

IN A

NUTSHELL

Non-formal
education

Practical Manual

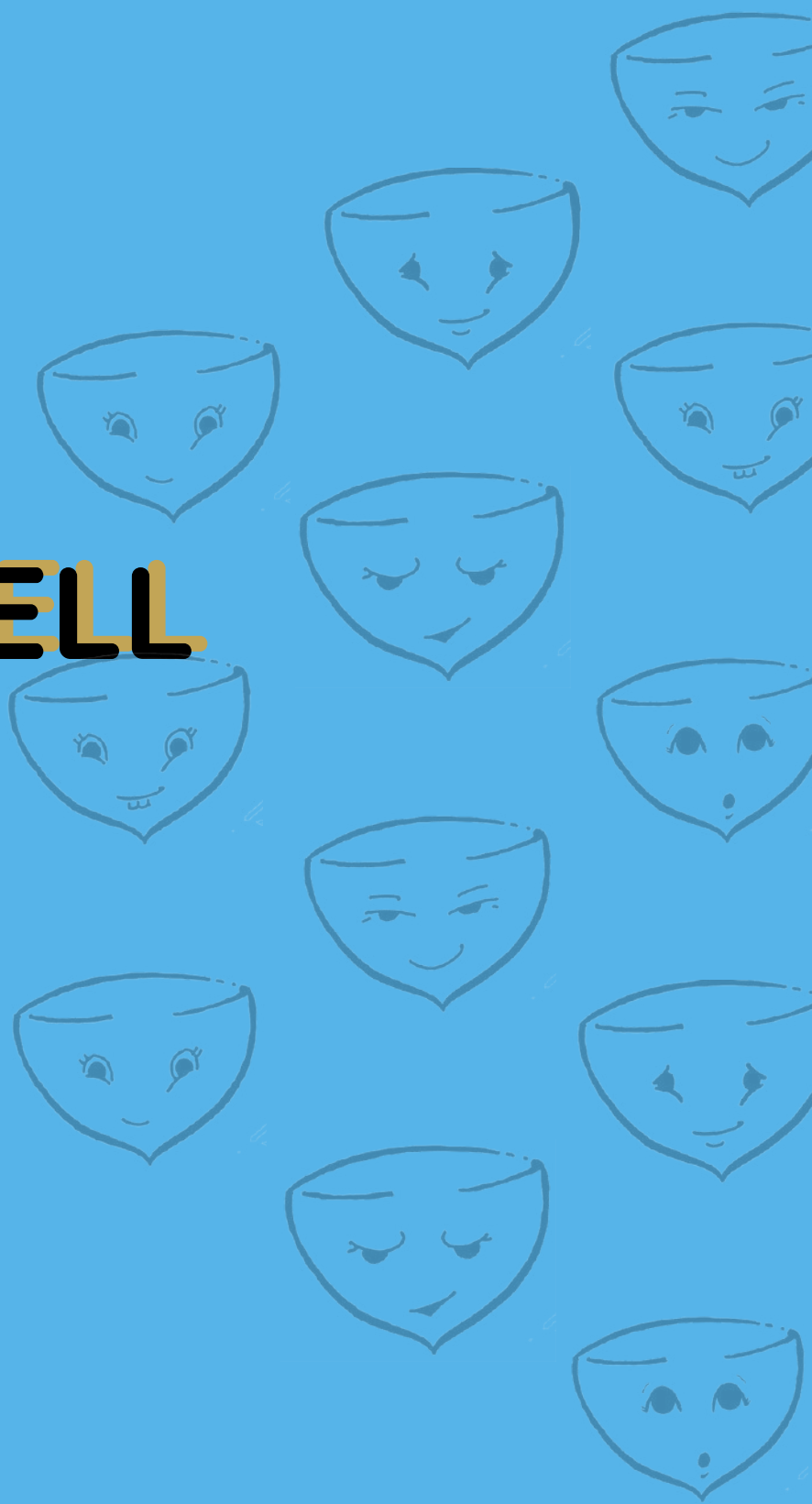
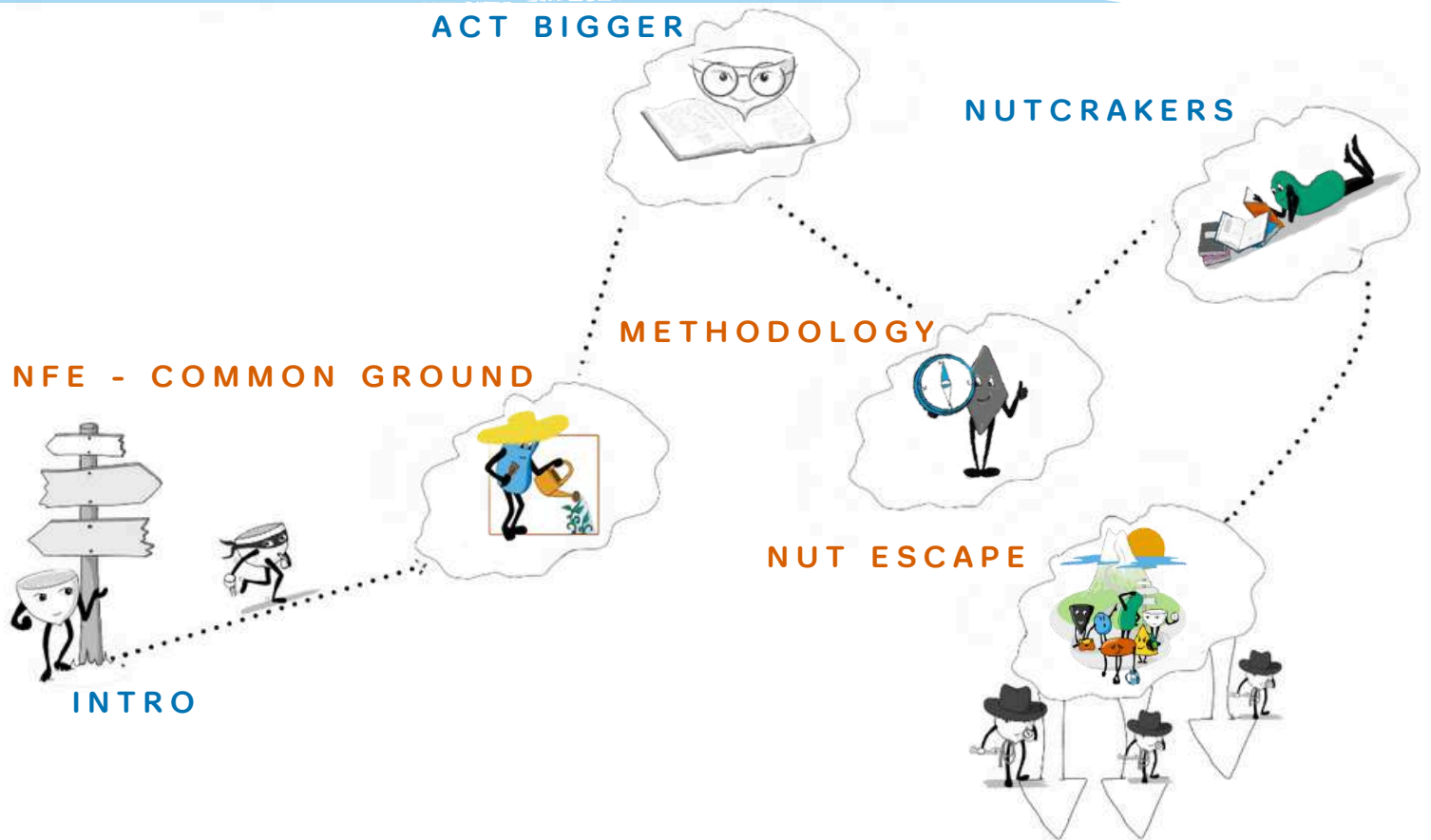


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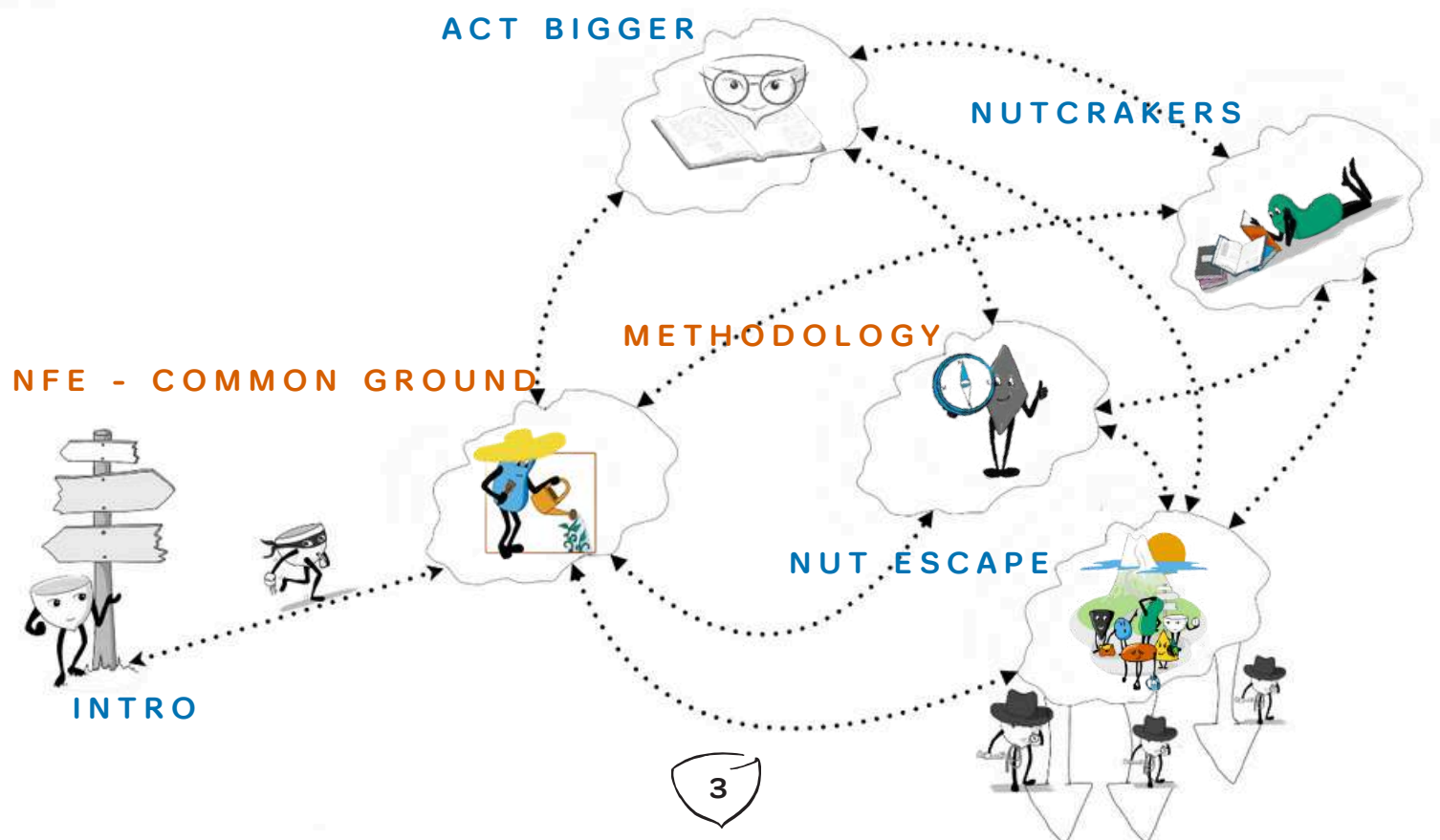
This manual is built in a dynamic structure and does not require a reading from the start to the end. You can explore it in different possible ways (see Intro : how to crack this nut manual?).

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NutReading path - Linear



NutReading path - Go to page



NutReading - Draw Your path

ACT BIGGER

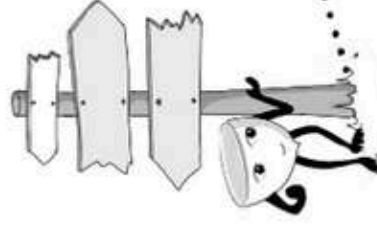


NUTCRACKERS



4

NFE - COMMON GROUND

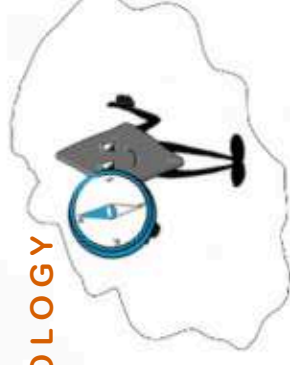


INTRO

NUT ESCAPE

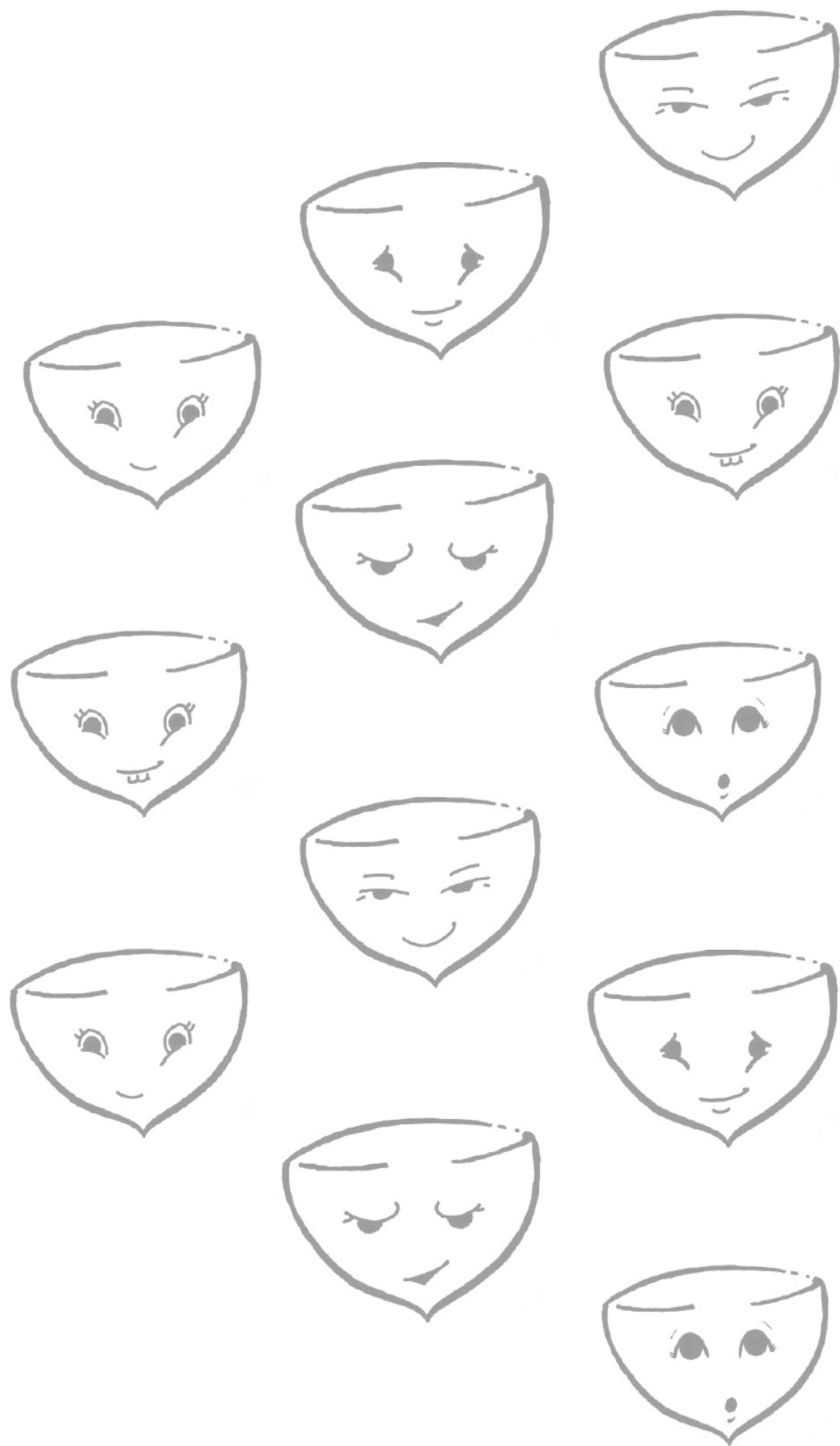


METHODOLOGY

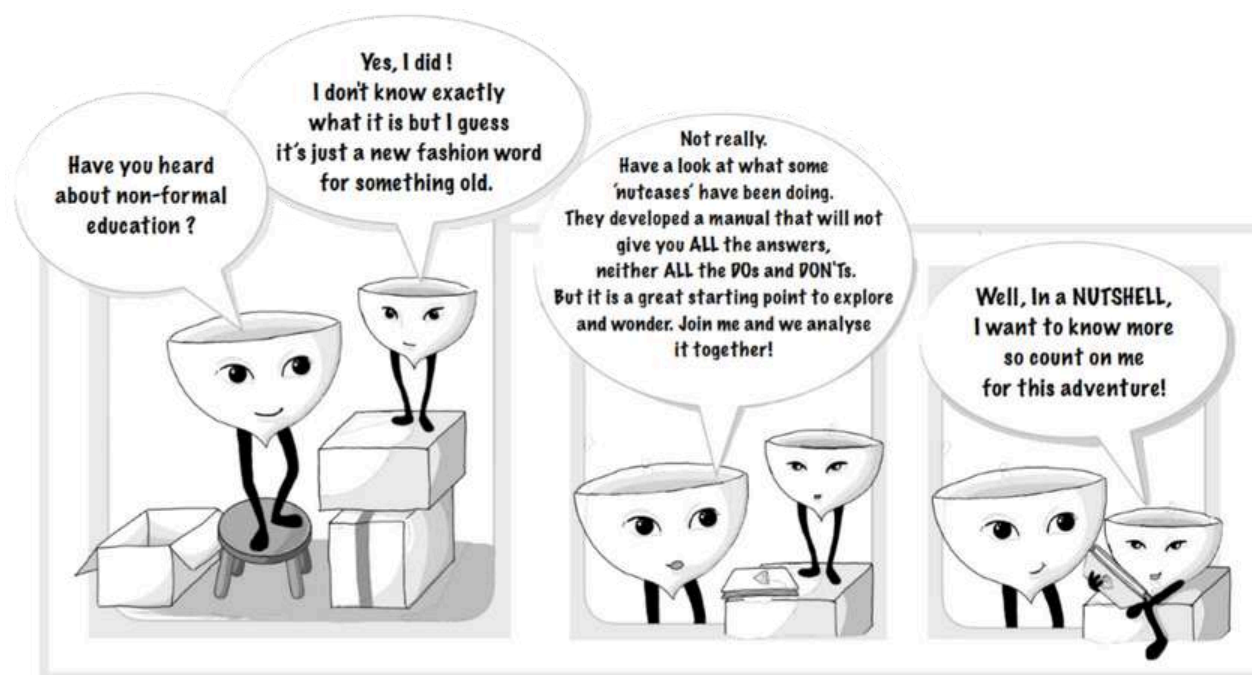


NUT ESCAPE





INTRODUCTION



How to Crack this nut manual?

With this manual, we invite you to enter and explore the universe of non-formal education (NFE). In our many encounters to define what the “IN A NUTSHELL - NFE Practical manual” would be, we reached the conclusion that much of what we display here can “open many new boxes”.

We aim for this manual to be accessible to everyone, regardless of the level of experience in the field of non-formal education (NFE) or the role and interest in this area. Whether you are a volunteer, a youth worker, or a politician, feel free to extract what resonates with you. Similar, you can navigate through the chapters in a way that suits you, without following a strict chronological order. Everyone has the flexibility to build their own path through the different elements of the manual based on personal preferences and needs.

In the process of reading IN A NUTSHELL you will find elements that will support you on this journey, by bringing some clarification, some different perspectives and points of view.

The NutStories – these are real-world examples from our own experience that support the information covered in each chapter and subchapter. To better comprehend the implications or applications of the message expressed, they provide a practical and concrete illustration of the theoretical content that has been delivered. Examples on pages 47 to 74.

The NutCrackers- This manual was initially thought for newcomers in the field of non-formal education. But we realised soon, that even if we might be working in the field for a while, there is always space for debating, learning and challenges. For this reason, we introduced the NutCrackers: special chapters which interlinks to other chapters and subchapters. If you are curious, or you feel the challenge, or just because you need...feel free to crack the nuts!

The NutEscape - Sometimes looking for answers only leads to more questions . This could sum up the content of this manual. But for someone who is starting to understand what non-formal education is and can be, it might be frustrating not to have answers, guidelines to follow or suggestions.

The NutEscape is a 'safe zone' where we share answers from our perspective of the challenges presented to you throughout this manual. Similar to the 'rescue page' in an escape room game.

Important note

This is not meant to be an academic study, but the result of our different experiences, knowledge basis and highlights from our personal practice.

A Nutvisual Identity

Welcome to IN A NUTSHELL journey! Our commitment to inclusion extends beyond the narrative itself to the fabric of its presentation. To ensure that every reader feels appreciated, we've taken special care in the design elements of this book.

We've chosen a palette that considers colour-blindness, supporting the narrative. Additionally, we've selected fonts with careful consideration for dyslexic readers, understanding that the journey of words can be different for everyone.

Images and drawings are also supporting the readers in giving a different point of view, or being a metaphor, a suggestion or an emotion.

Happy reading!

Our colours

The colours chosen for the design of the manual take into consideration the different kinds of colour blindness. Some people may have trouble seeing the difference between certain colours and shades or perceiving the brightness of colours differently. Based upon research, we also follow in this manual the research recommendations to increase accessibility to everyone who wishes to take the full experience from it.



Our typography

To facilitate reading for everyone, we took into account the use of dyslexia friendly fonts.

We compared different letter fonts such as Omotype, Dyslexie font and OpenDyslexic.

Both of those share the same basic features; they use thicker lines at the bottom part of the letter and accentuate differences between similar characters (b and d, p and g and q). Another feature is the larger ascender, the portion of the lowercase letters, such as k, b, d, h, t, above the body of letters a, c, e, m, n, o, r..., and finally, the equal size of uppercase and lowercase letters.

Design Elements



What's best than a bit practice to give a bit of spice to all this reading and thinking? Every time the Nutshell notebook and pen appears means that is time for a more practical exercise.



