting these principles, the strategy is also based on the principle of education centered on values: respect,

non-discrimination, equality, solidarity, tolerance, truth, freedom, integrity, dignity, honor, sincerity, originality, trust, love.

In this context, the values ensure the frame in which the social norms are established and explained. They stand at the core of forming attitudes, of taking decisions and have a great impact on behavior patterns. It is important to identify the values of pupils, teachers and grown-ups in order to find a common denominator of the representative values of the community which can produce positive changes in the educational system at the efficiency level. Children, teachers and parents together can make the school a better place for all those involved in the educational process, can create an environment based on trust, communication, respect and flexibility (2002, Education and training in Europe: diverse systems, shared goals for 2010. The work programme on the future objectives of education and training systems, European Commission. Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Bruxelles.)

Table 1

A. Quality indicators for continuous education in Europe (2000, Lifelong Learning: the contribution of education systems in the Member States of the European Union. European Commission, Education and Culture, Socrates – Eurydice)

A Zone	- Functional literacy
	- Economical literacy
	- New habits in the educational society (adaptive habits).
	- Habits of learning how to learn (Instrumental thinking).
	- Habits of active/cultural citizenship; social habits
B Zone	- Access to continuous education
	-Participation to continuous education
C Zone	-Intervention in continuous education
	-Educators and Yielding
	- ICT in education
D Zone	- Strategies of continuous education
	- The coherence of supporting continuous education
	- Consultancy and orientation
	- Accreditation and Certification
	- Assurance of quality

Table 2

Types of complementary education

Domain	Cultural and artistic	Civic	Technical and scientific	Sporting
	Education for personal development The cultural and artistic domain Communication Media	Education for human rights Education for the rights of the child Health education Preventing school abandon Preventing human trafficking Preventing child labor exploitation Preventing child violence and abuse Promoting equality of chances (non-discrimination disadvantaged groups)	Education for personal development The technical and scientific domain Communication Media	Education through sport

Types of education	Multi and intercultural education Folklore, popular art Romanian and foreign culture and civilization	Multi and intercultural education Romanian and foreign culture and civilization European studies	Ecological education Protecting the environment Ecotourism Tourist orientation Agro tourism	
	Education for peace	Education for communitarian development Communitarian development Voluntary		
		Global education (projects)		

**B. The European validation process for non-formal and informal education
European criteria of validation**

The Copenhagen Declaration, November 2002, points out the necessity of a common set of principles through the validation of non-formal and informal education with the purpose of ensuring a greater comparability between the habits from different countries and at different levels. From the continuous education Communication (November 2001), one sees that the main priority is the valorization of education emphasizing the need for mutual education in Europe. In the other European consecutive documents one signals the pertinent idea that the development of the official validation methods of non-formal learning experiences has been identified as the key result which makes the education more attractive and more relevant for the individual. This new hint of educational politics is taken into account by the Norwegian and Irish initiative at the informal Conference, June 2004. The initiatives of these European countries reflect a powerful European moment which exists in the particular zone of validating education within a society. The most important elements, which can be shared by all the European countries, are those related to the continuous education (2003, Quality Education for All (EFA) and Action Plan (document UNESCO). UNESCO Regional Seminar “Quality Education in Multiethnic Society”, Resort facility “Carpathy”, Mukachevo, Ukraine).

Contextualizing and operating non-formal education on medium and long term

Relating the participation in the European space to what the non-formal and informal education is concerned, the combined procedure of soft and hard – validation related to the evaluative assurance of quality to the respective voluntary and the validation of the non-formal and informal education in relation with secondary superior education and yielding – would lead to the elimination of the territorial and social disparities,

would reaffirm the tradition regarding non-formal and informal education in the Romanian society starting with the modern period.

The infrastructure is possible by setting up a new national agency and developing a new reference national frame for non-formal and informal education, program which is based on lifetime learning and quality indicators; by specifying the domain of the non-formal and informal education from the European validation point of view: in relation with the formal education and yielding the yielder, in relation with the work force, in relation with the voluntary activity; by creating, multiplying and diversifying the opportunities for non-formal education, both in schools and society, depending on the beneficiaries, young people and grown-ups, such as: work stages, distance learning, house learning, summer schools, etc.; by identifying and increasing the voluntary potential and the financial sources for the non-formal education on a local, national, regional, European and international level; by the local financial sustaining of the actual non-formal education infrastructure (clubs and children workshops, community centers, popular universities); by enlarging the TIC scholar infrastructure and by opening the TIC service offer to the local community; by identifying and enlarging the active networks and partnerships, by involving the informal educational factors of social connection: family, mass media; by educating and cultivating voluntary work, by taking opportunities and consecutive risks derived from school and society projects; by correlating the school activity with the actions of the nongovernmental organizations, social, philanthropic and religious services, in the sense of the contemporary European practice; by recording and transferring the good practices and the assumed participation exercises in the societal experience and the positive attitude.

In a nutshell, a vision of context and infrastructure includes:

- the reassessment and coherence of the relation between the educational politics vision, the allocation of funds and the long term strategies;
- the quantitative allocation and the optimization of quality regarding human and material resources destined for non-formal education

- the adequacy, the efficiency, the distribution on temporal units of the allocated resources (segmental developing plan)

References

- Analyzing national politics in the field of education: Romania, OECD. 2000
- Lifelong Learning: the contribution of education systems in the Member States of the European Union. European Commission, Education and Culture, Socrates – Eurydice. 2000,
- Joint Employment Report. European Commission, 2001
- Compass – A Manual on Human Rights Education with young people. Ed. Consiliului Europei. 2002
- Education and training in Europe: diverse systems, shared goals for 2010. 2002, The work programme on the future objectives of education and training systems, European Commission. Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Bruxelles,.
- European Report on Quality Indicators of Lifelong Learning (Fifteen Quality Indicators). European Commission, 2002
- Implementation of the “Education and Training 2010” programme. 2003, Commission of European Communities, Bruxelles.
- Quality Education for All (EFA) and Action Plan (document UNESCO). UNESCO Regional Seminar “Quality Education in Multiethnic Society”, Resort facility “Carpathy”, Mukachevo, Ukraine. 2003