Every time you see paintbrushes throughout the manual it means that we, the authors, consider that this part of the text deserves extra attention, being highlighted.

note

Of course, this manual had to bring the “old but gold” post its. When found in this manual they intend to add information that is presented on the text!



Examples help us many times to better understand information or to integrate it in a more practical way. We have a lot of them throughout the manual. Find them always with the Nutshell symbol on the left.



The Nutshell notebook lost the pen and it's the readers time to have the opportunity to use it! During the manual we created spaces for the readers to write their own impressions and notes along the manual. When you find this box with the Nutshell notebook it's your time to comment on what you just read!



The Nutshell little devil joins this manual sometimes! Every moment that the authors propose a practical exercise that intends to challenge the reader to think outside of what is written. Usually, it's associated with the Nutcracker chapters of the manual.

In all the chapters the reader can find a rectangular banner(s). This highlights a summary of the text.



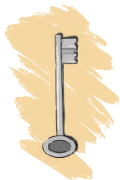
The Nutshell manual wants to be as green as possible. Content wise the reader can find some examples of green practices represented by the Nutshell plant symbol and for and brush stroke.



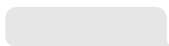
There are some resources where we based some of the content of this manual or that we advise to the reader to consult while reading. Throughout the manual every time we want to forward to an external resource, it will be represented by the Nutshell pen Symbol and QRcodes.



Questioning the questions and rhetorical reflections also have a space here. They are represented as a “thinking” Nutshell and two lines framing the question/reflection.



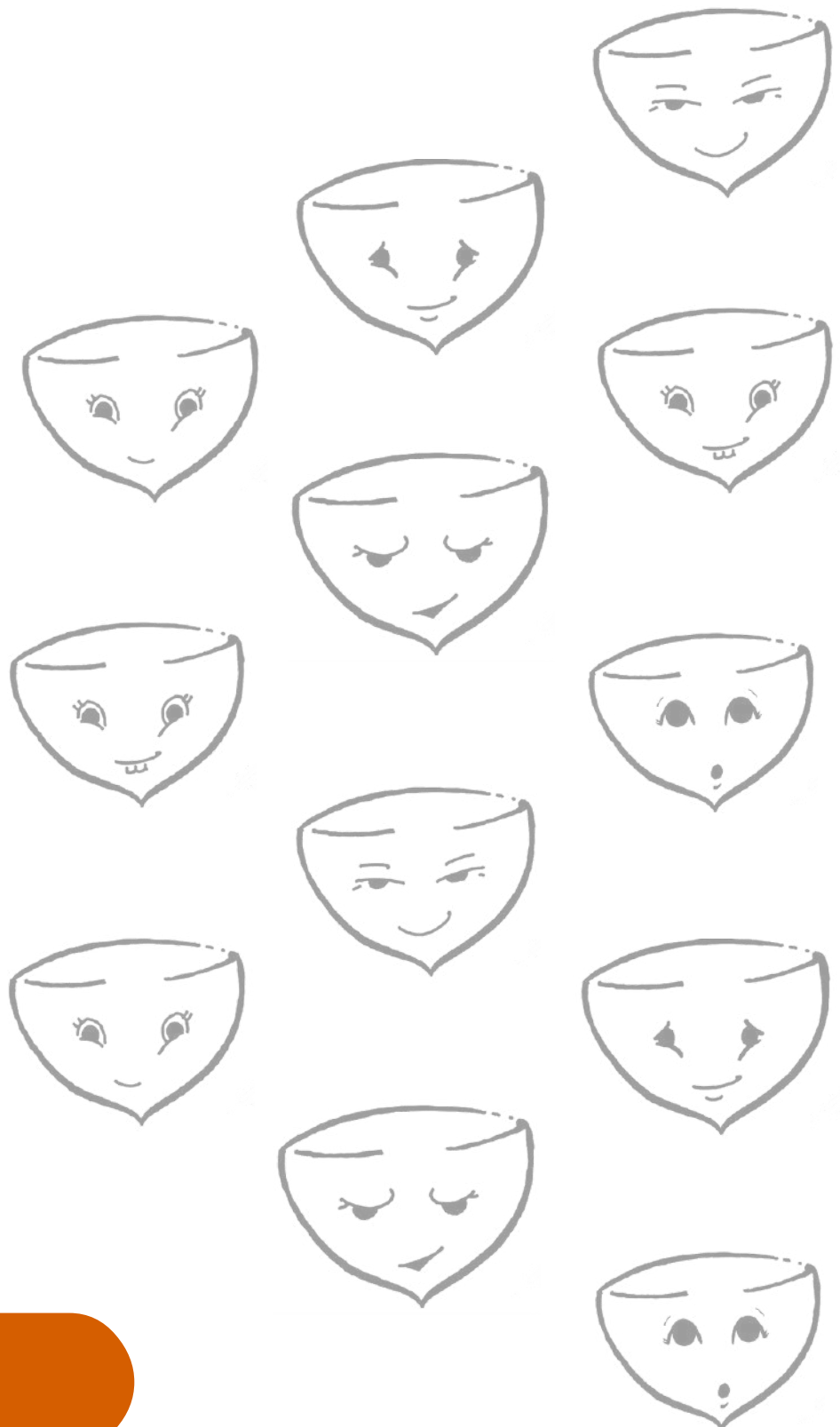
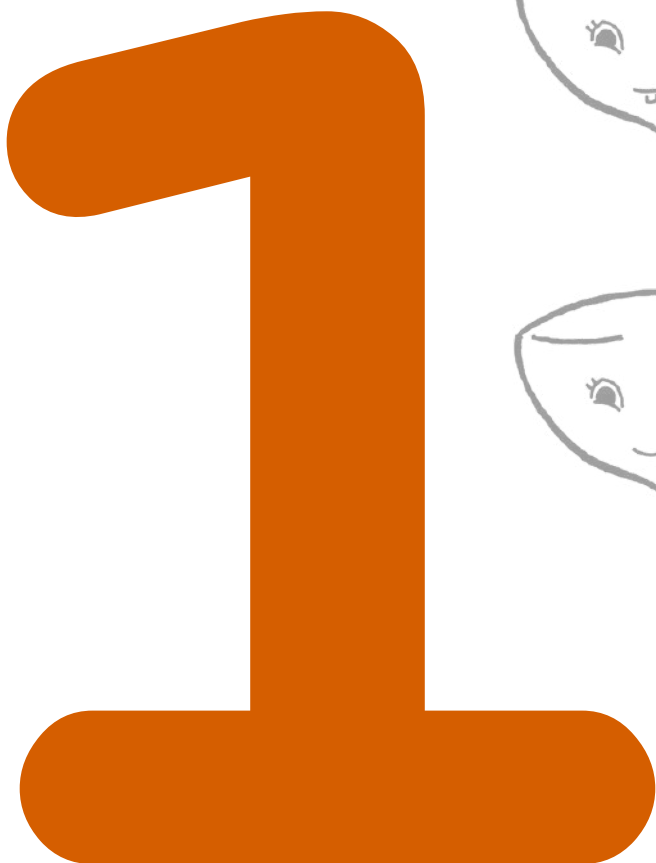
What are the important questions to consider when we apply NFE? For sure some of the readers open the book searching for this. Well, we gave our perspective, and it is marked with a key symbol and brush stroke.



Last, but not least a great of inspiration comes from great quotes. The reader can find some of them along the manual marked with a speech balloon highlighting them.

Non-formal education (NFE)

Defining some common ground



Welcome to the very beginning of this manual!

In this chapter we will tackle what we consider the basic elements related to non-formal education. Firstly, we share what is non-formal education (NFE) based on our experience. Then the reasons we believe that non-formal education is value based, what is its purpose and its intended impact. After that we jump onto the main characteristics of the non-formal education (NFE) and what are the roles of the non-formal educator. Finally we address recognition.



At the start of this adventure, let's check the difference between learning and education.

→ **Learning** a possible lifelong process to transform experiences into knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours. It can happen with or without the support of an external educator.

Education an intentional, structured process directed to achieve and reach set learning aims. This process happens mostly under the guidance of external educator(s). Additionally, it is the process that society uses to transmit its knowledge, skills, attitudes and values from one generation to another.

Let's start with your first thoughts about formal and non-formal education and informal learning. You can use the cloud of words as inspiration. Some words might fit in more categories, follow your spontaneous and first thoughts.

Age limit Mandatory A board game A trip to Italy
Any setting
Voluntary Certification Value based
Curriculum focus Game-based learning A museum visit
Not planned Grading No age limit
Not Structured Learner-Centred
Participative Structured Self-assessment



Formal Education	Non-formal education	Informal education

Well done! It is not always easy to put things in separate categories, is it?

In our practice there is a well-known grid that compares the difference between formal education, non-formal education, and informal learning. The reason we do not put it here is very simple: we believe that the field of NFE has changed quite a lot in the past decade and that some of the areas inside it are much more fluid, overlapping or even irrelevant. Nowadays we use a bit of formal, a bit of non-formal or informal and we constantly combine different approaches. Therefore, we believe that this grid division is a bit rusty, and not applicable in all the cases around us. Yet, if you want to know more about it, go to Annex on page 128.

Let's take non-formal education (NFE) together to the next decade

Nothing is static and borders are dynamic. For example:

- schools use increasingly more participative and interactive methods
- more schools employ also 'non-formal educators'

- more and more teachers take part in what we usually call “training courses on non-formal education”
- non-formal educators also apply formal evaluation criteria
- private businesses use both formal and non-formal approaches

Clearly defining “non-formal education” gets more challenging as the number of variations is growing.

For us, non-formal education is a structured process which supports conscious learning outside the formal educational curriculum. Even with a structured process, there is no guarantee what kind of learning participants will acquire. Non-formal educators define the learning objectives, but also participants may have other learning results besides the intended ones.

In our field experience, we have noticed a tendency to reduce non-formal education to specific settings like youth clubs and other non-governmental youth organisations. This is a big misperception. Non-formal education can happen anywhere, in any situation, on any topic, and with anyone. Are you curious to know why? You can explore this further in the chapter Act Bigger (page 47 to 74).



Take a break with a little challenge:

A few people have just visited a museum. Which of the following approaches would you ‘label’ as closest to non-formal education?

- You have organised the transport and the entrance to the museum. Each person received an assignment on what to discover in the museum. After the visit, you gather the group and ask them to take an online questionnaire related to what you have predefined they should learn from this museum visit. The people who have less than 6 points, can not join the next museum visit.
- You have organised the transport to the city for your group and dropped them in front of the museum, as a starting point for their free time in the city. Some decided to visit the museum. Afterwards, you asked how their visit went and all expressed it was a great, fun and even learnful experience.
- You have organised the transport and entrance of the museum. You agreed with the group that after the visit (maximum 2h), you take 30 minutes to talk about what they discovered.

You can write your opinion on a paper and then check our in the Nut-Escape annex on page 129.

Confused? If so, that is ok. Further in this manual we explore several elements which define non-formal education more in detail. Let's start with:

- It is value-based
- It has specific purpose
- It has certain characteristics

Congratulations! You just succeeded in going through the first few pages. Ready to keep going?

Important note

Non-formal education is not...

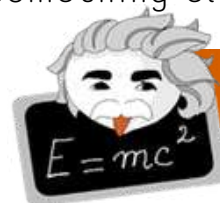
- A game
- A specific method
- A Type of activity

1.1. Values: the backbone of NFE

Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value.”

(Albert Einstein)

What's the reason we start with a quote of probably the most acknowledged physician in the world? Are the values connected to the formula of the 'Theory of relativity' or is it something else?



Is it about what we do, or what we value in the world around us?

To start: what is a value?



A value

a fundamental leading principle which guides and motivates our actions and attitudes.

A core value

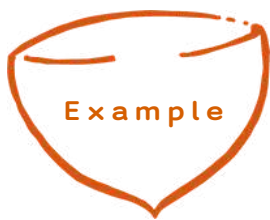
a highest priority value which serves as a compass.

A value set/profile

a selection of the main core values.

VALUES a beautiful collection of words. Greatly used during electoral campaigns or commercial profiling to justify products. We all have encountered slogans using words such as sustainability, solidarity, cooperation, and growth. Many among us read those slogans with a sarcastic smile, while thinking 'Yeah, sure!'.

Nevertheless, also in our educational sector we often 'use values' to claim what we stand for. Here is a question: are we different compared to those electoral and commercial campaigns? Are the values we claim to promote more than an empty shell? How truly do we translate those values in our daily actions and practice?



Youth centre X states 'participation' as a core value. However, the organisation board decides everything: the type of activities, where and when they are implemented. There is very little or no participation of young people in this decision making process. The implementation of the value 'participation' in concrete deeds is questionable.

For some, values are just words.

For others, they do really matter. And they should.



We invite you to engage in the following practical exercise. List the following 6 values according to your priorities as a person. Which is most important towards which is less important.

- Peace
- Independency
- Participation
- Empowerment
- Equity
- Solidarity

If you do the above with other people, the exchange of opinions leads to exciting discussions and different understandings.

NFE already has implicit values it supports through its approach

As non-formal educators ourselves, we support values which promote 'living better together', based upon values such as cooperation, respect, diversity, justice and peace.

NFE as such is not value-free from the very start. The basic characteristics described further in this manual incorporate a clear promotion of different values. If you want to know more about characteristics of NFE go to page 25.

The non-formal educational approach promotes (either implicitly or simply openly) following values:

Freedom the choice to engage in the proposed learning process or not.

Diversity the learning of each one is individual and unique, so is the learner.

Respect

towards the individual choice to which degree every learner wishes to engage within the proposed process.

The upper value clarifications are our interpretation of these values, within this context.

Are there good and bad values? For us, that is an individual judgement. Non-formal education can promote all kinds of values. The important conscious choice as a non-formal educator will be which values you stand for and how you interpret them. Non-formal education leads to learning, which eventually leads to a change or confirmation in the learners' mind, based on perceptions, attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviour.



Example

Through our non-formal educational activities we can either promote 'competition' or 'cooperation'. We can agree that both are absolutely different, if not almost opposite. Yet, both can be supported through non-formal education. If successful learning takes place, the learners will either become competent in cooperating, or in competing. The choice of the values we aim for, will therefore be crucial towards our intended impact. If you want to know more about intended impact go to page 23.

Define the values which your NFE-practice will support and/or promote.

With a swift (online) search, you might be impressed knowing how many organisations, from micro to macro level, have a value profile. This is a statement of the core values which define and justify their actions. As mentioned before: this is in theory, while in practice we can question if there is a real coherence with 'the spoken word and the concrete action'.



Notes for self!



Now: time for 'hands on'. Take a moment and reflect upon the below list of values as a practical exercise. We have limited the list of values for the sake of enabling a quick practical exercise:

- Choose 3 to 5 values which you believe that as a person or organisation you would stand for.
- Define what you mean with each value and formulate your own description and understanding of each value.
- The most challenging part: describe how your non-formal educational activities are in line with your chosen value profile.

Achievement	Commitment	Fairness	Inclusion	Partnership
Active	Community	Faith	Influence	Passion
Meaningful Work	Critical thinking	Fame	Service	Patience
Aesthetics	Competency	Family	Innovation	Peace
Appreciation	Competition	Freedom	Integrity	Persevere
Accountability	Compromise	Friendships	Joy	Pleasure
Assertiveness	Contribution	Fun	Justice	Reliability
Authenticity	Cooperation	Generosity	Kindness	Popularity
Authority	Courage	Goodness	Knowledge	Recognition
Autonomy	Creativity	Gratitude	Leadership	Regardless
Awareness	Adventure	Individualism	Learning	Religion
Balance	Curiosity	Growth	Love	Reputation
Beauty	Determination	Happiness	Loyalty	Resilience
Belonging	Dignity	Health	Meaning	Respect



Boldness	Efficiency	Honesty	Compassion	Respecting rules
Care	Empathy	Humility	Money	Responsibility
Challenge	Empowerment	Humour	Openness	Safety
Citizenship	Equality	Identity	Optimism	Security
Collaboration	Equity	Improve	Participation	Self control
Self esteem	Spirituality	Sustainability	Wealth	Trustworthiness
Self-care	Stability	Tolerance	Wisdom	Vulnerability
Self-Respect	Status	Transparency	Success	Solidarity
Inner Harmony



Notes for self!



Following guiding questions can support this exercise:

- In which activity-parts do you concretely identify your value(s).
- How do you measure the success of promoting those values? Which are the indicators?
- Are there any actions or elements (e.g. setting, behaviour) that might be in contradiction with these values? Can you identify those?

Ufff...!!! After all, now we know that values are not connected to the formula 'energy = mass multiplied the speed of light squared'. But rather with the ethical grounds of non-formal education as practice.



T-KIT
14:Value
based in
mobility
projects



Do you want to be challenged?

The thunderstorm of conflicting values"

The (non) coherence between personal and educational values, values of institutional funding organisations, political values and community. → go to page 111

**Connected to chapter 1
and 3**

"Value crash in our practice"

How inclusive are our infrastructures and actions, visible and sometimes invisible? Explore here more about dyslexic friendly and accessible publications, colour blindness, accessible structures, ... → go to page 113

**Connected to chapter 1,2
and 3**

"-----" [the self titled nutcracker]

While writing this nutcracker, we struggled with the title.

Different ideas popped up as we tackled topics like: colonial approach / dogmatism / imperialism / power dynamics / manipulation...

Read this nutcracker and then write the title you find the most relevant on the empty space → go to page 115

Connected to chapter 3

1.2. Purpose of NFE

Let's be clear: There are multiple purposes of NFE. Each non-formal educational activity is based on its learning objectives and desired results. It usually has many different layers and it is adapted according to the needs it wishes to answer and the target groups involved. Depending on the context, the purpose may vary from being very explicit and measurable to more broad and abstract. We see it as an agreeable purpose of NFE to simply provide conditions for learning which is connected to:

- ① Developing competences
- ② Complementing formal educational programs
- ③ Creating opportunities for personal and professional development
- ④ Creating empowerment opportunities for groups or individuals
- ⑤ Contributing to a better living together
- ⑥ Supporting life-long and life-wide learning



Can you match each of the following examples with a specific purpose from the list above?

- Overcoming prejudices towards refugees _____
- Learning how to knit _____
- Maintaining the attitude - "I can always learn something new" _____
- Improving your language competences _____
- Working with minority groups inside or outside their communities _____
- Participating in self-awareness and self-care seminars for managing stress and anxiety _____

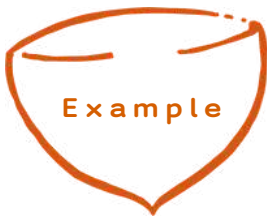
Can you give more examples by yourself?

What do we mean with "NFE creates conditions for empowerment"?

Different fields define empowerment in a variety of ways. However, it refers to a process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's own life and claiming one's own rights. Empowerment is viewed as a process and as a result. Looking broadly, it is a process by which people, organisations, and communities gain power. The focus of empowerment as a result is more on solutions than problems.

Important note

As non-formal educators, we do NOT empower people. We create conditions through which people can empower themselves. If we, as non-formal educators, believe we empower people, that would make us gods. Such thing not within our reach..



Example

“A little example from nature: you don’t grow a plant by pulling its leaves on a daily basis. That would be enforcing and at least counter productive as process and result. Creating the right conditions for the plant to empower itself (right soil, amount of sunlight, water etc) is creating the best way for empowerment opportunities. And even with the right conditions, it will still be the final choice of the plant to grow or not. With people, we see the same process.”

In other words the purpose of NFE is:

- ➔ To support each individual to act with knowledge of their own life and wishes/ to become aware of their effective power to act in their own life and in the society in which they live, and to assume their own responsibilities.
- ➔ To encourage people to be (more) an active part of society, to use the awareness regarding the society they live in, in order to build a common and shared reality together.

The purpose is also linked to the intentions, ambitions, motivation and dedication of the people involved - the learners, the educators, the community, etc. Through this, results can be expected or unexpected: what we planned and desired to achieve and what we could get in addition.

In short: NFE can have any purpose in general, but we, as authors, believe that we should be more ambitious. We have the responsibility to promote an understanding of the values which we stand for, to achieve a desired impact and a concrete social change.

1.3. Intended Impact

Now is the right time to ask an important question: what is our ambition as non-formal educators? It is inevitable that we ask ourselves what we want to achieve using non-formal education and what path we take to do so? Our strong belief is that NFE is meant to support positive changes on a micro level (e.g. our local communities) and on a macro level (e.g. fight for equality). Many among us claim to promote social change through NFE. However, the very concept for that particular 'social change' is not deeply explored and moreover it is vaguely described. It reminds us of a cynical and ironic project management law: 'One advantage of fuzzy project objectives is that they avoid the embarrassment of showing concrete results'.



We, as non-formal educators, believe that NFE is a powerful tool that can support the common well-being of communities and societies. Therefore it aims at bringing a positive social change (being free, having equal opportunities for all, being respectful and not discriminative towards others). Moreover, by the term "social change" we understand that as an outcome of our learning process (or those of the participants). There is a concrete change or transformation. On the other side, NFE can contribute to maintaining certain existing conditions or situations.

Without a doubt, we aim at achieving that on a broader level, beyond the individual one, hence, social change.

This social change and impact should be coherent and in line with the values that we stand for and that we promote in our practice through NFE. Our value profile/core values (if we truly believe in them) inevitably influence the social change we are fighting for.

We also need to be aware of our limitations as non-formal educators using NFE. Working with people, promoting our values, integrating them into our non-formal educational practice, translating it into learning activities, ... : even having the best of intentions, does not mean we will succeed easily.

For example, organising an activity for fighting discrimination towards refugees does not mean that we will fight the discrimination automatically in our community, nonetheless in our society. It takes a lot of systematic efforts in order to achieve this goal, and even if we'd like to believe we are almighty, we are not. Just because this success is dependent also on factors beyond us - how society and its institutions function, what is the governmental policy on immigration, how media influence public opinion... - all this while we are running our well planned NFE workshop on anti-discrimination.

This does not mean we should be discouraged, but it simply means we need to be attentive and realistic about how our work contributes to the desired impact.

In short: Our NFE practice inevitably is a way to promote or to fight for positive social change, in coherence with our values and beliefs. And the “positive” part addresses the impact on the community or the society. It is beyond the individual dimension and it aims at transforming the status quo which we define as problematic.

Let's make another link here:

This chain can lead us to think about impact. When we design an activity based on our experience, it is a recent concern among NFE practitioners that these activities/processes should have a way to be measured and to be proven as efficient and qualitative. This is a way to guarantee the claimed sustainability in the social field or social projects. However, throughout the process of writing this book, we went back and forward with the clarity of what impact means to us. We could agree that it is preceded by an output and an outcome.

It is the chain output -> outcome -> impact, in our perspective, that leads to change or confirmation.

A concrete example to illustrate the lines above:

Impact can be better understood through different synonyms: change, transformation, effect, footprint.

➡ **Intended impact:** 50 more trees on public spaces in our local community. This is a measurable impact.

➡ **Educational objectives:** creating learning opportunities that planting trees helps fight the climate crisis, different sorts of trees exist and influence the public spaces differently. Then how to plant trees, what are the benefits of more green spaces, also possible difficulties over time with roots infiltrating in existing underground sewers, etc.

➡ **Learning output:** learners have learned and practised the above objectives. Yet, at this moment, there is not yet an impact as such. For this, the learning outputs firstly needs to be put into concrete practice.

➡ **Learning outcome:** the learners plant 50 trees, using what they have learned (=output).

➡ **Impact:** 50 trees, which were not existing before, contribute to transforming the environment. A clear quantifiable effect, footprint, change.

True, this is rather an easy example. Quantifiable results are easier to measure. Yet, talking of impact, long term qualitative change could be also considered as an impact. For example, levels of 'respect', 'cooperation', 'happiness', etc. But this requires a clearly different approach of verification... but that's for later.



Time for a green intermezzo! Stand up, stretch a bit and drink some water. Today is also a good day to start some wildflowers for the bees, butterflies and all other pollinating insects. Why not use that empty vase which has been waiting outside for too long to plant the seeds. What's done today, starts giving results tomorrow.



1.4. Characteristics of NFE

After reading about value based dimension and the intended impact, we invite you to look into the next piece of the puzzle that makes non-formal education (NFE) unique.

Non-formal education has following characteristics:

Common Rules and Safety



In NFE, ground rules need to be defined in order to support the physical, mental and emotional safety of participants.

E.g. in the beginning of a learning process based on non-formal education, a way to establish a common ground is to support the group on defining how we wish to work together and how collective decisions will be taken.

Goal oriented and structured

A non-formal educational process needs to have a clear direction. For that, a concise goal or aim has to be fixed (what you'd like to achieve as a final result), as well as precise objectives necessary to reach it. Those need to be clear and transparent for the "organisers" as well as for the "participants".

Only after this, you build a structured process, with a coherent set and flow of activities to reach it.

Be aware that this order can be variable according to the dynamic of the group. E.g.: in a 5 day activity with the intention to build partnerships, the non-formal educator realises that the group needs more time to know each other better before engaging in a partnership, and changes the original day programme in order to answer this need. Yet, the aim and objectives remain the same.



Voluntary and based on the learners' free will



In general, participants of a NFE process choose voluntarily whether to engage or not in an activity. The process is openly offered to allow voluntary participation based on transparency. The learner takes responsibility by choosing whether to be or not to be a part of that process.

Traditionally, NFE takes place outside of schools or any other formal learning environments, but in recent years non-formal educational activities are sometimes happening in the same place as formal education. The learners are invited but never obliged to join, the participation depends on their own free will.



WARNING:

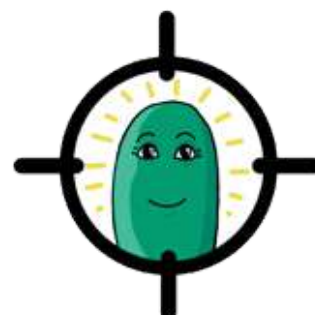
Consciously or unconsciously, you may fall into the trap of judgement

Learner-centred

In NFE, the learner's needs, interests and competences are crucial to the learning experience. The learner(s) are actors of the learning process, as such they contribute to it. The learning process is developed with and for the learners. The non-formal educator does not own the final learning path.

All participants of the learning process can support and be useful to other learners, the group is also a source of learning through peer-education.

In other words, we are not here to “be the main character” as non-formal educators, but to facilitate a learning process, in which each participant and the group reach their own conclusion.



**WARNING:**

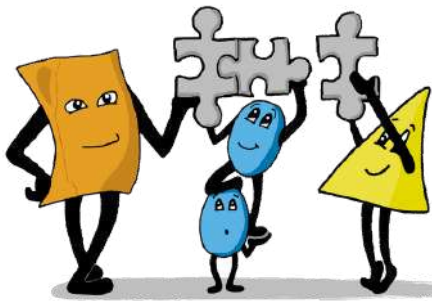
Don't forget that flexibility and adaptation are crucial and transversal, also in this learner centred approach.

E.g.: our language should be adapted according to whom we are working with. Often experienced non-formal educators speak with acronyms (YP, YW, PBA, TC, NFE...). In order to build a common language from the beginning of the learning process, we can co-create a glossary wall.

Participative

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember.
I do and I understand."

(Confucius)



Another relevant aspect of NFE is that it invites participation instead of imposing it. Participation is a core value in open and democratic societies.

Equal participation challenges oppression and discrimination, particularly of people with fewer opportunities.

Talking about meaningful participation, means that people participate and express themselves willingly. This might be challenging when people feel intimidated, feel that they do not possess enough knowledge to contribute or even the right to do so. How can we prepare ourselves for this? How can we foster an environment that promotes individual engagement?

We will never control all the factors. Even the participation we foster might not be completely free. But we can create the most suitable environment to enable meaningful participation and, most importantly, we should accept that everyone has the right to choose how and to what extent they are willing to participate in a given activity.

If you want to explore more, you can find resources here:



The Roger
Hart's Ladder
of Children
Participation



Amplify
Participation
of young
people in
Europe



Other models
of
participation



Have your
say!



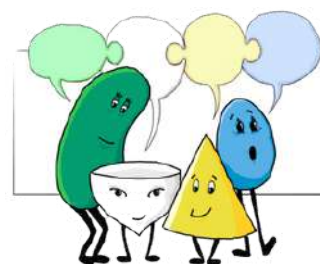


Self-assessed

One of the main characteristics of NFE is the self-assessment aspect. More concretely, it means that we provide time, space and tools for participants to reflect on their own learning experience. Enable and support them to define what they take from it (awareness of learning outcomes). One step further: to make participants think about what they will do with those learnings, and how they can transfer it to their daily life.

This requires an ongoing individual or group reflection, a process that leads to better results when supported.

Self-Assessment is essential, it makes a clear connection with change. It is a process that can promote change. This makes it a core element of NFE.



For more information on the connection between transformative learning and assessment we suggest :

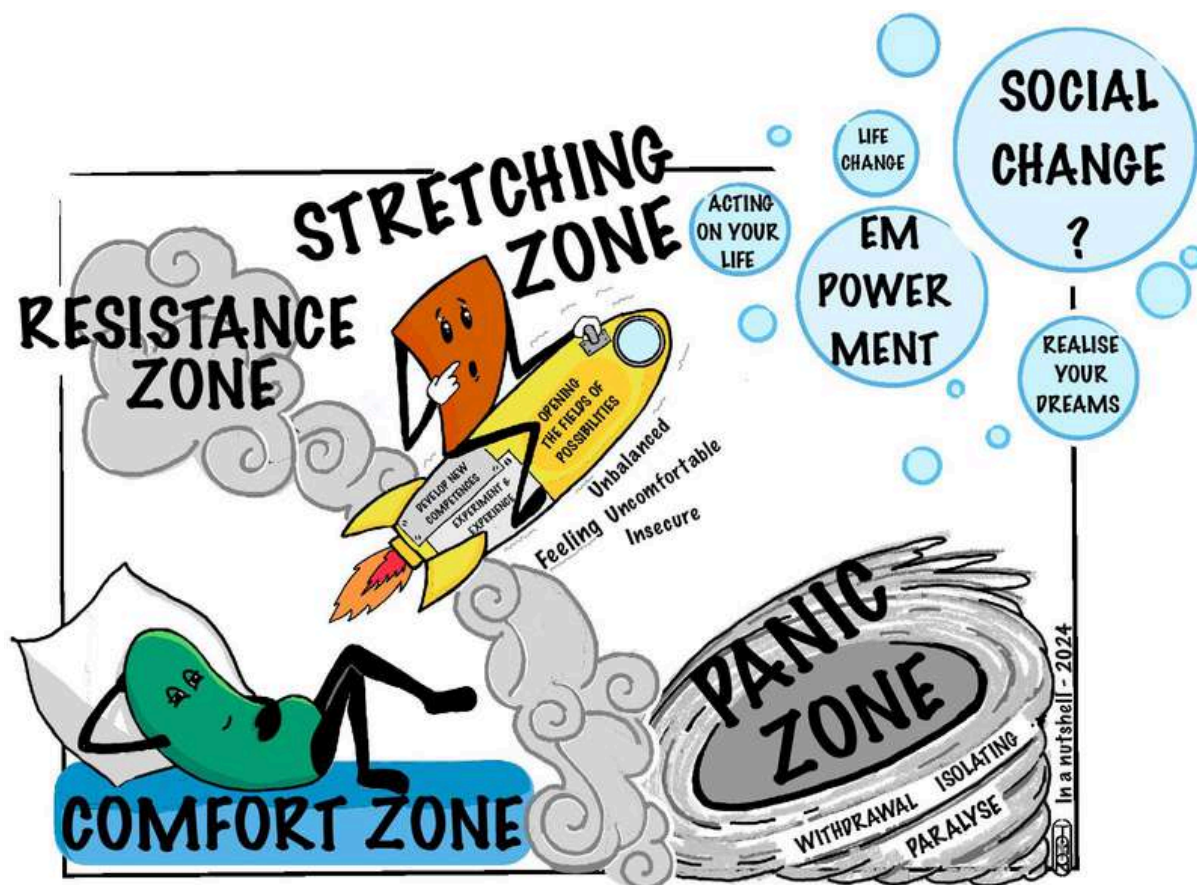


Emotion based learning

"I feel, therefore I am"
(unknown)

Emotions are the first reactions to life happenings. Often we tend to neglect them. In many forms of education, emotions are not an object of reflection or learning. In NFE we don't hide or suppress those emotions: we use them. A non-formal educator supports participants to acknowledge and understand their emotions, in order to enrich their learning process.

Emotions can foster, slow down or even block learning. Being aware of this brings us to an adapted version of the classic learning zone model.



The above drawing demonstrates the different levels of emotional challenges which we face when trying to learn something new.

There are, in a very simplified way, four zones: the comfort zone, the resistance zone, the stretching zone (or learning zone), and the panic zone.

In a learning process, a non-formal educator invites and stimulates the participants to leave their comfort zone, crossing the resistance zone towards the learning zone. At the same time avoiding the panic zone, where there is no guarantee for learning.

Comfort Zone:

This is where and when you feel safe, confident. You have a sense of control. Most of the possible learning which happens in the comfort zone is connected to informal learning (in our everyday life).

However, staying in the Comfort Zone limits you from developing new competences, and may even prevent you from growing. After all, what doesn't challenge us, doesn't transform us.

Comfort zone could be a physical space like your home, the community where you live, the favourite bench in the garden. But much more than such a space, this also (and mainly) relates to the topic or situation you deal with, e.g. violent communication.

What are comfort zones for you?



While you reflect about the comfort zones for yourself, use the same time to separate your waste: paper, glass, plastic, organic and so on. How much plastic do you put every day in the recycling waste? Would you be comfortable to start drastically reducing it? Even in details as example: using bar-soaps instead of liquid! Even for washing dishes you can find them. And they work very well!



Stretching zone or learning zone:

Before reading more on this zone, take a second for a small practical exercise:

➡ Stand up from the chair or the sofa and stretch as much as possible. Feel the tension, how muscles and joints are pulling, probably you even feel a little pain.

If you are now wondering if you would do the above little activity, you have moved towards the resistance zone. If you decide to move forward, a first step into the 'stretching zone' takes place.

The pain is the metaphor which could represent fear for some, insecurity or discomfort for others. You might start thinking about the obstacles or finding excuses to quit or not to go there. A hesitation that emerges when facing unfamiliar situations or surroundings.

This is the place where NFE wants to bring you. It takes you from what is familiar and safe to you towards the challenge to go further, beyond your known reality.

This is when and where the discovery and learning of new concepts, further development of competences and questioning of beliefs and attitudes happens. At the end of a NFE process and while assessing your learnings, you enlarge your comfort zone.

Coming back to our challenge at the start of this paragraph, it invites you to stretch and create positive results, yet: not to overstretch. Overstretching might really make your body and mind block, which can provoke panic.

Panic zone:

The Panic zone is where you can not deal constructively anymore with your emotions. Entering a panic state of mind, leads to paralysis and it directly affects the conditions of learning. The work as a non-formal educator is to organise the learning environment in order to avoid participants finding themselves in this zone.



Do you remember which are the characteristics?

Stop here, do not go back to the previous pages and play this riddle game. Fill in the missing letters that correspond to each characteristic we mentioned above. Let's finish this together!

_om_on _ _le and s_ _et_
G_a_ or_ _n_e_ a_d s_ _uc_ur_d
_ol_n_ar_ b_s_ _
L_a_n_r-c_n_er_d
a _ic_pa_ _ve
e _ _s_e_se_
E_ _ _io_ _ _ se_ _ea_ _in_

If you didn't manage to find the solution, check the page 129 on the Nut-Escape Chapter.

1.5. The roles of the non-formal educator

In the previous subchapters we have explored different important elements which define non-formal education (NFE). In a nutshell: the values which are implicit and explicit present in NFE, the social purpose towards the intended impact, and all of this based upon a clear set of characteristics. Yet, all of that does not happen fully automated or autonomously (by some mysterious sophisticated machinery). There is a crucial human touch which connects it all. This subchapter explores and deepens that important dimension in NFE.

Who is that person running the workshop or training course, or generally an educational activity?

When participating in educational activities, these are frequent heard questions:

- “What’s the reason they are asking us to do this now?”
- “How do they know what to ask us to do and what is the purpose of this activity?”
- “What’s the reason we are discussing these questions and not other ones?”

Observing our own practice, and the ones around us, we have noticed the confusion and uncertainty about the role(s) and the responsibility of the non-formal educator. There is even confusion about the way we call the person/people who are „in front of the participants” (or in front of the young people). Are they a trainer or a moderator? Aren’t they facilitators or probably they are hosts? When is someone a mentor? When do certain actions change the role from a trainer to coach or mentor and vice-versa?

And then - is the trainer facilitating this? Is the moderator coaching that? Are the mentors here to guide? Is the educator here to train? To whom it is up to decide?

For the outsiders and people who are not familiar with NFE, a non-formal educator might be seen as an educational expert. Or someone who combines all the “labels” mentioned above. And then we ask: are these “labels” in fact really combined, do they overlap, or are they actually and simply the same?

Others might see the non-formal educator as a game designer, a “conductor” of a funny orchestra, a game-player or something completely different: a source of universal wisdom (the ones that know it all).

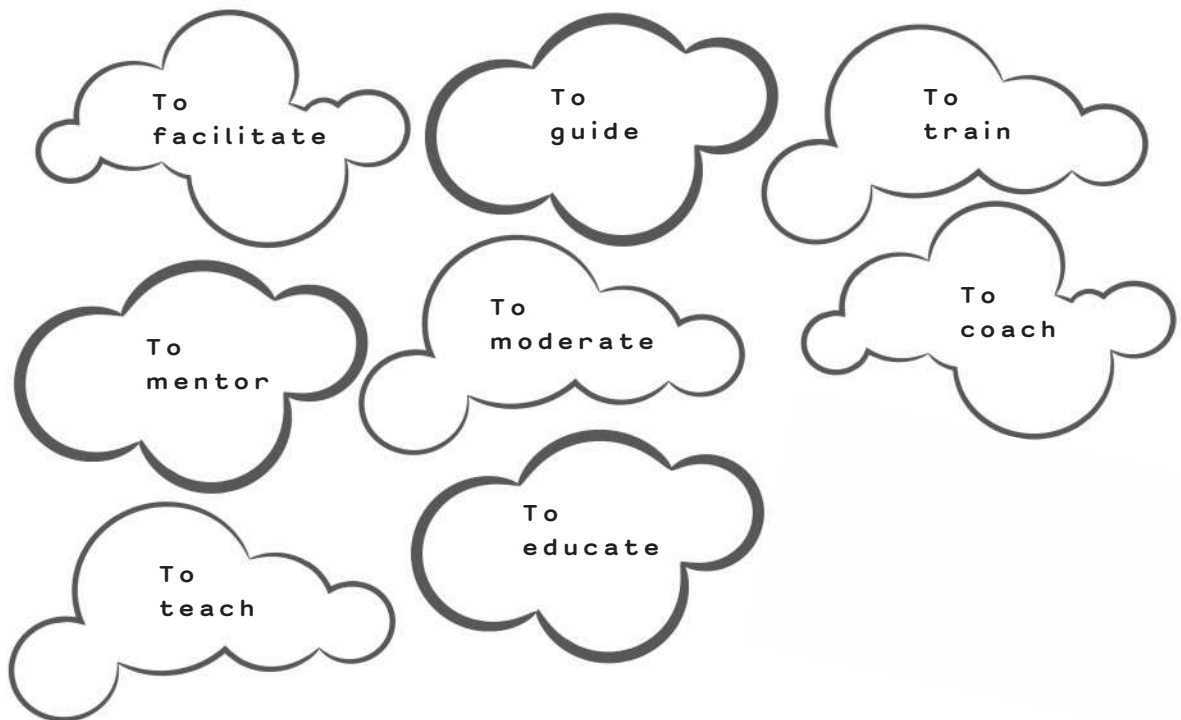


Notes for self!



Let's explore this more in depth, to search for and create a better understanding. Based on our own practice, understanding and experience, this is what we came up with.

We start with a short practical challenge: list your spontaneous understanding and thoughts. Write below as many different characteristics you can think of for the following actions?



Was it challenging to list your thoughts above? Which of the above actions were rather easy or difficult to define? Do the different verbs somehow give a hint of what characteristics suit some of the possible actions more than others?

Let's create more clarity. Our proposal for you comes from our practice. Firstly, be aware that the terms have different meanings and understanding in the different realities, and also languages. We are aware that the used terminology and the different ways of naming the action might bring different meaning and interpretation, considering the unique contexts of each of us.

In the universe of non-formal education, we suggest the term “non-formal educator” who covers these different actions.

For some this will sound a bit long or distant, abstract, or even create the impression of different levels in status and hierarchy, in the sense that a “non-formal educator” exists to “educate” the rest of us. This is not what we imply. Using the broad term ‘non-formal educator’ allows us to differentiate between different roles that the person or the team has at different moments of a non-formal educational process.



In a Nutshell: the non-formal educator is responsible for creating the conditions, choosing adequate approaches and methods to support the learning process of learners, traditionally not part of the school curriculum. The non-formal educator is aware that they can have different roles, and according to the role: a different intervention and level of responsibility.

The non-formal educator thinks of and chooses between many diverse ways to design, run and assess a learning process. There is also the responsibility for proposing the steps which the learner(s) are about to take, when to take it, how to support and safeguard their experience and how to encourage the learning as a result of the experience. In order for this to happen, the non-formal educator is the one applying a certain methodology. For this, they are capable of considering which learning methods should be applied and tools to be used.

Careful! With this we do not mean that the non-formal educator should be the “expert on everything” or “the flash drive trainer”(the one that has everything, about every topic in a flash drive upon demand). It’s the exact opposite, the non-formal educator should be aware of their limits, competences and the truth, being open with the target group about it and practising it.

For a more clear differentiation in the terms methodology, methods and tools, see chapter 3.

A non-formal educator has to be aware of own strengths and weaknesses in the chosen role and to understand the possible limitations of that role itself. Additionally, they must also be aware that the chosen role is much more than merely creating game experiences. Even though the learning might be rooted in a game-related experience and could be joyful and engaging.

Being dynamic and funny, or being more serious and static; being gamified and colourful, or being more strict and even obscure - the

non-formal educator is aware that supporting others' learning has various forms and shapes. They understand that sometimes learning can emerge within a group of people (during a learning activity), other times happens individually (one-to-one after the activity or by having a mentoring process).

Below are several elements which a non-formal educator needs to consider when designing and applying an activity, or integrating more activities into a comprehensive learning process. This in order to make the learning process fluent and better understandable for the learners.

Imagine you and your friend are going on a bicycle trip. Once you hop on the bicycles, even if you are not a bicycle-expert and not familiar with all the bicycle parts and mechanical elements, you know how to ride it... you have this inner trust that moving is possible and you and your friend will reach the final destination.



Now imagine that you and your friend are non-formal educators and you count on the bicycle, with all its mechanics, to bring you to the final destination. This is because you know that all bicycles' separate elements, once combined, will make the trip happen. Preferably in a pleasant and meaningful way, and in the best case: successful.

But just for a second, let's leave the trip aside, and look at the bicycle. Let's dismantle it into separate mechanical parts and link them to important elements of the non-formal educational paradigm.

Group-dynamics. This is the **bicycle chain** - the non-formal educator is knowledgeable, skillful and attentive towards group-dynamics and how the relations between learners evolve and how this is linked with various learning needs and intentions. All this makes the bicycle move. Non-formal educator uses the group-dynamics and creates conditions for competence development that makes the learners move forward in their learning.

Communication is the **wheels** - The non-formal educator is a competent communicator. They communicate openly, clearly and transparently, with a positive attitude. Without the wheels the bicycle will not move forward, even if the other parts are working perfectly well.

Attitude is the comfort of the **seat** - Non-formal educators are able to reduce borders and tension between people, but also are able to set limits. The seat is of great importance, especially when the trip is long. And you always might need to travel for a longer ride, and probably on a bumpy road. The better the seat, the better the ride.

Clear objectives of the educator are the **handlebars** - the non-formal educator has a clear view on the needed learning to answer identified needs. They choose the best way to make a left or a right turn along the ride, apply soft pressure on the brakes, make the ride smooth and not (too) shaky towards the intended direction.

Organisational capacity of the non-formal educator is the **bicycle frame**. This element helps the bicycle to remain all together. The non-formal educator has the experience and is aware how to take care of processes (learning and group processes), resources, people, space, time. etc. Without this holistic capacity the bicycle might be able to turn left, but some pieces could fall apart.

Self-scepticism and **criticism** are the **breaks**. The non-formal educator knows that many issues have different viewpoints. Therefore, in each action they apply critical self-reflection and a pinch of scepticism even and especially when it comes to their own beliefs.

Learning process is very important once they are the **pedals** of the bicycle. This is about pressing it, making an effort, transforming a single move into a constant movement, a process of learning. Remember, in most cases, you need to make the effort to make the learning happen. By pressing the pedals, you have the feeling of getting closer to something, comprehending it, probably understanding it. The non-formal educator is aware that a learning process needs to be maintained, also that it is a cycle - it could be guided by someone and surrounded by a group of peers, but also that empowerment drives autonomy. Without the pedals, the only movement is driven by inertia...

The **choice of methods and tools** is like choosing **the route**. A non-formal educator, based on their experience, knowledge and feeling for the learners, manages to choose, adapt, design, shape and facilitate the chosen tools in the best way possible. Imagine you ride with the bicycle not just for the ride, but hitting on the best and shortest route to reach the final destination. Those trips are always nice, right?

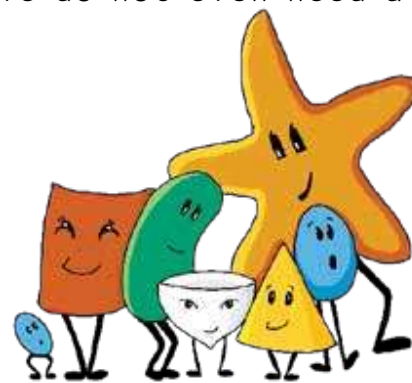
A non-formal educator is someone who **has multiple knowledge about the whole bicycle engineering**. Sometimes this means to moderate a

discussion, other times it is facilitating a group process, or in particular cases they might be in the shoes of a trainer. As a competent person they are capable of applying all that is listed above, but much more, from driving smooth and carefully different types of bicycles, through changing tires, oiling the chain, being able to orientate by a map or take a look at the gears if the sound is not right.

Lastly, the competence development is the final destination. The non-formal educator is aware that all has its own meaning - to develop new competences among the learners. The whole journey would be incomplete if there is no self-aware feeling for acquiring new competences or deepening existing ones.

In fact, in the world of non-formal education any kind of a vehicle could be used to “spark learning”. Sometimes we do not even need a vehicle, and we could have a walk.

This might be seen as something simple and clear for an outsider’s eye. Meanwhile, if you put the upper elements in very pragmatic and concrete examples, we believe there are similarities in every field of professional life and also nuances. These concrete elements overlap and complement with each other (like in the diagram on the right).



Still, the nuances formulate essential differences. This is why we differentiate what elements suit and combine a specific role and what is the balance between those roles when we speak about non-formal educator from different perspectives.

Our reading is the following:

➡ **Moderator:** leads a group discussion process, gives the floor, formulate and rephrase questions, follows the time limitations, keeps track of the agenda, makes sure everyone speaks and contributes. If needed, sums up and formulates conclusions. The moderator is neutral towards the participants and the topic. Hence, they are in the middle – moderate. Do not influence the topic and the content, but only the process. They are the process-caretaker.

➡ **Facilitator:** has a moderation role but next to it, there are additional elements - creates the setting and conditions for a peer-learning experience, also “bring” the group of learners from point A to point B. Makes things easier and understandable for the group. Might have experience and expertise on the topic, therefore influence the process but also the topic and the content, hence influence also what the learning might be. Usually, they work to achieve a particular outcome.

➡ **Trainer:** has a facilitating role but next to it brings new learning and competence development in place. They also create conditions for learning, but by guiding the learners, invites them to reflect on their experiences and supports the summarization of what is experienced and/or shared. As they put new “learning” into consideration, influencing the process, the content and even the result (learning output). Depending on the setting and the context they might add new learning and therefore, they work to achieve a particular learning output.

➡ **Coach:** is also someone who supports the learning process, but much more often enters into the role of questioning and suggesting by critically asking questions that have relevance for the learner (the young person). They limit the direct interference with content or learning outputs. But work for achieving outputs that might be particular for the young person. Their main aim is to support and to provide conditions for critical self-reflection which eventually bring further development or decisions.

➡ **Guide:** rather opposite to a coach, a guide is someone who shows the clear path to walk. Instead of suggesting or questioning, the guide tells what are the different steps to take to reach an intended learning output. Depending on the group dynamic and the available resources (e.g. time), the role of being a guide can gradually move towards being a coach.

➡ **Mentor:** Often acts in between learning activities, or in some cases before or after an activity has taken place. Mentors also are supposed to provide support, or could propose solutions, or take care for the learner’s personal growth and development. Usually the mentor is perceived as someone “with more experience” in a certain area which can be consulted for opinions or additional information and questions.

➡ **Teacher:** A role most often related to the formal education system, where this person is entitled to teach, hence they are the carrier of knowledge on a certain subject. Opposite of the teacher, often are standing (or seated) the ones who supposedly acquire the knowledge - pupils or students. It is a bilateral relationship of providing and adoption of knowledge. In a formal education this also implies a particular power relation, hierarchy between the one bringing the knowledge (teacher) and the ones receiving (pupils or students).

Finally we come to the collective role, the one that we prefer to address when explaining non-formal education.

Non-formal educator: this is the role combining varied capacities among which is the capacity of switching between any other of the above-mentioned roles and pretty often between more than two or three of them at the same time. The non-formal educator is able to act and differentiate between moderation, facilitation, training, guiding, coaching or mentoring and to act accordingly depending on the particular need of the learners in a particular moment of their learner paths. The complexity is inevitable as the realities are changing and the learners are growing and developing, but during this growth they have different needs and this evokes suitable responses.

Shortly: the non-formal educator is the whole learning bicycle, with its mechanic and all its elements combined. And together with the learner, enjoy the ride.

In a nutshell: the rich collection of roles which we take as non-formal educators at different steps in our educational processes, gives us the possibility to support the learner in each phase of their learning journey. It is clear that we, as non-formal educators, act somehow as chameleons.

We adapt our role according to the needs of the learner. This might now be clear to us, but how do we explain this to outsiders? Many people have never heard about non-formal education and in many countries and languages the term 'non-formal educator' doesn't even exist. The next chapter takes us on this rollercoaster. Buckle up.



Great! This is a good moment to take a break with a fresh snack, some vitamins: an orange or an apple! And why not... a coffee! And hey, did you know that coffee grounds, apple peel, eggs shells and other everyday leftovers can help your gardens grow. Instead of throwing away food scraps, make a compost bin. This will be a usable fertiliser, and even if you live in an apartment you can have a little compost bucket! And before doing that, you can even first re-use the used coffee ground to create 'old perkament paper' effects on plain white A4 paper.'



Notes for self!

1.6. Recognition: How does our neighbour see NFE?

For the ones who have read the previous subchapters, it should be clear what is non-formal education (NFE) and who is the non-formal educator in this educational universe. If that is the case: great! If not, then read this subchapter as if you would be the neighbour of a 'non-formal educator'.

The next challenge is: how can we introduce NFE to people who have never heard of it, without forcing them to read this manual. The next step after that is to make the general public understand and recognize that NFE is an important part of education and society in general. All this is related to what we call "recognition".

Non-formal education IS SERIOUS BUSINESS

Often in the field of non-formal education we face the following challenge: people who are not linked with the field experience hardship in understanding what NFE is all about. Somehow NFE seems vague or abstract. But this is just one dimension of the issue. Another one is related to the fact that on state level the debate is related to the recognition of the field by state institutions (like Ministries and Governments), employers and the general public. All this brings another string of questions:

- Recognition of what?
- Recognition by whom?
- Recognition for what purpose?
- And even this: Should we have some more recognition in the first place?

Let's explore this in more simple terms, this also considering the complexity of the topic.



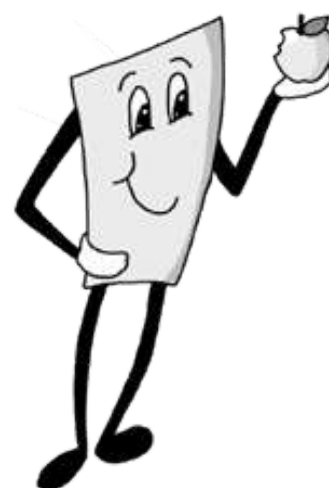
Try to explain NFE to someone who is not familiar with it at all. This could be some of your relatives, parents or kids, or even a stranger on the street. For all these groups of people it would be more or less clear what you mean when explaining the fruit "apple". Everyone knows what an apple is since early childhood. Most people love apples, they have tasted it hundreds of times, tried it just as a fresh fruit from the tree, as a juice, probably in a pie or as a marmalade. So, "apple" as a concept is pretty common. The image and the feeling of the fruit too.

It should be pretty much the same with NFE, but in reality: most often it is not. While trying to explain NFE to the very same group of “apple lovers”, we might face two major difficulties.

The first one is that NFE is more than an image or a concept, it is also a philosophy and a process. They all go together. And all this combined - concept, philosophy and process - differ from the education that is more popular and commonly understood - the education in school or university, as we call it formal education. This is important to be said, despite the fact that both have the same aim.

Secondly, NFE is still a relatively new concept that is not exactly a part of the daily routine for most people, or even if it is, they tend not to realise it. Attending a seminar or a workshop, taking part in a youth exchange or a training course, is not as frequent and familiar as going to school or university. Also, it is not the first thing that comes to mind when we usually think about education.

And there we go - the result is that NFE might appear quite odd for outsiders. Let's take our group of apple lovers for instance.



For them the NFE process might look like a simple process of playing games for fun - participants are laughing and moving, often enjoying themselves and it seems like no learning is happening. Therefore, our apple lovers might think that this is just a waste of time. They might think for a second that if you want to learn something it is better to go back to your homework, textbooks or “more serious” stuff. NFE is seen as a childish activity with no added value. So, if the process is different (or seem not serious) and the concept is unfamiliar, we need to be very clear if we want the apple group to understand what NFE actually is.

People are generally familiar with conventional ways and places of learning - such as schools and universities. Partially because schools, as part of the “official” and obligatory educational system, are common and accessed by (almost) everyone. They also provide quantitative measurements regarding their learning process and outcome and therefore - standardised certification. Usually we call this “a diploma”. This certification is legitimised - it helps one to find a job, go for a higher level of education, and prove qualification status that opens professional doors and helps in finding a job. Last, but not least, formal education is still compulsory for almost everyone, especially if you are a young person.

NFE, on the other hand, being a relatively new concept and seemingly mostly used in voluntary activities, faces the challenge of being acknowledged by the general public. Our 'apple group' might be puzzled and it is harder to explain what NFE is to them. Particularly if they have only been in high school or university.

Another reason for its invisibility is related to the topics and the content. While in school you can easily learn maths (what equals $2 + 2$), in the field of NFE you encounter topics, which are rarely, if ever, tackled in schools and in most cases are not part of the school curricula. For example, how to organise and run an initiative, how to promote democracy and Human Rights, what is the relation with participation and inclusion of groups in society through and in civic processes - all important topics for us.. In some countries, we have to say, the above-mentioned topics are present in schools, but in most cases they are not the centre of the educational process.

So, NFE most often brings another focus, thus also important, but not so much related to finding a better job (if you are a good student you support your own professional development), but rather to be a better citizen.

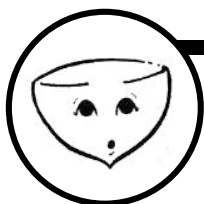
NFE goes through a different learning process than formal education. They both are structured processes of learning, yet NFE is more experiential and participants are more often engaged in the learning through interacting with each other. All this is in line with the main NFE characteristics, which are not the opposite but are distinct from ones in formal education.

Important note

We distinguish between two recognition elements: One is the recognition of the learning process in NFE context; The other one is the recognition of the learning output, acquired by a NFE process

A domino effect of these challenges brings us to the lack of recognition of NFE on institutional and political levels. In certain contexts and countries, NFE is seen as a valuable way of learning, in others - not so much.

In this manual our intention is not to provide the full picture for all countries and institutional arrangements. We rather introduce the notion of recognition on an institutional level as a key element for learning and its added values for our societies.



What do you think about this: could another reason that non-formal education is not recognised be that the people who practise it or participate in it do not call it such. Often on linguistic level we tend to use “games” as a main word, describing the educational activities or methods.

As a result, the people (children, young people, adults, families...) who have benefitted from non-formal education are not aware of it. Consequently, they cannot acknowledge and subsequently recognize this form of education.

Meanwhile, because of its nature, characteristics and the core philosophy of NFE such standardisation would be much more difficult to happen, at least on official state (governmental) level.

One example: as NFE is much more learner centred, the learning output might be something that is not planned by the organisers. So it can not be a subject of standardisation, therefore not being certified as a learning.



If the apple lovers are attending a college class for making an apple pie and they do good, they will eventually get a culinary diploma. But if along the way they learn how to cook together, cooperate in a team and solve cooking problems, this will not be a subject of examination, thus they will not get a diploma for team work or problem solving. So, the first thing will be a subject of examination and certification in school or college. The second dimension might and often is a subject of NFE activities but not necessarily leading to certifications (with few exceptions).

For all the reasons above it is probably understandable that NFE often lacks the recognition which is typical for formal education. It is harder to be understood by our apple group who never got the chance to experience it consciously.



Another example: one decides to study medicine and become a doctor in Italy. After graduation they get a diploma and could go and practise the very same profession in Sweden or Bulgaria. This is because between these countries there is an agreement to recognize diplomas coming from formal education. But also because there is a clear consensus on what learning outputs they are supposed to acquire and prove in order to practise medicine.

In some parts of the world there are more and more initiatives for the recognition of the competencies acquired through NFE. Like the growing field of vocational education and training in the EU, where people can validate their competencies from NFE and receive standardised diplomas for some professions.

For example, in the European reality there is an EU agency called CEDEFOP that is dedicated to support the development of the European vocational education and training (VET). The agency helps the EU institutions and member states in the process of defining and elaborating the best VET policies. So here the main focus is to support citizens to qualify for a better job.

Another good example is the Youthpass - "a European recognition instrument for identifying and documenting learning outputs that are acquired in projects under the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps Programmes." With more than 1.4 million certificates issued from 2007 to 2022, more and more people are getting familiar with its existence. Some universities require it as an important criterion in the admission of their Master's programs. Also, some employers find it a valuable asset when hiring. But it is important to stress that the Youthpass is not a diploma but a self assessment certificate that is validated by someone - the trainer in the learning activity, the team or NGO responsible for the project, etc.

If you want to know more about it:



CEDEFOP



Youthpass



In conclusion, we could say that the main reason why NFE recognition is such a challenge is the fact that the NFE learning process is harder to define and put into a standard procedure. The learning outputs (and its impact) are harder to measure and to be seen directly. NFE often has a long-term effect that is not immediately visible and measurable.

For this reason, when talking about NFE we need to present the whole picture – the process, the aim, the result and eventually the impact... and not only the activities. This will certainly support the recognition among the wider public.



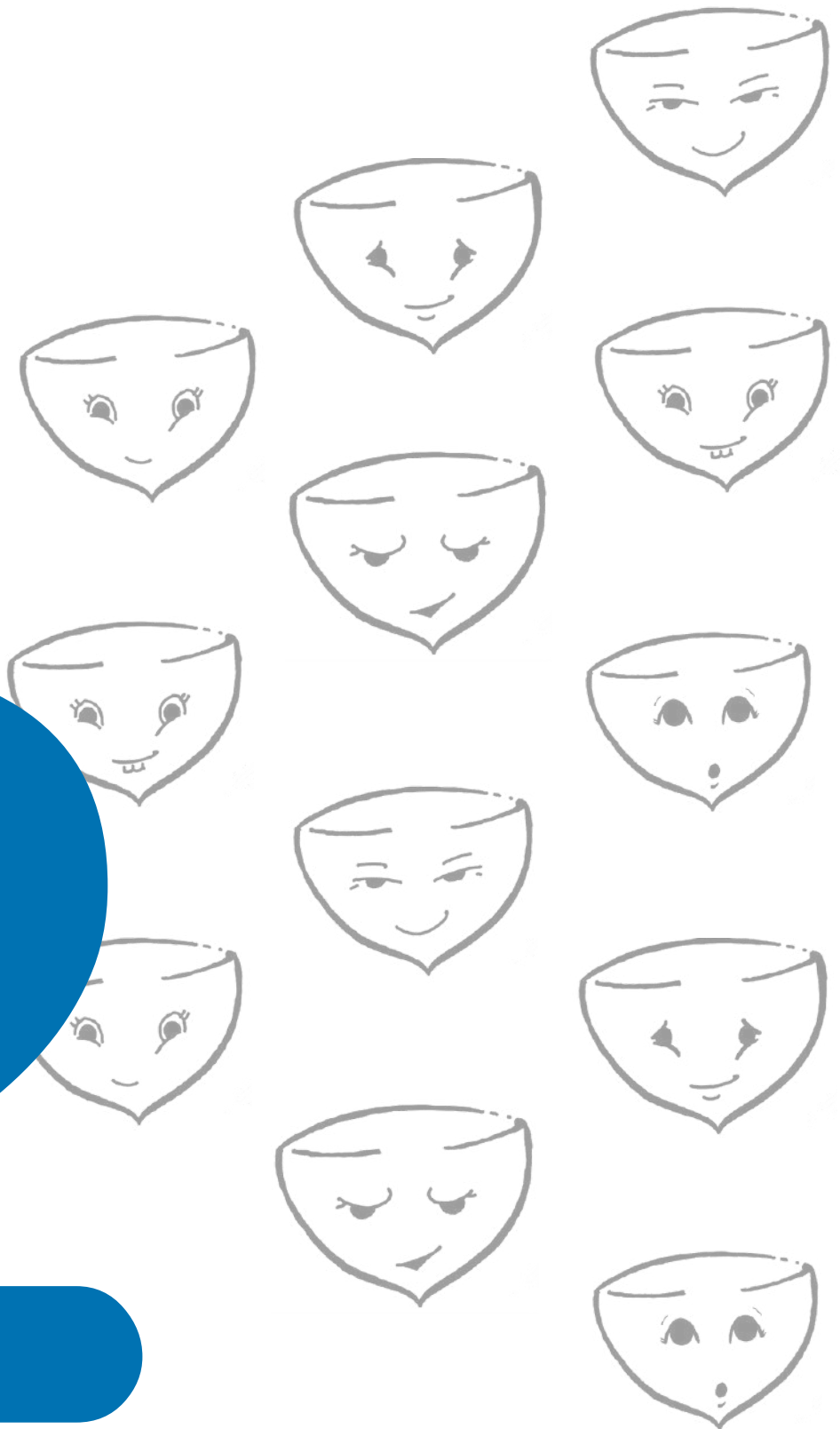
A challenge: We challenge you now in this very moment to stop for a second. Imagine our group of apple lovers. Try to explain them what NFE is in one or two sentences using only simple words...

A second challenge: If you managed to define it in one or two short sentences, could you try to explain the same to someone who has never heard of it.

This is the end of Chapter 1, which explored a variety of different aspects to understand what NFE is and who is the non-formal educator in this aspect. Well done.

Do not hesitate to re-read subchapters when convenient. With the international team we worked on the content and we have gone many times back and forward. Non-formal education is not a static concept, and luckily so. In Chapter 2 we present you with very concrete examples where the different partners have set up NFE processes. We highlight failures and successes and hope you get inspired to transform some of the successes also to your reality.

Act bigger
Let's be ambitious



Welcome to chapter 2.

In this chapter we show in practice some of the main ideas tackled previously in this manual. In particular - the transition from purpose to practice. We have mentioned that non-formal education (NFE) aims to create opportunities for personal, professional and societal transformation. This to create empowering opportunities for groups and individuals and to contribute to a better living together, as well as fostering this positive social change.

Why have we titled the chapter: 'Let's be ambitious'? In short: the more synergies we create between diverse sectors, agents, actors, target groups, and fields... the bigger and more sustainable our impacts will be.

In other words...

NFE can be applied anywhere: we shouldn't limit NFE to any physical spaces (like youth or social centres). It can be applied in the public spaces, in schools, in private sectors, even in our own family.

It can happen at diverse levels, such as local, national and international. Keeping that in mind, this manual as such is a good example, it is a product of an international European cooperation answering the identified needs in our own local realities.

NFE can be with everyone: We do not limit NFE to any specific target group, regardless of e.g. age, sex or gender, culture, education, social or economical classes.

For example, while working with young people, we should consider them in relation to their social environment (parents, friends, local representatives...) if we aim for sustainable impact.

In the next pages you will find some concrete and, we consider successful, real life examples coming from the practice of the very authors of this manual, to exemplify what we 'preach'.





2.1. Nutstory 1

Shaking and reshaping local youth policy:

Using international mobility to support local initiatives of young adults by local authorities

Origin, context and identified needs:

A local rural territory in Bretagne - France, an administrative entity regrouping 13 different villages (around 21.000 inhabitants in total). There is a very dynamic associative life in general with around 230 NGO's, all sectors mixed.

➤ Need identified: Back in 2007, young adults in our local community were a “ghost group”. The 15-29 year olds represent around 23%, which is quite a lot in a rural territory. Yet, they were not visible in social life, and very particularly they were completely absent in almost all decision making bodies at local level (board of NGOs, city councils, even sport clubs).

The challenge: how to create a local social life with more young people concretely involved?

We discovered that this was a shared need identified in different local realities by several of our partner organisations in Europe (district of Cascais in Portugal, a district of Firenze, Oropos village in Greece, Trakai district in Lithuania, a district of Barcelona in Spain).

We engaged in different trials to act at the local level, but with little to no success. This led to the decision to use the International mobility programme of the European Union (at that time called ‘Youth in Action Programme’) as a motivation tool for local stakeholders.

Main aim

To promote that young people, and particularly young adults, also have the space to engage as real actors of their local territory.

Expected impact:

Each partner defined the concrete impact they would like to reach. From our Breton local perspective, here are the general ones we identified:

- to have some young adults represented in local village councils
- to have an NGO created by young adults
- to have more young adults represented in the board of existing NGOs

The pedagogical process built

We used the international dimension to catch the interest and motivation of the local stakeholders.

For this reason, we applied to a large scale project of the European programme Youth in Action (= a 3 years project and process).

➤ At European level: we planned several international encounters in order to create connection between our local territories. A seminar and training courses on active youth participation in our local communities and how to use Erasmus+ as a tool to improve local youth participation.

For each international encounter:

- Every partner came with a group including the 3 target groups (young people, youth NGOs and local authorities representatives). To start, an analysis of their local realities, a better understanding of the meaning of active participation, the creation of a detailed timeframe action plan at local and international level.
- Each encounter, the partners involved different representatives from the different target groups they progressively involved at their local territories (young people, NGOs sector and local authorities).

➤ At local level in Bretagne - France:

From the beginning, we aimed to create a local network which concretely involved the different target groups at the same time.

- Young adults themselves, as the direct target group, were involved from the beginning. Some of them are part of existing NGOs, most being “independent”.
- Local authorities: local elected people in charge of youth, social life of their territory.

- ➡ Local NGOs: a social centre, several youth centres in the villages, 2 youth NGOs. We involved youth workers (professional or volunteers) working for NGOs and/or for municipalities.

It was a challenging start: at the beginning, with our NGO, we had face-to-face meetings with in total around 300 people (informal with young people, more formal with other stakeholders). We did not present any project to start with, nor any request for public money. We shared our central concern: "What's the reason we have so many young people and young adults in our territory and they are so little (or not) represented in any decision making bodies?".

We explained:

- ① the same process is happening in other local territories in Europe
- ② we will meet to share our realities
- ③ we'll identify possible obstacles and actions to take. We invited them to join, highlighting that the travel and accommodation would be co-funded by a European programme.

This proved to be an effective way to involve them from the beginning and to create an informal network. It was the concrete start of a local participative diagnosis in order to understand better the situation in our local reality. This evolved towards breaking down prejudices, particularly between young adults and local politicians.

Each European encounter reinforced the analysis, reflection and planning of concrete actions back home in order to improve active participation of young adults in local social life.

Short and long term Impact

- ➡ An informal network with young people, local politicians, youth workers who meet every 2 months during 7 years, to reflect, plan action and support youth initiatives. An effective cooperation between local politicians and young adults. Breaking of mutual prejudices.
- ➡ New Initiatives, like the 'Diner Debates' (open dialogue with local politicians) / English lessons, new NGOs, junior NGO, green theatre (see photo: cooperation between youth NGO and municipality), youth exchanges fully planned by young people with youth workers' support..
- ➡ 2 young adults elected in 2 different city councils.

Additionally, there was an unexpected bigger impact: a real change of the local youth policy, in 2 main steps:

- ① During 4 years the local authorities financed part-time employment in Luciole to coordinate the local network and promote the participation of young adults in our local communities.
- ② At the end of the 4 years a new global project for our 13 villages started as a follow up. The local authorities assumed officially to support the local initiatives of young adults in the territory, with the creation of 4 part-time jobs.
- ③ And now? In the last local elections, we 'lost' most of our "allies". Yet, the process done was not for nothing. The political engagement of support for the 13 villages still exists. One social centre is still actively working on concrete youth participation.

To conclude, what can we take from this example?

- ➡ It was very important for us to involve at the same time and at the same level all the groups and categories involved in youth policy: young adults, NGOs sector, youth work, local authorities and other identified stakeholders (e.g. parents). It proved important to establish that in our local network: every voice is important, every voice matters.
- ➡ We had no project designed beforehand. To convince local stakeholders, we simply started from the paradox of having a lot of young adults in the territory, yet being 'invisible'. We created conditions (with the European encounters as a support) for the people involved to decide what they want to do together in their local reality. In simple words: we created conditions for this to happen, on a voluntary basis.
- ➡ We used the European Mobility programme to create curiosity and motivation. Yet, the main purpose remained local changes. International mobility can be a strong motivational element for local social changes, if used as a conscious tool, not a finality.





2.2. Nutstory 2

The rural centre of non-formal education

Using (inter)national mobility as motivator for social transformation of our community.

Origin, context and identified needs:

September 2010 : we created the private social company 'Produções Fixe' (= Cool Productions) in the small rural village Vila da Marmeleira - Portugal, the place where we still are based and living. A geographical confined village on a small hill, optimistically about 350 living souls.

A private company format, once this gives us full autonomy to act fast, and independent from public funding and consequently policy defining. This last being important in order to stay politically free, fully focused and unbiased in regard to our predefined value profile. Our core-business: non-formal education.

We identified our needs through a (seemingly simple) SWOT analyse. Important: we did this on a personal, organisational and community level. All actions taken to answer the identified needs should benefit all 3 levels, in order to be sustainable.

A short and very reduced summary of some needs, to frame the few exemplary actions described further on:

- ➡ Personal: the need to be coherent as (international) trainers by having concrete practice supporting our social message through NFE.
- ➡ Organisational: the need for recognition that NFE is more than playing 'games'. It is serious business and as such, does lead to serious learning.
- ➡ Community: an increased desertification, lack of NGO initiatives, little to no new entrepreneurship, our own living environment where our children would grow up within.

note

the need analysis was conducted through 'our' cultural glasses and 'our' defined values of what is a sustainable and good community life. Clearly debatable when it comes to objectivity.

Main aim

To contribute (and transform) towards a dynamic community life which leads to a better living together within social, cultural, educational and financial dimensions. A community where empathy, compassion, sharing and cooperation become an obvious norm.

Expected impact

One of the major mistakes we made at the very start, is the lack of defining specific indicators, which would be traceable back to our implemented activities. A clear mistake, which now makes it difficult to have waterproof data that our community project did contribute to the current change in our community life. But then again, we never thought this would be important ... back then. As the expression says 'we felt it from the belly'. But on long term thinking: the indicators would come in more than handy and useful.

We take into account expected and unexpected, quantitative and qualitative, desired and undesired impact. In whatever of the above combinations possible.

Our concrete desired and expected impact was, in short:

- ➡ a revitalization of the village community life, with a quantitative increase of community initiatives and events.
- ➡ an increase in population, this particularly focusing on families with young children.

The pedagogical process built

Considering our resources and work area (training and education), hosting national or international groups in our village became a clear tool to tackle the desertification and at the same time, use these groups for the other identified needs. The pedagogical process was built based on the KOLB approach.



'The Rural Centre of NFE' is not a building, but a concept. Where all the population are invited to be learner/teacher and all the infrastructure and public spaces are learning spaces. On the image a rough map of the village, indicating where groups would be learning/teaching in direct interaction with the population. A mutual learning.

e.g. the green dots are families engaged in an evening 'learning dinner'. Families receive in their house a small group of learners from abroad and have dinner together. More than simply a dinner, the families are previously prepared on what they wish to learn and teach, and how. After the learning dinner there is a reflection and debriefing moment.



For more detailed information, contact us or surf a bit on the current different AI apps and online publications.



Impact after 13 years

The village is blooming with activities. The 3 local NGO's, village board and little library organise together now several activities each month, there are different weekly activities from children (futsal, theatre, music teaching, dancing classes), a revived local little library with additional activities, the village is as good as fully populated again, and much more. Our activity interventions are not needed anymore, at this moment. Even stronger: by continuing them, we might contribute to an 'overdose' which ends up counter productive. However, this situation does allow us now to limit drastically the type of our previous activities, and to focus now more on sustainability actions concerning the environment from a short, medium and long term perspective.

To conclude, what can we take from this example?

- ➡ We increasingly feel the lack of 'not having defined concrete impact indicators' at the very start.
- ➡ Every action gives each time simultaneously answers to needs identified in the 3 different levels: personal - organisational - community. If not on a personal level, that leads to a burn out. If not on an organisational level, that leads to bankruptcy. If not on a community level, that leads to rejection.
- ➡ Concrete involvement of a variety of stakeholders in the community from different social layers, hereby creating a shared ownership of the progress. Additionally, make this systematically visible.
- ➡ Actions which create win-win situations. This gain can be financial, social, cultural, educational or other.
- ➡ Actions implemented have ongoing results in the short, medium and long term.
- ➡ When the 'tool' (e.g. Erasmus+ mobility programmes) has done its 'work', it is no longer a useful tool. Then it is time to look for other tools. Remember: for the one who has only a hammer, everything is a nail.



2.3. Nutstory 3

How can I choose without knowing the options?

Origin, context and identified needs:

Once upon a time in 2013 in an Occupational Center in a small parish in Águeda, Aguada de Baixo, several educators noticed that young people continued to choose their academic or professional path taking only into consideration two main strong arguments: "I'm taking this degree because my friends are also" or "my parents told me this is the future, here you have a guaranteed job".

This, in fact, was the same process that the staff from the Occupational Center went through almost 20 years ago based on the small information they had about professions and opportunities.

So, they began to recognize that the needs persisted over time and that it was crucial to find a solution for them:

- ➡ lack of knowledge of the existing professional pathways that they could take;
- ➡ lack of self-knowledge and competencies to make a conscious choice;
- ➡ lack of knowledge about career paths (which professions exist and what they entail);
- ➡ lack of awareness that competencies are trainable and that there are tools to train them.

In the middle of this discussion and having already some experience with non-formal education, they started exploring the potential that NFE could have in a vocational guidance process. Soon, they understood the distinct tasks demanded by young people, realising the need for a different approach and recognizing the necessity for new tools to complement those already in use at schools.

Actually, the work in the Portuguese schools didn't change much in the 20 years, so it's also natural that the implications following this work would not change as well. The lack of human resources at schools was a barrier to the personalised work that needed to be done, so the innovation was giving something complementary to what was already being done.

And VOGUI was born!

In 2014 the first VOGUI – Vocational Guidance based on non-formal education, was created as a Key Action 2 project implemented with a particular group of students and supported by a national university in partnership with an organisation and a public school in Bulgaria. And here comes another impressive thing, this first VOGUI was created internationally, and the results attained had such a huge impact in both countries that the Bulgarian partners started to use it as a national tool for schools.

At the end of the lifespan of this project, the mentors of the project thought “This is not enough!”. They remained enthusiastic about its sustainability. The young people they collaborated with, continued to express the need for the program's continuation in Águeda through word-to-word dissemination. And so, it went.

The leader of the organisation, in a demand to continue to cultivate the knowledge on NFE went to a training in Vila da Marmeleira (consult NUTSTORY by Produções Fixe) and came back with more challenges to implement. Given so, they decided to apply an upgraded version of VOGUI to national funding for Portugal Social Innovation in partnership with Águeda Municipality.

In 2019, the project followed an upscaling, acting with 5 schools in the municipality and reaching 1.057 youngsters from the 9th and 12th grades.

The project, at the time, also had additional activities besides the sessions for training competencies based on non-formal education. The participants had access to other activities that supported them getting to know themselves better and the opportunities and reality around them. To do so the following was added:

- ➡ testimonies from 84 different professionals from different fields and with different backgrounds;
- ➡ visits to surrounding companies;
- ➡ job shadowing with professionals of their areas of interest;
- ➡ personalised mentorship when approaching the exams period and in the elaboration of their curriculum for job applications or preparing their application for superior education;
- ➡ an online vocational fair developed in partnership with more than 90 national entities.

All these activities contributed to the main aim of the project: to train, guide and support young people towards the development of competences.

VOGUI aims to support defining personal goals and action plans, developing personal and social competences in young people, as well as a positive global self-concept and good adaptability.

Expected Impact

For the 2019 project of VOGUI, the expected and attained impact was measured considering the 'Theory of Change', the results collected throughout a pre and post-test and satisfaction questionnaire administered in each activity next to all target groups: participants, partners and stakeholders.

The project was expected to involve 225 young people and it achieved 1.057 young people from Águeda Municipality from 13 to 18 and NEET (= Not in Education, Employment or Training) youngsters.

It is not only important the number of people we reach but mainly the impact we have on them. We verified throughout the impact evaluation an increase of 26% of the key competencies at work on the target groups, as well as an average satisfaction of 90%, with 86% of the youngsters considering that the project was fundamental for their career path decision.

The pedagogical process built

VOGUI was conceived from the beginning to have a different approach than the formal vocational guidance programs offered already in the schools, acting as a complement.

A multidisciplinary team composed by psychologists, teachers, non-formal educators and youth workers linked the identified needs with the main areas to be trained during the program, namely:

- ➡ self knowledge
- ➡ expectations and values
- ➡ conflict management
- ➡ decision making
- ➡ communication and interpersonal relationships
- ➡ myths and Truths about the labour market
- ➡ CV and motivational letter: how to enter the labour market

The programmed design was flexible and adapted at every moment to the different needs of the groups. We acted 2 times a month with more that 50 classes of the region, offering also additional activities for a more complete training.

The impact 10 years after

In 2024 will be 10 years of the very first version of the project. The conception and circle of life of the project continues alive and well, impacting young people around the world. The project made a complete circle and this year DIGIVOGUI was approved: a version of VOGUI as a Massive Open Online Course created both for youth workers and youngsters. Through financial support of the European Commission Executive Agency for Education and Culture, we will be able to take VOGUI as a Virtual Exchange supported by practical and theoretical manuals for the replication and implementation of the program in Portugal, Greece, Bosnia Herzegovina and Albania.

It started as 'Acting Global', changing one career path at the time locally. In 2019 the start of 'Acting Local, Changing Global', and in 2023 we continued with the evolving and the application of the project in a bigger and more inclusive way. From 2024 on, it is accessible to young people and youth workers all over the world.



To conclude, what can we take from this example?

- ➡ Educators in Águeda identified the needs felt by youngsters in terms of career choices, arising from peer pressure and parental guidance.
- ➡ They proceed to the design of the program, taking into consideration multiple societal actors involved in the vocational guidance of young people: multidisciplinary team, stakeholders, involvement of the municipality creating VOGUI.
- ➡ The project started acting on an european level and due to the success of the implementation, they reinforced the action on a local level and later they continue to spread the word of the complementarity of using NFE to complement formal methods of vocational guidance.
- ➡ With DIGIVOGUI, ten years in the run, they continue to adapt to the actual needs of the young people and proving the capability of sustainability and impact of an initiative to transform local career paths to changing global perspectives and now ready for worldwide accessibility.



2.4. Nutstory 4

Supporting the empowerment of local inhabitants by encouraging collective organisation to enable them taking action in their daily lives and transform their local territory

Origin, context and identified needs:

A rural area in Bretagne - France, including 6 different municipalities (around 8,000 inhabitants).

Needs identified

Every 4 years, the social centre renews its associative project and puts in place a participative diagnosis to fully understand the needs of inhabitants and territory changes.

We have identified issues around the role of senior citizens, mobility problems and isolation:

- ➡ The 60 plussers are increasingly present in the territory. Some of them are new, have no family here and know few people.
- ➡ There is also a desire for individual initiatives at the local level, but for isolated people, as you're alone, it is not easy to go from idea to action.
- ➡ The intergenerational dimension is part of the association's project, but we wish to develop it more transversally.

The challenge

How can we support local people at all stages of their lives to take more action in their daily lives and local community?

In 2018, the structure took advantage of a reorganisation of the professional team to develop the following missions:

- ➡ supporting initiatives led by local inhabitants;
- ➡ working on the theme of seniors and intergenerational relations.

General objective

Two different approaches with a common objective: to create conditions which encourage inhabitants to meet and talk about the problems they face in their daily lives and local area, and to encourage them to take collective action to tackle these identified and shared problems.

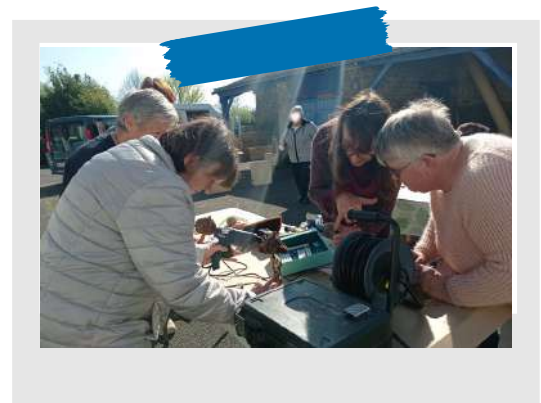
Expected impact

- ➡ Local inhabitants meet in different areas and discuss the problems they encounter in their daily lives and identify local issues.
- ➡ Additionally, they will set up concrete actions to meet the objectives they have defined together.
- ➡ They learn to organise themselves collectively to take action in the place where they live.

The pedagogical process built

At the end of 2018 - beginning of 2019 we launched two projects:

- ➡ the “ageing as a citizen” commission;
- ➡ a physical place called “local d’initiatives solidaires”, to support inhabitants developing concrete actions to promote solidarity among them.



A number of residents are engaged in this place, and some are involved in both. As these two groups progressed, we realised that they wanted to take action on common issues: combating isolation, mobility, sharing know-how, and more. We decided to bring everyone together to see how we could move forward together, restructuring the initial proposals so that they fit in with the directions defined by the residents.

All went as planned until unfortunately, COVID came along and stopped the collective approach. In 2021, as soon as we could meet face to face again, we invited people to work on the objectives shared by each group:

- ➡ combating social and geographical isolation;
- ➡ making our actions accessible to as many people as possible;
- ➡ sharing skills and know-how;
- ➡ encouraging social connection between residents.

Taking these objectives as a starting point, the new group planned various actions:

- ➡ a trip to the market every 2 weeks;
- ➡ one residents' outing per month;
- ➡ a weekly residents' afternoon with a shuttle bus to pick up people with mobility restrictions;
- ➡ for the group, these residents' afternoons are a time to meet people, chat, do things together, learn, share and take action.

These events are organised jointly by the residents and the social centre. The latter provides logistical (communication, minibus....) and organisational support (meetings, minutes, networking, etc.). Inhabitants feel supported and "safe", and consequently they become even more involved in setting up, welcoming, supporting other residents and running their various activities.

Impact

After two and a half years of experimentation, we have observed the following.

- ➡ Increasingly more residents are taking part in these initiatives. For many of them, it is a way of recreating links, building new friendships, showing solidarity and getting involved in their local community.
- ➡ It has enabled other residents to take advantage of these spaces to launch their own new solidarity initiatives, such as solidarity transport, a travelling DIY café, etc. Through collective organisation, residents are taking action and developing creative solutions to improve everyday life.

- ➡ Several residents are regularly involved in the social centre's reflection spaces and decision-making bodies. Additionally, several people are involved in other local initiatives, and sometimes take part in working sessions with local elected representatives.

To conclude, what can we take from this example?

If we want to enable local people to take action in their daily lives and find solutions to their problems, we need:

- ➡ enough time to learn how to do and live together, build a community;
- ➡ to be attentive through regularly monitoring how the group is evolving and how each member is finding his/her/their place;
- ➡ to create a safe and secure atmosphere, that everybody feel free to express how they experience the collective work;
- ➡ as a non-formal educator, to be flexible enough to adapt the support you give to the groups.



There are many other 'community movements' which are not directly based upon non-formal education, but can perfectly integrate the previous examples. It for sure fits the values we stand for. Have you ever thought of ordering together with other families fresh vegetables from a local farmer? This can be done spontaneously or in a more organised community model. In Italy this is called GAS (Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale), in Belgium GASAP (Groupes d'Achat Solidaires de l'Agriculture Paysanne) or in France AMAP (Association pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne). Check if you have something similar close to you... especially if you live in a city. Alternatively, you can also organise together other families in your neighbourhood such a movement.



Notes for self!



2.5. Nutstory 5

“Leaders of change”

how using non-formal education to trigger societal and political issues on local and national level

Origin, context and identified needs:

Yes, politics is complicated and a “hot” business!

Could there be a possible link between that hot and risky business and non-formal education? Yes, undoubtedly. Here is a true story.

This is the story of the impact of non-formal education in a political and activist context in Bulgaria.

In 2012, with colleagues involved in non-formal education but related to civic initiatives and progressive political currents, we decided to develop a training programme. This programme would provide time and space for young leaders and activists who want to develop themselves and participate in the community and political process at the local and national level. We named the programme 'Leaders of Change' - looking back, it is a bit of a pretentious title. At the time, we didn't think that much about it.

All this, from the very beginning with its clear and stated progressive and left political perspective, which was, however, beyond any political party and not limited to party organisations. As we believed, and still believe, that civic and political engagement and participation has much broader and fundamental stakes and it is not limited to political parties. In simple words: “critical and political youth”.

It is important to note the context - this is the story of a training programme having civic and political intentions, set against a tendency of ever-increasing extreme conservative currents and policies in Bulgaria. This was and is still the case in many other places in Central and Eastern Europe since then, right up to the present day. We believe this needs to be challenged.

For such a training programme we decided to use the tool we know best - non-formal education.

We received financial and logistical support from the German foundation Friedrich Ebert. This clarification is important because it is another example of how non-formal education can be developed and used outside the familiar paradigms of European youth programmes.

And so: “Leaders of Change” started in 2013.

Main aim

To promote the progressive values and principles of equality, solidarity and justice related to societal and democratic processes by providing opportunities for development of young leaders, activists, volunteers and young people in general, who are looking into engaging in societal deeds.

Expected impact

We admit, at the beginning we did not think so much about impact and its respective indicators. Even though the intention was clear and that somehow formulating expected impact should not be such a difficult task.

We just started acting and working step by step.

But as time went on, the programme evolved and we started to articulate in a more comprehensive way exactly what we were planning and expecting from it, namely:

- ➡ active involvement of participants in social and political processes at local and national level;
- ➡ actively taking clear progressive political positions on issues important to their community;
- ➡ clearly contributing progressive ideas to their communities and organisations.

Over time, we have seen that the programme is actually extremely impactful, both for the participants themselves and for several of their organisations.

The pedagogical process built

Generally, when preparing a training course, we always plan which competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours) we want to develop. Whether we are working with youth or a technical training for job qualification: knowledge and skills often stand out ahead.

Here, we decided to focus on working with attitudes, and in particular reflecting on and applying key values for the progressive field - equality, solidarity and justice. Fundamental principles without which we could not fully think of and practice democracy. Alongside this, we laid the foundation for a different and collectivist conception of leadership - democratic leadership as a collective phenomenon and practice, in opposition to more popular ideas of individual leadership coming mostly from psychology and governance.

We planned, conceptualised, and translated all of this into a highly experiential programme in line with the principles of non-formal education.

“Leaders of Change” is a quantitative wise a modest programme: it happens once a year and each time involves a modest number between 15 and 25 participants in a total of ten training days, divided into two separate training events. The entire training programme is experiential and uses a variety of techniques, paradigms, theories and practices of non-formal education, which also makes it significantly impactful. In 2023, it celebrated its tenth anniversary.

Despite its modest size, we are acutely aware that sustainability is rooted in the qualitative and in-depth process, not in the sheer number of participants.

Impact after 10 years

Ten years on, we dare to say that the programme has had its real impact on the communities and organisations involved. In individual cases we can trace this impact in the following way:

- ➡ Initiatives or projects of the organisations represented over the years;
- ➡ Concrete appearances of those involved in the programme at local or national level, including publicly taken positions on important community or societal issues;

Throughout the years we welcomed in the programme: grass-root activists in a variety of fields (feminism, ecology, education), informal group representatives, teachers, youth sector activists, youth NGO members, municipality councillors, mayors and deputy mayors, members of parliament, etc. List is not complete.

At the same time, we are aware that the public process is always very complex and dynamic, which is why the impact itself is an ongoing project of the programme authors themselves.

We would still like to believe that the programme has contributed at least a little to the reduction of conservative and even reactionary currents at local and national level, and has provided a more progressive discourse for the world around us.

This is also visible by testimonials of participants:

“Leaders of Change is like an eye doctor - it opens your eyes to the world as you have never seen it before! It is better to start seeing later than never!”

“Leaders of Change is a unique programme that allows participants to explore the founding principles of democracy through their own experience.”

To conclude, what can we take from this example?

It is a well-known saying that "change starts with ourselves". We have always believed that we need to look for ways to make change happen beyond the individual level, because without a doubt we all live in societies. And that means we are all surrounded by politics, whether we wish to admit it, or not.

This story is simply an example of how non-formal education can carry its own political charge, for a better and more just future for us all.

The programme is still implemented every year, at this level only in Bulgaria and in Bulgarian language.



Moment from the 10th anniversary of the program in 2023



Leaders of
change



2.6. Nutstory 6

Using non-formal learning in the business field, to develop the competences of the workers, in a continuous way, both in an online and off-line integrated system.

Origin, context and identified needs:

In the city of Torino, capital city of Piedmont in northern Italy. The location is a big multinational factory, a world well-known name, with worldwide around 213.000 employees in 2018. The challenge was on how to raise the competence level of workers and, at the same time, to make it fair, visible, and enjoyable for all kinds of employees.

Main Aim

To develop the potential and the competences of the entire working force in the factory, in a transparent way. To add a gamified process and an on-going possibility to learn and to grow inside the factory. An integrated system of learning resources and tools in an environment of continuous, individualised, collaborative updating. A system that incentivizes personal responsibility, stimulating leadership and performance.

Expected impact

To reach the entire workers population, creating the possibility to learn and the connection with other employees in any of the different workers positions. To increase the competences of employees and to have better product results.

The pedagogical process built

The idea was to develop a fair learning model, based on the idea that all employees should have equal opportunities to access learning resources and facilities.

Therefore, a support learning team created the concept of a “Learning City”: an interactive training platform accessible 24/7 by employees, designed to enhance individual responsibility and strengthen learnings combining elements of gamification, community building and content sharing.

The virtual learning city, which started in October 2017, is composed of different 'Boulevards' (= avenues). The "Sustainability Boulevard" with training resources on sustainability. The "Leadership Boulevard", with different activities about people management, communication and presentation, personal and team effectiveness and managerial methods and tools, plus the support of learning coaches. The "Languages & Cross-Cultural Boulevard" with language courses and training on how to work in a multinational and multicultural context.

In other words, employees can access training resources, compete in interactive games, and participate in business challenges. They have the possibility to first define and choose their own personal learning objectives, to learn online and test the knowledge online, as well to play and engage in different kinds of challenges to gain badges or passes, as an achievement of their learning. In this way they will also be visible on the platform and as reference for others.

Being a blended learning concept, they can follow their path by training their skills through an in-person workshop which can last half a day till a couple of days depending on the topics. This way, employees can participate together with different colleagues and exercise their knowledge gained previously by the online platform. Additionally, establish connections with other employees of the same plant in different areas.

We have been asked to join the team of trainers and/or facilitators involved in the active workshops part, called the "Gym". There were different 'gyms' according to the topic. A team of educators, teachers, professors, psychologists, sport trainers, actors, radio speakers were forming the trainers and coaches pool involved in the learning support process of the Learning City.

For each Gym there were different trainers and coaches according to their personal and professional background. We were supporting each other and participating and observing different Gym to learn and to be updated. For example, some of the topics of the Gym that could be done were on public speaking, intercultural awareness, accountability, creativity, ongoing feedback, team work using very similar activities as the one used in workshops at schools or in other contexts.



The content of the gym was co-created by several trainers, and then proposed to the rest of the trainer's team according to the objectives set for each of the topics and the learning areas. Each

of the Gym has been connected to one of the Olympic sports as a metaphor. One example: intercultural awareness relates to the Olympic sport of Judo, as one of the principles states that progress is possible only with collaboration and together with other people. Like in intercultural relations: it is needed to understand the others to collaborate.

In every gym the main idea is to train and to exercise what was previously learned in theory. Therefore, the different activities are designed to follow this objective. Each workshop is built following the cycle of learning, using methods such as group work, role play, simulation activities and personal reflection. Every gym concludes with a personal action plan to be completed by each participant.

Short and long terms impacts

The short-term impact was definitely the very positive reactions of employees to this learning opportunity, as being out of their comfort zone, so different approach, but great inspiration and enriching opportunities. The feeling that the place where they worked was not only a place, but that there were people caring about them, and that they could even enjoy it.

In less than one year 2.400 participants went to the gym which rated the courses very high (4,3 on 5) for the efficiency and usefulness towards their work. Very positive feedback about the dynamic and interaction, and the clear wish to have more time to dedicate to this.



Currently, this format has changed. Unfortunately, the Covid19 largely affected the learning opportunities that the factory was offering, and the process was partly stopped, the offer reduced and mainly transferred online. The hope is however that this will inspire other companies to adopt such a model to offer to their employees. But that is to be seen in the near future.

To conclude, what can we take from this example?

One of the main lessons learned is to realise that non-formal education has less boundaries than we think. Many among us fight with prejudices against the business sector, and the idea that it would not be possible to work with non-formal learning in such a

context. A factory, like any other working environment, is however just another environment where people are learning. The idea that we can also learn different competences, even related to our working role, is one of the key motivating factors. Also in a traditional industrial factory. A social change is one of the main purposes of non-formal education, and to see such a positive social change inside the working culture is an important change. As non-formal educators, this was a great learning opportunity to step out and to enlarge the comfort zone.



2.7. Nutstory 7

“The Debate - from a meeting to a movement”

Origin, context and identified needs:

In 2008, the European Commission suggested that all member states should organise national debates to increase the inclusion of young people in the process of Structured Dialogue. This process aims to promote the active participation of young people in democratic life and to foster a debate around the major issues affecting youth.



In that period in Bulgaria, increasingly more non-governmental organisations and informal groups were founded by or worked for young people. They functioned independently and very often didn't know about the existence of each other, even if they were operating in the same city. The Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans (YSPDB) knew this reality. The organisation itself started as an alliance of Student leaders in 1998. Later on, it became an organisation in 2001. Until today, one of the primary aims of YSPDB is to improve the dialogue between the non-governmental sector, business, and authorities at local, national, and international levels.

Main aim

The National Meeting of Youth Organizations, also known as 'The Debate', aims to consolidate the opinion of all stakeholders on topics relevant to young people by bringing together in one place over 120 representatives of ministries, commissions, local authorities, experts, youth organisations, and young people. Each event has specific learning goals for each of the targeted groups and as a result, a policy document is drawn up to reflect the vision and choice of development of the given topic.

Expected impact

- ➡ Networking - development of communities that collaborate and share resources.
- ➡ Sustain the cooperation and collaboration between all stakeholders in the youth field.
- ➡ Capacity building - development of personal and professional competencies.
- ➡ Intergenerational succession and development - transmission of know-how, policy and practises - improvement and innovation.

The pedagogical process built:

A cycled model builds the Debate with three key phases - awareness, training conference and advocacy. Awareness involves informational campaigns and topic-specific seminars and events to give context and deepness to the theme. It usually takes from 3 to 6 months. The training conference is when the Debate is held, and the participants are all together. There are plenary sessions, workshops, open space and a youth fair, each crafted in alignment with concrete methodology. In addition, usually, there are more non-formal and informal activities according to the specific goals and objectives. Advocacy is a follow-up to promote the results and to stand with the participants' vision. It also draws attention to the topic, raising new questions to be discussed. This completes the circle and the process starts again with raising awareness about them and preparation for the next debate.

Impact after 16 years and 11 editions:

Through the years the following topics were covered: Structural dialogue and young people (2008), The face of young people in society (2009), Youth employment (2010), Youth volunteering (2011), Youth entrepreneurship (2012), Non-formal education (2013), Youth worker (2015), Youth spaces (2017), National meeting of youth organisations (2018), Civil participation Digit On/Off (2019) & Youth work from A to Z (2022).

Thanks to the Debate, these topics are becoming increasingly an essential part of the agenda of youth organisations and decision-makers at local and national levels. An example of this is the popping up of youth spaces in various places around the country. For the local authorities an opportunity and tool they can use to engage with local youth. There are also a lot of explicit and implicit results connected with Bulgarian legislation and the personal and professional development of the participants and young people in the country. One of the most significant so far is the establishment of the National Youth Council of Bulgaria due to the 2010 Debate.

To conclude, what can we take from this example?

One of the most significant effects and results of national meetings for us is that they create a space for networking and sharing, for making communities. It is essential to realise that we are not the only ones working in the field and have unique challenges.

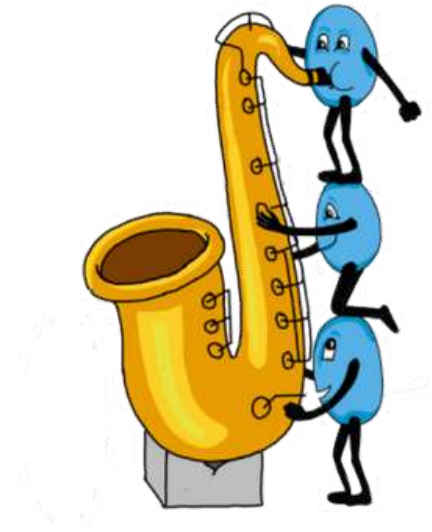
We need to allow ourselves to look around us and find like-minded people with whom we can exchange experiences and look for solutions together. And when it is necessary, to unite so that our voices can be heard and topics that are important for young people and the future of our countries can be put on the agenda of the decision-makers.



The previous stories are very diverse, but have clear parallels when it comes to putting NFE into concrete practice. More than single activities, you have noticed that bigger processes have been set up. Each of these processes are quite different, yet similar.

You could compare them as beautiful unique melodies, but all written with the same music notes. The sequence, duration and order of these music notes make the melody fitting to reality. This is not for a single solo instrument, but for a full orchestra, involving many musicians.

In the next chapter, we explore together how you can concretely compose your own melody. We explore methodology, methods and tools, we deepen the transfer from a single activity to a process and we have a closer look at the pros and cons of using digital tools in NFE. It is now time for you to start dreaming of your own melody and take the steps towards composing.

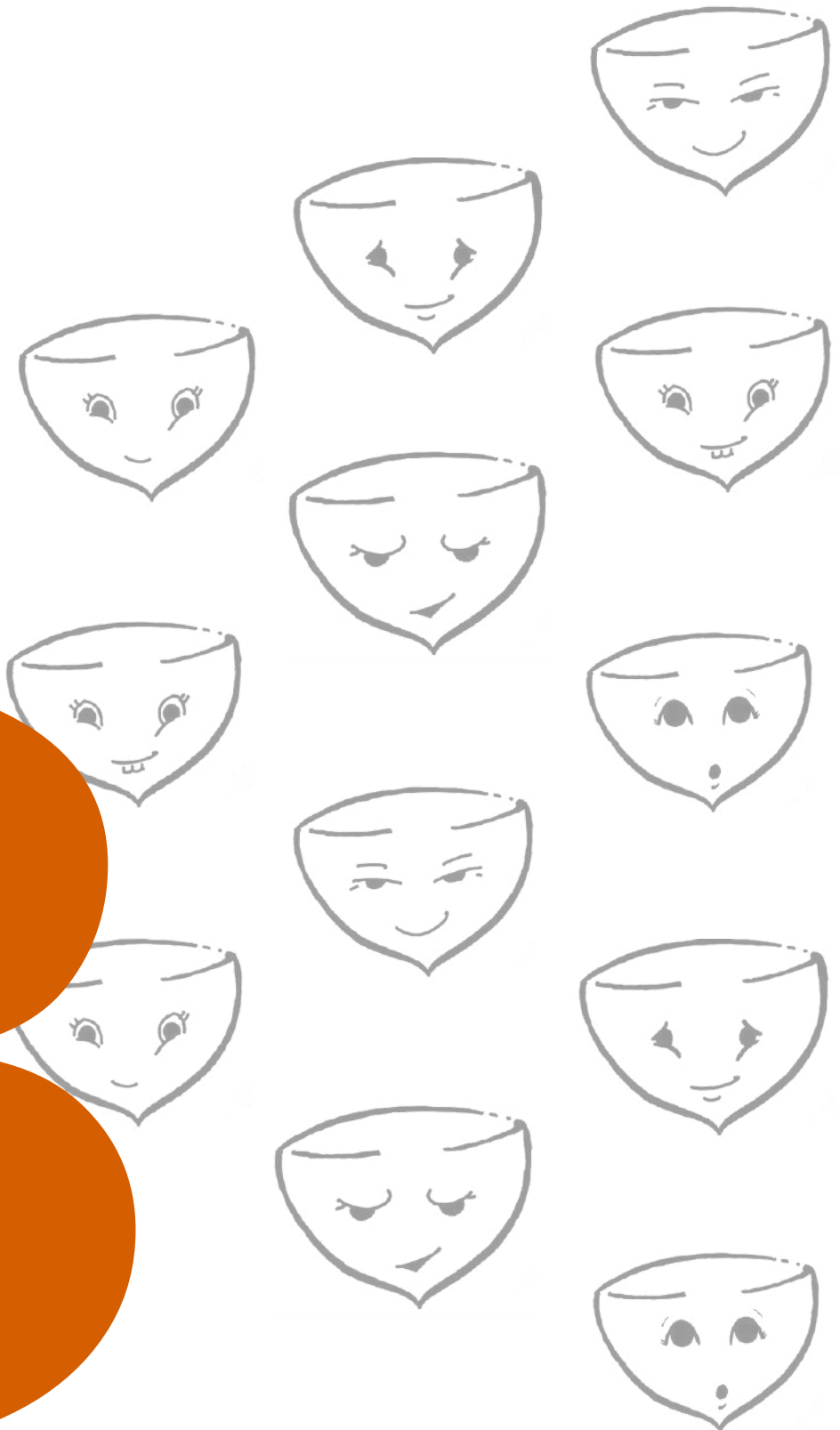


Notes for self!

Methodology

Let's put this into practice

3



The first chapter gave us an insight into what is concretely non-formal education (NFE) and who is the non-formal educator. The second chapter gave a touch of reality and showed us how such NFE processes have a concrete impact on people and communities. In this chapter, it is time to put everything at practice. Together we will explore methodology and what that means concretely in the context of NFE. Then we will make the bridge between single activities and a whole learning process within NFE. This includes the steps from planning to implementing such a process. Additionally: we will tackle the digital dimension of NFE.

3.1. Methodology what do we mean by that?

In this subchapter we go deeper in the specific terminology and processes related to the field of NFE. As in every specific area of practice there is a specific vocabulary and all the words in it are inevitably interlinked between each other to compose a more complex structure.

Here we introduce the meaning of terms like methodology, methods, tools.

Methodology, methods and tools ... what a mess!



How do we see the link between both words?

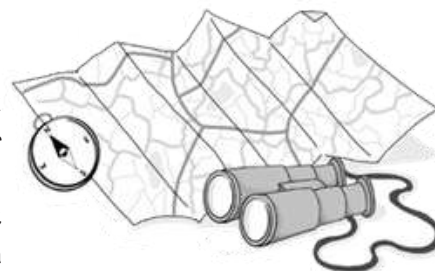
A method is the specific way you do something. It's a step-by-step process for achieving a particular result. For example, following a recipe to bake bread is a method, or in other words: there are many different ways of baking bread. The recipe you choose to follow is the method you choose to bake bread. E.g. different methods to bake bread (in an electric or fire oven, short or long fermentation etc).

A methodology is a broader approach to solving problems. It's a set of principles, procedures, and techniques that guide the use of specific methods. Methodology is like the map that guides the methods. It helps you figure out which method to use in a given situation, and how to use it effectively. E.g. choosing natural or chemical modified ingredients are different principles in your methodology which have a direct impact on the methods you will use to bake bread, once needed procedures to reach the result become different.

Think of it like this: the method is like a road, and the methodology is like the GPS system telling you which road to take to reach your destination, after you define the parameters (by foot, by public transport, by car, shortest or longest way, multiple options and more).

Let's get a bit deeper on this in the context of NFE:

➤ **Methodology** in NFE could be defined as all the methods used. For example, when you're working in a particular field, you might establish a series of questions to ask yourself, identify people's needs, gather information and carry out operations in order to make choices. All of this makes it possible to conduct research or solve a problem or tackle a challenge more efficiently.



To differentiate between method and methodology, we consider that 'NFE methodology' is the philosophy behind the methods used. It's about knowing the "reason" for using a particular method.

Methodology is linked to the educator's beliefs about what he or she observes and how knowledge can be acquired. In non-formal education, the methodology will be in line with the principles of NFE (chapter 1) and the values of the non-formal educator.

➤ **Method(s)** is basically the 'how' we intend to approach something. Firstly, let's demystify the following: there is no such thing as a single method for Implementing NFE. There is also no such thing as a 'non-formal educational method' or "the right method" and "the best method".

A method can be:

- A step-by-step procedure to simplify a task or learning process;
- A description how a set of tools can be used in a certain order and in a certain context;
- An approach that breaks down different times / different work process/ learning sessions
- A know-how or way of doing things developed by a person or a team working in a particular field.

It's all about establishing coherence - and then questioning and verifying it - between the methodology you wish to apply as a non-formal educator, and the different methods you actually use with people.

Tools in non-formal education

When we have chosen a method (the how), the tools are the elements we use in the method to make it possible (the 'with what'). To make this distinction more clear, a few examples.

To explore our own stereotypes we will use the method of a group discussion. For this we will use statements and each participant can express their opinion through a set of opinion cards. These statements and the cards are the needed tools for this particular method.

In subgroups, the participants exchanged opinions on the topic of 'green' and 'sustainability'. Back in the full group, participants are free to express some highlights of their discussions. To organise this moment in such a way that each one listens to each other, you decide to use a teddy bear. The one who has the teddy bear, is allowed to speak. In this example, the teddy bear is the tool you use to support your chosen method.

At the start of a new project, with the group you decided to create firstly a value profile. To explore what values mean for each one, you will use an educational board game exploring values. In this example, the board game is the tool.

The world of non-formal education is highly creative, and overflowing with diverse and varied tools, so don't hesitate to go fishing and make existing tools your own!

To put this into practice:

During learning processes, we usually consume considerable amounts of paper (flipcharts, sticky notes, A4 white papers...). One example of a non-formal education practice implemented on an international Youth Exchange, was: at the last day of the learning process the group of participants was invited to reflect on their learning as part of their self assessment process (methodology). The method used to reflect was through guiding questions. As a sustainable practice, they used the papers from the previous days (tools). After taking their time to reflect upon the written materials and draw personal learning conclusions, the participants were asked to tear the 'used' papers in order to be able to upcycle it and create new papers from it using water (tools). Some of the participants felt uncomfortable with the texture, others with the sounds, so they divided into groups completing the different tasks. At the end, they all went home with a new recycled paper as part of their own reflection, part of a 'green practice' and symbolically with transformed learning.

Looking for methods and tools? Many resources are available and below a couple of interesting links:



Some thoughts to consider when it comes to methodology, methods and tools

- A fixed methodology: what room is there for error, for the unexpected, for change? What room is there for curiosity, for experimentation? Using the example of the road map: does it provide you alternative routes to arrive at the intended destination?
- Methods which are copied and pasted without questioning their meaning (using a method without a clear methodology behind it). Using the example of taking a road: does this road get you closer to your intended destination? The same is valid for tools: are 'debating cards' good tools for every method?
- The reign of the tool: through experience, non-formal educators might have created their own toolbox with a tool to manage every phase, every situation, and every problem. But also bicyclists don't always drive the same bicycle models, so be sure to question the relevance of the tool you use. Using the example of the bicycle: it's not convenient and effective to take a city bicycle into muddy forest roads.
- Methods used are not static, fixed from the beginning. It needs to be readjusted permanently according to the reaction of the groups. It requests permanent monitoring.

To conclude this subchapter: it seems a bit of juggling with dazzling words and abstract meanings. You might still be confused, and maybe even more than before. But bare with us. The next subchapter builds further upon the previous one and clarifies much when getting more into the practice. It supports concretely to put things in order.



3.2. From an activity towards a process

On the next pages, we explore the difference between a single learning activity and a whole learning process. For non-formal educators this is a powerful understanding when we wish to create sustainable and durable impact. We could almost compare it as the difference between simply ‘flirting’ or engaging in a long lasting relationship. Both are enjoyable, but there are clearly fundamental differences. And trust us, these differences go way beyond the element of duration. Stay with us and discover in this chapter how flirting with learning activities can be transformed into an impactful relationship with personal and professional transformation.

From one single activity to a learning process over time, creating more time to work on sustainability of our values through practice.

quick reminder

As a quick reminder: when we refer to ‘activity’ in this manual, we do not just refer to any kind of activity (e.g. ‘football/soccer’). We always refer to ‘a learning activity’ (e.g. using football/soccer to work on teamwork and cooperation competences).

Firstly, let’s clarify what we mean with activity in this manual. We understand activity as a one single session, like an educational exercise, with a limited short time dimension (e.g. from one hour up to half a day).

For the ones experienced in using the European youth programmes (Erasmus+ Programme and European Solidarity Corps), this might be confusing. Erasmus+ uses activity terminology differently and this is not the one we mean here. E.g.: for Erasmus+, a face to face week long training course is considered one activity. In this manual, we see this differently: a training course is a learning process, with a lot of different activities, structured in a meaningful and a coherent way.

Having this clarified, we can have a look at the work we do in non-formal education.

As non-formal educational actors, we usually have ambitious and beautiful values and intentions (cf page 19).

Certainly diversified, but with the wish that what we do is meaningful, improves the lives of people involved and brings something constructive to our local communities towards a better living together.

Defining our general intentions is something that becomes an automated action after some experience in the non-formal educational field. It is a part of our “methodology”.

Different challenges appear when transforming those meaningful pedagogical values and intentions into concrete practice.

Is non-formal education really something serious?

Over the past 20 years, non-formal educators, ourselves, are still confronted with several strong judgemental opinions from outsiders. Instead of being recognised as ‘serious business’, we still harvest much of the opposite. You also might have been confronted already with sentences such as: “You’re only playing games!”, “Do you get paid for that?”, “When will you get a real job?”.

We can indeed be perceived as merely leisure time activities providers by outsiders. And even if those statements upset us, a very common justification from our side sounds as: “Ach, that is not true but don’t bother, they do not understand what we do.” In addition, we tend to comfort ourselves with statements like “what we do has an added value, invisible for the majority and visible for the few”.

And what if those strong confrontational statements do have a grain of truth?

If we are not taken seriously, is that because they don’t see clearly the purpose of our work?

Or maybe because we are not able to explain in clear words the purpose of our work. Do we manage to show concrete results of the work we do through non-formal education? True, much of the impact we create is not immediately visible (e.g. working on respect, cooperation, diversity) and we refer to our ‘long term effect’. If so, let’s make sure we have the needed indicators to support our own statement.

Let’s explore here our coherence between what we stand for and the activities we organise?

The methodology trap: when the HOW comes up constantly (even unconsciously), while the WHY and the WHAT FOR is not clearly defined.

Imagine: you start a new project, with colleagues, friends, partners or simply a group of people around you.

The first step: what can we concretely do together?

Often, professionals are trained to first define educational intentions, followed by the objectives (general, specific, operational). We know that only after all of this, we can work on the “how”. In short, we know the theory, and still ... it's so easy to slip quickly, often too quickly, immediately to the “how and what”: which activities, the program design, etc.

The above does not mean there is only one right way and many wrong ways. We can get stuck in defining our educational goals. Going first to the concrete “how” can be an effective way to unblock the situation. Yet, the permanent dialogue between ‘the why’, ‘the what for’ and ‘the how’ remains a fundamental point here, if we wish to remain coherent between what we stand for and what we’ll do in practice to reach it.



As illustration, here a little exercise you can do yourself, or even better, with your colleagues:

- ① As an NGO or another NFE structure, have a look at your legal regulations, the official presentation of your organisation and the main aims.
- ② Then, list all the daily activities you do. When it is done, try to connect all the daily things you do with the main aim / objectives of your organisation. Use the grid below.

The main objectives of your structure	For each of the objectives, list all the daily activities / tasks done by the team

How many and which of the concrete activities can you connect to the objectives? And how many do not directly connect? Depending on the ratio between the both, It can raise some questions.

- ① What's the relevance of the activities which do not have any connection with the objectives?
- ② Vice-versa: if some of our aims / objectives have zero connections with what we do daily, are those aims / objectives still relevant?
- ③ How can we concretely answer the blank spots in the grid? Adding objectives, or adding activities?

Some suggestions to avoid this trap...

To simplify our aims / objectives: from (too) general to very concrete.

In other words, how to make it as concrete as possible. For this you can have different models and approaches. (If you want to have more insights on this, see the T-Kit on project management + page 91)



This is often how we formulate our aims or objectives. Is that good enough or too general? Let's have a closer look: 🔍

"To promote active participation of young people."

Yes but where? In what?

- ➡ within our own organisation?
- ➡ in the associative life of our local community?
- ➡ in the political life of our territory?

The above are different dimensions and the choice will have serious consequences in relation to the needed activities to reach this aim or objectives.

**To translate those objectives
into very concrete desired impact.**

It can be difficult to reach our expected impact. Yet, we should not use this as an excuse not to work on it. How can we know if we're going in the right direction if we have no clue where we want to go?

How can we evaluate our work if we don't know concretely what we want to achieve?

Let's be as concrete as possible and take the previous exercise a step further: "To promote active participation of young people." towards "To promote active participation of young people within our organisation".



Another step further,
to translate it into concrete expected impact:

- minimum one young person enters the board (decision making body) of our organisation;
- the creation of a youth-led council inside the management of our organisation;
- at least two young people will organise a minimum of three workshops for other young people;
- one youngster competent in IT will train the staff on using social media for visibility purposes.

This makes the meaning and direction of our work easier, it leads to defining our work more coherent to reach the concrete expected impact.

Next step: what can we design in terms of a non-formal educational process to reach this?



Notes for self!

From concrete expected impact to the design of a non-formal educational process.

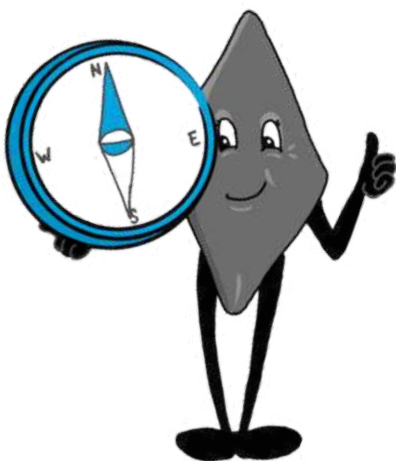
We invite you to reflect upon the following questions:

- Are the activities we organise really coherent with the concrete impact we want to achieve? Is our programme a coherent process or just a patchwork of different activities, with no real visible links to our set objectives?
- Don't we go too fast into easy one-off activities?
- Does the length of our pedagogical process influence the sustainability of the concrete expected impact of our work?

The purpose of our activities

It is clear that we can not expect to use only one activity to reach the expected concrete impact we have described just above.

Here is the difference between activity and process.



Is our non-formal educational work limited to organising activities, or combining different activities in order to build a step by step educational journey? In our view: we use activities to build a non-formal educational process for the people we work for and with. Our activities are not here by chance, but each activity represents a step on the staircase that will take us to the impact identified at the start (and possible other unexpected impacts). The sequence of activities connects the identified learning needs towards the intended result and impact.

In other words, if we try to link these lines here with the chapter of Methodology - our activities are a combination of methods (and using tools), that we run inline with a specific methodology in order to answer to identified learning needs with the aim to reach our intended impact.

If you want to know more about the difference between methodology, methods and tools, go on page 77 to 79.

To resume how we see the different steps in order to design a non-formal educational process: the project we design should be the link between identified needs on the field and concrete desired impact, as 'the why' and 'the what for' should come before 'the how'.

Before we move on with the next subchapter which deals with the concrete set up and planning of learning activities and processes, the following case study shows nicely how an activity might have a different purpose and result than initially expected or anticipated.

WHEN THE PURPOSE AND PROCESS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN AN ACTIVITY.

A case story

This is a real story that happened in Palestine, in December 2018. For the confidentiality of the people involved in this story, we name the organisation as X and the trainers as the trainers.

It was a cold December afternoon, the trainers were sitting in a cosy cafe drinking some hot tea with cinnamon, when they received a phone call from X asking to help them with a specific group of volunteers, and the employees working with that particular group. The request: to implement a 2 days training course about Gender and Sexuality in a very conservative city in Palestine. “Be brutally honest about sexual identity, they need it.”

The trainers planned the course keeping in the back of their minds the sentence they heard from the project coordinator: “Be brutally honest about sexual identity, they need it.”. The trainers got all the information they needed from X. Logistical planning was done, learning process was planned, aim and objectives were identified with the support and coordination between X and the trainers.

First day of the process, after breaking the ice and getting to know each other, the trainers started with a simple activity. “The Genderbread person”, which is a tool used in the NFE field to explain sexual identity with all its elements, and allows the participants to reflect on their own. What happened next was not expected.

15 minutes after starting this activity and when diving into the elements of sexual identity, all the male employees and volunteers came up with an excuse to leave the room. When 15 minutes later we finished the input part, a majority of the older female employees came up with an excuse to leave the room, leaving behind mainly the young female volunteers and the X coordinator.

A few older women stayed in the room out of courtesy, and the trainers were aware of that. The surprise was however that the younger generation of women stayed, implementing the activity and analysing their own genderbread person.

In this case, the trainers kind of expected that some employees would 'escape'. The expectation was that this would happen after finishing the input and half way through. The possible and expected general running away from this topic idea was on the table and discussed before with the X coordinator. The real surprise for the trainers was having the younger female volunteers staying for the whole activity and being able to analyse and use the tools provided to better understand themselves. The trainers haven't heard anything from the participants that have left the room with an excuse, they didn't come back. The trainers and the X coordinator were prepared for such a situation.

After finishing the 2 days training about 'Gender and Sexuality' in this traditional city, the X coordinator and the young female volunteers asked the trainers for materials and intellectual outputs regarding the topic. They implemented a second training the year after for another group of volunteers in another city.

The aim of that training was to introduce the topic, because that group of volunteers and employees were a group of first aid volunteers in the X organisation. And an important part of their job is to be aware.

At the very end, even if it seems the 'activity' failed, the process was successful and reached the intended impact.





GENDER IDENTITY

- Woman-ness
- Man-ness
- non-binary/ agender
- Gender fluid

personality traits, jobs, hobbies, likes, dislikes, roles, expectations

common GENDER IDENTITY things



SEXUALLY ATTRACTED TO ... and/or (a/o)

- Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People
- Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People
- No-binary person /agender/ gender fluid
- Asexual person



ATTRANCE ROMANTIQUE

- Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People
- Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People
- No-binary person /agender/ gender fluid
- Aromantic person



SEXE ANATOMIQUE

- Female-ness
- Male-ness
- Intersex

body hair, chest, hips, shoulders, hormones, penis, vulva, chromosomes, voice pitch

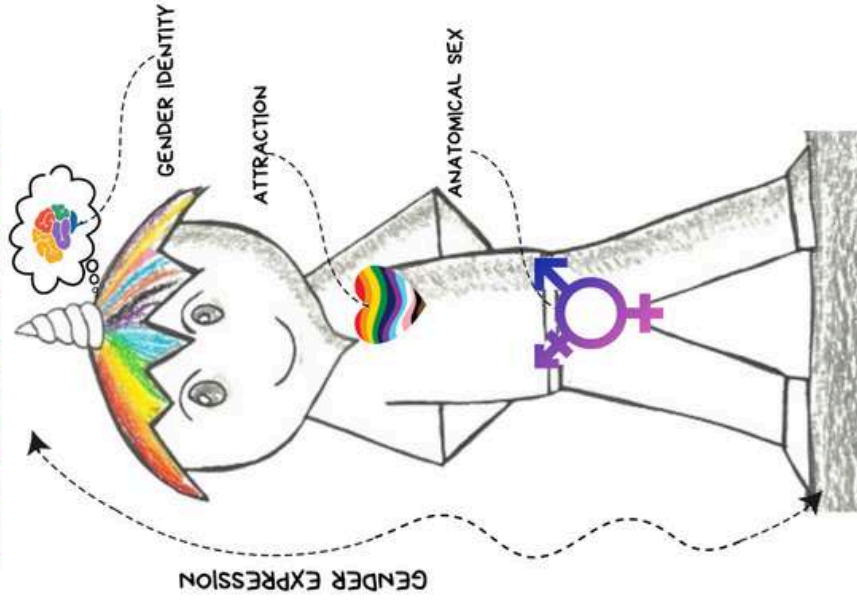
common ANATOMICAL SEX things

- ☐ Female ☐ Intersex ☐ Male

Typically based solely on external genitalia present at birth (ignoring internal anatomy, biology, and change throughout life). Sex Assigned At Birth (SAAB) is key for distinguishing between the terms "cisgender" (when SAAB aligns with gender identity) and transgender (when it doesn't).

⊘ Means a lack of what's on the right side

THE GENDER PERSON



GENDER EXPRESSION

Inspired by genderbread person version 4 created and uncopyrighted 2027 by Sam Killermann. For a bigger bite, read more at www.genderbread.org

EXPRESSION DE GENRE

- ⊘ → Femininity
- ⊘ → Masculinity
- ⊘ → No binary/agender
- ⊘ → Gender fluid

IDENTITY \neq EXPRESSION \neq SEX
GENDER \neq SEXUAL ORIENTATION

THE GENDER PERSON

GENDER IS ONE OF THOSE THINGS EVERYONE THINKS THEY UNDERSTAND, BUT MOST PEOPLE DON'T. GENDER ISN'T BINARY. IT'S NOT EITHER/OR. IN MANY CASES IT'S BOTH/AND. A BIT OF THIS, A DASH OF THAT. THIS TASTY LITTLE GUIDE IS MEANT TO BE AN APPETIZER FOR GENDER UNDERSTANDING. IT'S OKAY IF YOU'RE HUNGRY FOR MORE AFTER READING IT. IN FACT, THAT'S THE IDEA.

GENDER IDENTITY

IS HOW YOU, IN YOUR HEAD, EXPERIENCE AND DEFINE YOUR GENDER, BASED ON HOW MUCH YOU ALIGN (OR DON'T ALIGN) WITH WHAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE OPTIONS FOR GENDER TO BE.

ATTRACTION

IS HOW YOU FIND YOURSELF FEELING DRAWN (OR NOT DRAWN) TO SOME OTHER PEOPLE. IN SEXUAL, ROMANTIC, AND/OR OTHER WAYS (OFTEN CATEGORIZED WITHIN GENDER).

ANATOMICAL SEX

IS THE PHYSICAL TRAITS YOU'RE BORN WITH OR DEVELOP THAT WE THINK OF AS "SEX CHARACTERISTICS", AS WELL AS THE SEX YOU ARE ASSIGNED AT BIRTH.

GENDER EXPRESSION

IS HOW YOU PRESENT GENDER (THROUGH YOUR ACTIONS, CLOTHING, AND DEemeanor, TO NAME A FEW), AND HOW THOSE PRESENTATIONS ARE VIEWED BASED ON SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS.

This Gender Person is a suggestion that you can make your own by doing it to better understand who you are or to help other people understand themselves better. You can also adapt it by modifying and/or adding to it based on your own experience and that of those around you.

3.3. Planning NFE Processes and Activities

Let's start this subchapter with the following metaphor.

Imagine you are fond of pizza. You are excited (and hungry) when ordering your favourite pizza. Similar to the proverb "The eyes are bigger than the stomach", you decide to order the XL sized pizza. More than probably, you will simply not finish this XL pizza and leave some slices on your plate. Taking them home in a carton box to eat them - maybe, at a later stage. This later is still to be seen, once you have stretched yourself already and the 'pizza-desire' is more than satisfied, if not over-satisfied.



In this perspective, it might have been smarter and cheaper to order a regular size pizza. This would have allowed you to finish the full pizza and still have enthusiasm for another one in the nearby future.



Let's transfer this metaphor to the educational activities we organise.

The XL pizza refers to our enthusiasm when ambitiously organising an educational activity. Yet, time is limited or runs out and parts of your educational set up are not possible anymore. These parts are postponed to - maybe - later.

Unfortunately, this part is most often left to be the last one, but in fact it is the most important stretch in your educational flow: the debriefing and learning reflection.

A pity ... once this part is the initial reason you organised the activity.

Summary: "Small is beautiful". Make sure you have enough time to have all the educational phases of your activity.

A tip:



start with planning the time needed for your activity from the end to the beginning, instead of the opposite.

Learning process and activities

As identified previously in this manual, when we speak about an activity we understand it has a limited amount of time and it is part of a bigger learning process. E.g.: a training course is a non-formal learning process that has several activities inside, which are -together- answering to the set learning objectives.



So: what is a non-formal learning process? How to design it? What are the specific steps we need to follow when planning such a learning process? Is there a fixed recipe or a mathematical formula to follow?

When thinking about this learning process, we have in mind three different timelines: the 'pre', the 'during' and the 'after'. We will explore together which are the main steps in each timeline, keeping in mind that you need to adapt them according to the frame you are working with, the objectives, the target group, the setting, the context and other variables (unforeseen happenings: weather conditions, electricity shut down, ...).



Notes for self!

→ The pre phase (the planning):

1) Observing and identifying a need.

You need to know the target group you are working with to know the relations between the participants and the context they live in.

- Do they know each other from before or not?
- Has this group worked on such topics before?
- What does the group identify as a challenge, need or interest?

Preparing the activities according to their needs, not forgetting to take into consideration their vulnerabilities E.g; if you work in a community centre, or in a school where there are discriminatory acts against religious minorities, this could mean that there is a need to work on topics such as discrimination, respect, diversity and inclusion.

2) Setting aims and objectives.

Have a clear aim of what you want to achieve, and plan a set of objectives that goes coherently with the needs of the target you're working with. E.g.: continuing with the same example, you aim to have a safe and inclusive community centre or classroom without religious discrimination. In order to achieve that, it is necessary to set at the beginning which is the impact you aim to reach (to learn more about the meaning of impact go to page 23).

There are different models that can support you in defining your objectives, one very practical well known model is S.M.A.R.T.:

- S: Specific;
- M: Measurable;
- A: Achievable;
- R: Realistic;
- T: Time bound.



An example of a general objective: “People know each other's name”. We gladly admit, it is far from an exciting example, but it serves very well the purpose. Following SMART, this objective would be worded as: “By the end of the training course, all 20 participants know each other's name.”

Analysing this objective:

- S: Specific; yes, all participants.
- M: Measurable; yes, we can check it by asking.
- A: Achievable; yes, the group is small enough.
- R: Realistic; yes, after a few days with the needed methods (e.g. name games).
- T: Time bound: yes, the end of the training course.

It is not possible to formulate all objectives in a SMART manner, but at least it's worth trying. Fuzzy objectives give you the impression of measuring something, while in fact this is a fake and comforting "advantage" because what is reached is often very subjective and vague. And that is exactly what we have to avoid in non-formal education.

Remember: non-formal education IS serious business.

3) Planning the learning process according to the learning objectives

The learning process can be a short (half a day), a medium (a week) or a long term process (several months) according to the needs of the target group, the learning objectives and the available resources such as time, money, people, space To create a step-by-step plan you need to have outlined sessions within a coherent flow: sequenced activities, clear objectives, time allocations, the material needed, the methods to be used and how to use them, the debriefing questions.

Remember to be ready to change and adapt it, and to be flexible for unexpected challenges. Keep in mind in which moment of the day you intend to implement the different activities, as this will influence the level of attention of people. A morning has different energy than late in the evening after a full day. Use different resources and methods, to make the learning experience engaging and for different learning styles.

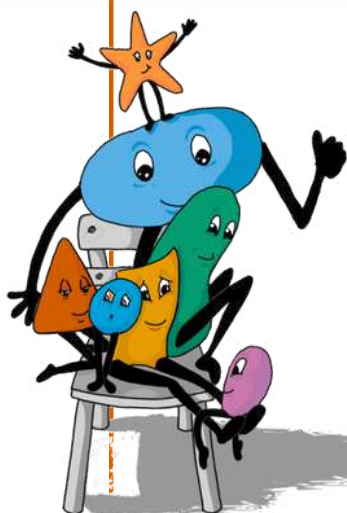


This not only because we all learn in different ways, but because varying the tools, forms and rhythms of activities can potentially enable participants to go further in their learning and to remain more focused. It's also a way of being "fair" and not favouring one dominant form over others. Combine learning at the individual and group levels, so that participants support and inspire each other in their learning process through group dynamics. And trust them in their ability to learn: being in charge of your own learning process increases the capacity to choose according to your own needs.

Overall, planning involves many aspects:

- a) Plan the learning: prepare the overall time frame and schedule according to the learning objectives. In this phase you choose activities (combination of methods) that will support the learners in reaching the learning outcomes that you set. Coming back to our previous example, if the objective is to make the classroom inclusive towards all religious minorities, you need to choose or create appropriate methods for your activity that takes into consideration all diverse backgrounds and beliefs of the group. In this case you can use the musical chairs activity, by appropriating it to serve your objectives of promoting inclusivity as explained in the box:

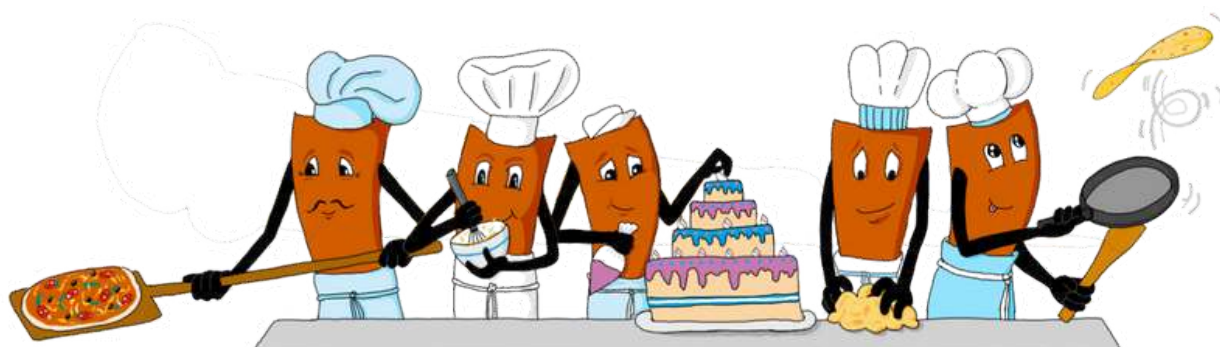
Musical chairs activity: exclusion versus inclusion.



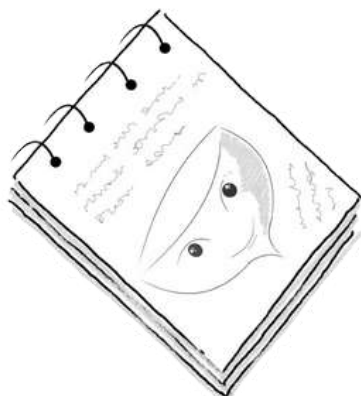
The most common and classic version of this activity is to be the last player remaining in the circle. There is one less chair than the number of players, and when the music stops everyone rushes to find a chair to sit in. That player with no chair is eliminated from the challenge, and one chair is removed for the next round.

To make it more inclusive, instead of eliminating participants from the activity, each time the music stops you will take away one chair and the participants will have to find a system to be sitting all on the remaining chairs.

- b) Plan the logistics: when, where, materials, finances, people involved, practicalities such as if you need a presence list or not, privacy forms signed for the dissemination afterwards, food needs, work and living room conditions in case of residential activities. Let's have a look at the non-exhaustive list of logistics for organising an activity and a process. In a metaphorical way, we can compare this with cooking a meal. When cooking one meal, that can be straightforward and without too much hassle. When you are asked to cook a full week for the group, that is another adventure. Looking at the balance of proteins and nutrients, a needed variation of ingredients, a longer preparation of shopping list, looking at how leftover food can be integrated in the soup of the next day and more. When it comes to food allergies and food choices as vegan or vegetarian, that remains the same for both situations. And so it goes for both an activity and a process: they have similar aspects, but not all the same.



- c) Plan the monitoring and evaluation process: in order to evaluate you need to decide what to evaluate (the learning process, the team work, the impact, the logistics...) and how to do it (using a form, making interviews...). Monitoring is intended as a continuous process of reviewing and checking during your activity/ies.



Example of checklist for logistics for one activity/one day workshop:

	Date and duration of the activity
	Space/venue needed (inside, outside or both options, maximum accessibility, toilettes, natural light and its impact on the session E.g: if you want to project something but there is no way to blackout the windows). Do you have the key? Is the space big enough for the group and the planned dynamic?
	Are there any 'house rules' you should be aware of? (e.g. noise level). Is there a first aid kit?
	Visibility poster/campaign (if applicable)
	Equipments needed (chairs, tables, audio and visual equipment, laptop, speakers, multiplug and extension wires... and If they work)
	Stationery materials (papers, handouts needed for specific activities, pens, markers, paper-tape...) and are there recycling boxes foreseen? Can you make copies on the spot or not? Small materials (ball, etc) available if needed?
	Meals (for breaks and lunch and/or dinner if applicable)
	Budgeting (keep track of the budget available and the cost for this activity)
	If a clean up is required at the end: is there cleaning material?

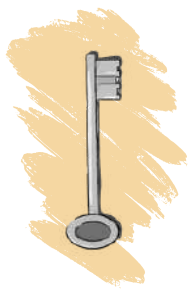
	Date and duration of the process
	Visibility poster / campaign (if applicable)
	Selection of participants and data request for logistics (e.g.: date of birth, country of residence, food requirements, medical conditions, travel info)
	Accommodation and accessibility (where and how - singles, double or twin, triple room). Is the place equipped for hosting people with different abilities?
	Transport for and to the Venue/ Accommodation place or for other program activities. What are options available for participants to relax and do in informal times (e.g. a park, sauna etc).
	Space/venue needed for the session (inside, outside or both options, maximum accessibility, toilettes, natural light and its impact on the session. E.g.: if you want to project something, but there is no way to blackout the windows). Do you have the key? Is the space big enough for the group and the planned dynamic?
	Are there any 'house rules' you should be aware of? (e.g. noise level). Is there a first aid kit?
	Info pack/Info letter with all the information and program of the week
	Meals (breakfast, breaks, lunches and dinners)
	Insurance for the entire activity
	Equipment needed (chairs, tables, audio and visual equipment, laptop, speakers, multiplug and extension wires... and If they work).
	Stationery materials (papers, handouts needed for specific activities, pens, markers, paper-tape...) and are there recycling boxes foreseen? Can you make copies on the spot or not? Small materials (ball, etc) available if needed?
	Budgeting (keep track of the budget available and the cost for this activity. Ask to different providers to have different possibilities)
	Is regular cleaning of the work areas foreseen or do you do that? Is there cleaning material?

The during phase (the implementation):

The implementation is in fact the running of the activity/ies you planned in the previous phase. Going back to our first example: your implementation could happen in the community centre or the school once a week if that's how you planned it.

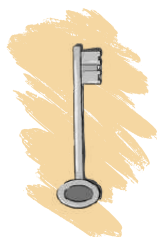
Let's focus on the running of one activity.

The first part is the introduction: clear explanation and an understandable set of rules are crucial to achieve the learning objectives. Keep in mind that each activity needs to be introduced according to what best serves the purpose of the activity itself. For example, some activities should not be revealed in details as the purpose is to discover together during the implementation, while others need **frontloading**.



Frontloading in the educational context means to announce the key learning points before the activity or the experience takes place. Frontloading can be easier and more in the comfort zone for some people. While backloading is the opposite and might be more exciting for others, yet it brings a layer of uncertainty. Both approaches have disadvantages and advantages and should be chosen according to the type of activity, to the objectives and to the group. One benefit of frontloading is to support the participants in setting the purpose and intention for the activity, by asking about the aims of the activity and what can be learned from the experience. In general be aware of overwhelming participants with too much frontloading. Meanwhile, one major benefit of backloading is the increased level of excitement and curiosity among participants who often start asking "What is happening here?". The learning objective is somehow "hidden" or at least it is not openly stated in the beginning. However, too much backloading might bring down motivation among some participants. In short: too much of each is negative, and both create a different learning experience.

Each of us has a different style to introduce an activity, so here the "personal touch" of the non-formal educator will make the difference. But the suggestion is to create the atmosphere according to the type of activity, to use a bit of story telling technique, the music, visual supports or different scenarios according to the objectives.



Some activities could be triggering for participants, depending on their own personal previous experiences and the topic you are working on. If you doubt that a certain topic could be emotionally challenging for the participants, it is important to give a trigger warning in advance, before diving into action.

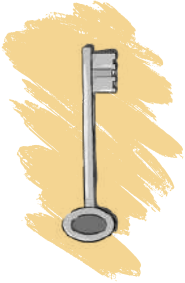
Think in advance about the space of your activity, all details in the plenary have an influence on your learning journey: the light, the decoration, the materials, the music and so on. For example: you can use the music to relax, or as a smooth and soft background, or on the contrary on high volume to give energy during a moment of boosting attention. For many events in our life we give lots of attention to the decoration and details, be it a birthday party, a wedding or simply receiving good friends at home. The same attention given to your activity is much appreciated and well noted by the participants.

Another thing to consider during the implementation is that conflicts or disagreements can arise. When this happens, they can and should be part of the learning process and shouldn't be ignored, they are part of the process of change. This is not something that can be fully predicted but a competence that is trained by experience. The non-formal educator should be able to identify the source of the conflict and with the group define measures to approach it. Nevertheless, this is something difficult to do at the start of your practice, so it's important to guarantee the creation and continuous monitoring of the safe space.



Take the previous example to illustrate the steps of one way of conflict management.

- The conflict is: prejudices against other religions from the group of participants.
- The method used in managing the conflict: dividing the participants into smaller groups sitting around a table. Each group has at least one participant practising a different religion. Prepare in advance guiding questions which support understanding the different religions and the stereotypes related to them. Every table receives one question. Give the participants 15 minutes to discuss the question and write their answers. Then rotate the questions along the tables. After all rotations are done, bring the group back to plenary and debrief with them.
- The results: more understanding about other realities, beliefs and acceptance of the differences.



Once the “action” part or the experience of the activity is over, the next step is the analysis about what has happened during the activity itself. The “thinking” part of the learning process. This is what we call the debriefing. We review, analyse, link with reality and think how to put into action the learnings. This part is also composed by different steps which we explore further on.

Debriefing is a crucial step in non-formal education that allows participants to analyse and understand their experiences, consolidate their learning, and make connections to real-life situations. Let’s say that the debriefing is what makes an activity educational, and not just ‘a game’. It is actually the essence of our educational work.



Debriefing is an integral part of the activity that happens usually at the end of the implementation, being a roleplay, simulation, team challenges, video or other. It is basically a discussion facilitated to support participants in their learning process. We like to refer to the Kolb cycle, the entire activity is implemented following the steps of the cycle: having the actual experience, reflecting on the experience, learning from the experience and trying out what you have learned.

Debriefing has different phases, which you might adapt to yours and your target group needs. One possible flow is the following:

- ① tackling emotions;
- ② what happened in the activity;
- ③ learning outputs;
- ④ connection to reality;
- ⑤ what's next.

Be constantly aware that debriefing is not a group therapy session, but the fundamental part of the educational process. Here are some important tips to keep in mind while debriefing:

- De-roling". Before the debriefing, support the participants to get out of their characters in case of a roleplay type of activity. This step can be considered already part of the debriefing or happen in the activity itself.
- Safe space. Create a safe and non judgmental environment. It is very important that people don't feel judged for what they did, or did not do, say or did not say during the activity. As a non-formal educator, you can always suggest to the participants to take some peers time at the end of the debriefing in case of need.
- Emotions acknowledgment. We underline again that it is not a therapy session, even if you as a non-formal educator have a psychological background. Keep in mind that this is a non-formal educational activity which can be very powerful emotionally. It is essential to give enough space to express emotions, and it's not about solving deep personal problems.
- Avoid asking WHY questions while tackling the emotions. Is not your job as a non-formal educator to analyse why they felt the way they did, but to invite the learner to identify and understand what they felt. The 'why' question provokes a defensive answer, rather than an exploring one. Ask instead questions like: At which moment of the activity you felt like this? What could be reasons that caused you to feel this?
- Open questions. Ask questions to make them reflect and to think critically. Remember that if you ask a question that has a yes or no answer, you will get a yes or no answer.
- Active listening. Don't impose opinions. it's always a great support to take notes while following the discussion.
- Reality links. Encourage learners to make links between the activity and the real life;
- Learnings. Encourage to identify the learnings, and possible applications of the learning outputs.
- Leave space. Don't be scared of silence, don't try to fill the silence, but be flexible and prepare different questions in different formulas to reach the learning objectives.



Reflection on learning

Other essential parts of the learning process are the reflection moments. These moments could be connected directly to a specific activity, or more general on the learning outputs. Remember that it's necessary to allocate time to reflect throughout the process allowing participants to connect their experiences with the learning objectives.







This can be organised during or at the end of the entire process, giving time to self-reflect, providing different reflection tools, or critical thinking questions about what they learned during the specific activities or the entire process. Additionally, setting a peer to peer talk time.

According to your target group and available time, you can use different tools, such as drawing, short videos, learning diary, inspirational cards, collages, going into nature, and also listening to the suggestions of the participants.

"What's next?" (evaluation and monitoring):

The evaluation of a learning process and an activity is an essential part of NFE. It allows us to continue the work in a better way, by adapting to participants' feedback.

It's important for non-formal educators to plan in advance what are the parts they are interested in evaluating regarding the learning process. For example:

-  you might want to evaluate your performance as a non-formal educator;
-  the team work done with the other (non-formal) educators;
-  the group dynamic;
-  if the learning objectives have been met;
-  the logistical aspects of your activity;
-  the impact.

The participants should get the opportunity to express their opinion on the learning experience they have lived, and assess their own participation.

You can use several methods to evaluate, and there are several publications⁴ that can give you endless ideas regarding evaluation.

Here, in this manual, we will focus more on clarifying the diverse terminologies that are constantly used in the international NFE field, being aware that the terminology in different languages has different wordings.

Debriefing: analysing and understanding what has happened during the different phases of the activity. Exploring the purpose(s) of the activity and transferring the conclusions to one's own reality.

Self-assessment: Self-assessment is a process in which a person evaluates their own learning in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours. It is an ongoing process of thinking deeply using diverse methods on how and what has been learned. A moment for the learner to define which learning will and can be used in their reality.

Important note

Through self-assessment it is powerful to understand the learning. Yet, more important might be the transfer to their own reality through concrete action.

Monitoring: the ongoing coherency check between educators and participants to adjust and adapt the activities according to the aims and objectives.

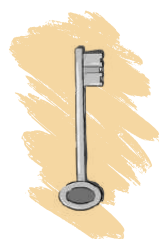
The monitoring process is not just a momental situation at the end of a learning experience, it is a continuous experience during the entire learning process.

Evaluation: is the final step of the implementation of a learning process, used to gather data and feedback, in order to improve the implementation in the future.

An element which we need to underline as one of the core aspects of NFE is the “self-directed learning”, which means that the learner is the one identifying their learning and therefore will be the one evaluating their learning outputs.

This means that it's not the task of the non-formal educator to tell what has been learned or not, nor to "grade".

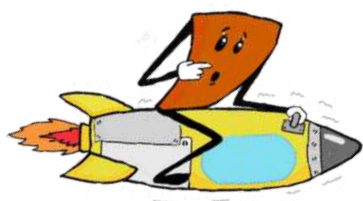
When we talk about learning, we talk specifically about competences. By that we mean the holistic approach to learning, in which a competence includes 4 different dimensions: knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours. Let's explain that through our example of religious minority discrimination in a community centre/classroom.



If you as a non-formal educator aim to support the participants in developing a competence: being less discriminatory towards a religious minority by using inclusive language. You support the participants to:

- gain knowledge about other religions;
- get skills in inclusive non discriminatory languages and how to include people with diverse religious backgrounds in discussions;
- to develop an attitude towards accepting others and at the end to behave accordingly.

We work towards a holistic approach to learning. The roots of the word holistic comes from Greek origins and that it means "entire" or "all". And that's how the holistic approach works in NFE: you work on the entire learning with the participants.



To be able to gain new competences and improve existing ones, you support the participants in extending their comfort zone and stretching their learning zone. (to know more about it, go to chapter 1, pages 29 to 31)

To conclude this subchapter: how big will your pizza be? We believe that this works two ways. If you are restricted by time and resources, then that will influence the size (and probably the ingredients) of the pizza. Otherwise, adapt the environment and conditions around you, to make sure the entire ambitious and delicious XXL pizza is fully enjoyed. There is already too much food waste in our realities, let's avoid an additional learning-waste.

This brings us directly to the next subchapter. We can order pizza online and have it delivered, or we can simply order at the counter. Both have the same objective: providing pizza for our learners. Yet, both are different roads to the same destination, with different advantages and challenges. Have a look.



3.4. Digital Tools & non-formal education

“ ... I heard my 7 year old son speaking in a loud voice. This drew my attention. I was convinced he was alone in his room. Unless he brought a friend over, which I was unaware about. Confused and with triggered curiosity, I started my investigation. With feather light steps I approached his bedroom door. Not light enough though, as he heard me and called. ‘Enter’, he said, ‘I’m doing my homework together with my tablet’. That was the day I discovered you don’t need to type your search, you can simply engage in a chat with a virtual ‘it’...”



In the rapidly evolving world of education in general, combining digital tools and non-formal education has become a reality in transformative learning experiences. This short paragraph gives a glimpse into non-formal education in the digital age, discussing its importance and the variety of digital tools that enhance learning in general.

Non-formal education can benefit from digital tools, as with other aspects of our lives. The effect on the process can be both positive or negative. In the best case it can offer new opportunities for engagement, personalisation and accessibility.

One of the positive sides of using digital tools in non-formal education is using more diverse learning opportunities.



Online platforms, webinars, blended learning, and interactive modules overcome geographical boundaries, providing learners access to educational resources and connections regardless of location. In this way, more opportunities can be provided to learners worldwide.

This inclusion is especially important for those with difficulty accessing traditional educational settings.

Important note

Blended learning is an approach to learning that combines face-to-face and online learning experiences.

Digital tools can go well hand in hand with in-person training courses or activities. A short and not exhaustive list:

- A preparatory online meeting to 'get to know each other' as the start of icebreaking.
- Previous sharing of resources, or simply a challenge or task
- Using a Word cloud creator to visualise the answers of participants to specific questions, or results of group-works.
- Collecting the different materials and resources produced during the sessions in one online folder or a "wall".
- Using an online survey for collecting feedback once the activity is finished.
- A virtual space for follow-up and to remain in touch on distance.
- Quick polls to set dates of meetings, decide on a title, etc

Digital tools can also enable the delivery of personalised learning experiences through online dimension. Adaptive and flexible learning platforms, AI (Artificial Intelligence)-driven exercises, and interactive content allow learners to progress at their own pace, engage more and focus on areas that require attention, or diversify the methods you can use during an in-person activity.

E.g. you could use one application to implement a treasure hunt with your group of participants or to have the support of an online survey to ask questions and see the results appearing on the screen. It is the non-formal educators' choice which is the best method and tool to use to reach the activity's objective.



Along with the benefits, it has challenges as well. The digital divide, characterised by unequal technological access and digital skills, should always be considered. Not everyone has access to the Internet, devices or adequate space to participate fully. The financial and environmental costs should also be thought about. Most of the platforms have a paid subscription. There are some possibilities for educational and non-profit organisations to have free access, but they are still limited. Also, it is a common misunderstanding that using digital tools is eco-friendly and sustainable when it is not that much. The resources needed for the production of devices, their maintenance, and responsible disposal are enormous and usually stay out of the conversation.

To have an idea, you can check how much it costs to keep one email in your email account. The carbon print is something that we need to take into account.



What are the positive and less positive aspects of using digital tools?

The integration of digital tools requires careful consideration. The temptation to prioritise flashy technology should be in line with your core values and principles. Non-formal educators should balance innovation and educational efficacy to maximise the benefits of digital tools, not just use them for the sake of using them. Remember: tools are supporting the method you have selected.

As digital tools are also used increasingly more in non-formal education, fostering digital literacy becomes a key priority, too. Learners need access to technology and the competences to navigate and critically engage with digital content.

Scratch Moodle Flipgrid Padlet
Miro Google Classroom Others Kahoot!
Canva Sli.do Quizlet Mentimeter

But why not ask directly to an AI what their thoughts are about this? We asked ChatGPT to generate a recommendation on digital tools and non-formal education:

“Combining digital tools with non-formal education offers a transformative opportunity for personalised and engaging learning experiences. To make the most of this synergy, stakeholders should embrace the diversity of digital tools, promote collaboration, prioritise accessibility, blend traditional and digital approaches, and emphasise the role of non-formal education in supporting lifelong learning. By doing so, we can create an inclusive and innovative educational landscape that meets the evolving needs of learners in the digital age.”

Well...this is what ChatGPT says... and you, what do you think about that?



If we like it or not, being a hardcore defender or the opposite: this is now the reality. It is our challenge to measure and take the usefulness of the digital tools and online world towards our set learning objectives. And some food for thought: regardless of our preference or not to use these tools: what's the preference of the learners? And where is the balance between both? After all, we do promote and support self-directed learning in non-formal education. Or would that suddenly be too much to expect? If this triggers you, then the next part in the manual is an excellent lecture for you too.

The different topics tackled there are named 'Nutcrackers'. They are not giving you clear answers at all, but are meant to question, wonder and serve as food for a good discussion with your peers. Crack that nut!

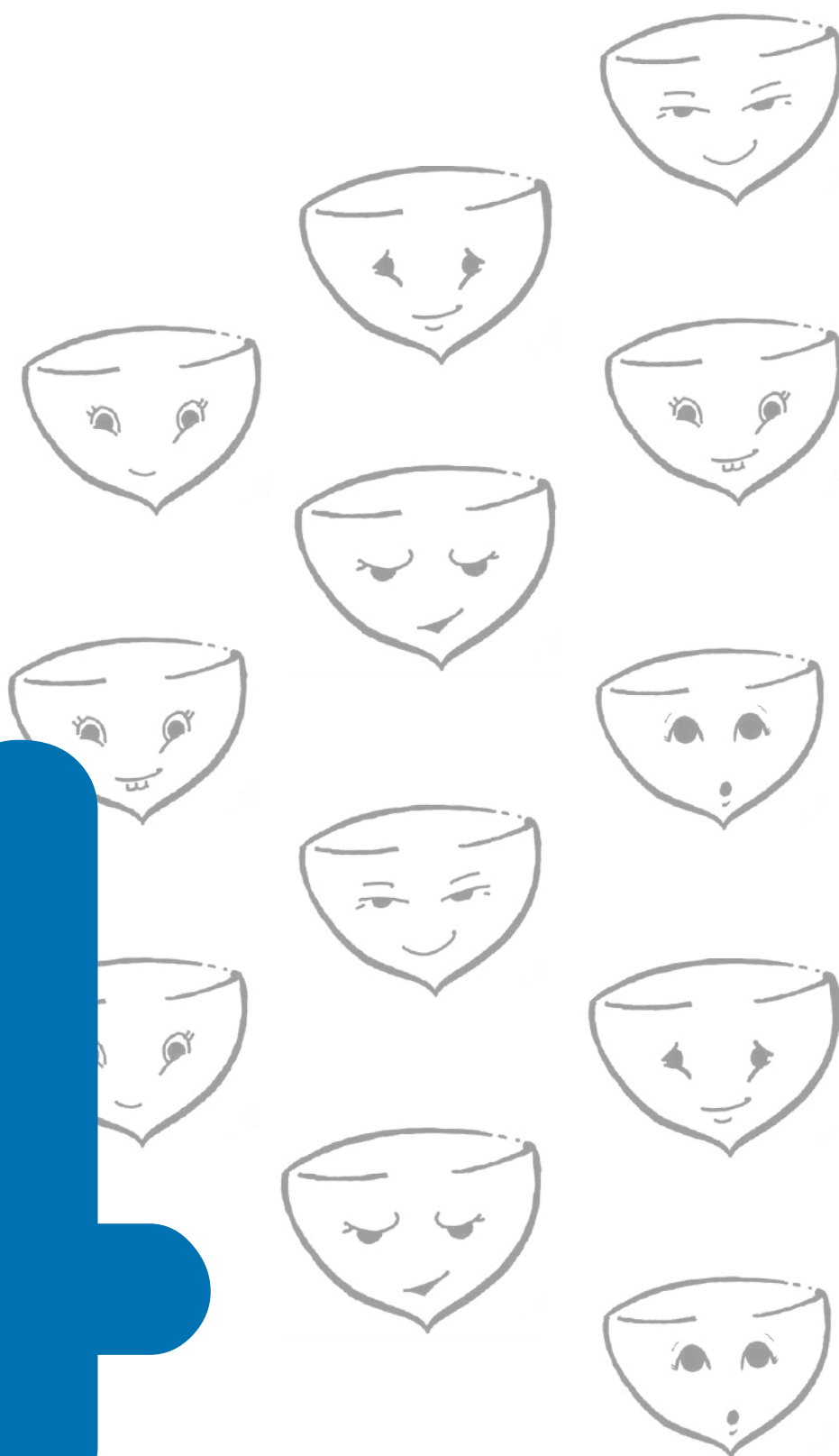


Perfect moment now to put aside the manual and to invest half an hour in a digital cleanup. Cleaning your email box by deleting old emails you don't need anymore, delete documents and especially pictures in different online storage accounts, there are often 'tons' of those which you probably will never use or watch again. It is definitely a good investment of time! Ah...and once done, don't forget to shut down the computer and turn off the light.



‘Whose Name you must
not say’ Nutcrackers

4



4.1. Is self-organised study a form of non-formal education?

Yes.
But...



...this could easily be debated upon, and particularly how this self-study is organised. Let's have a closer look upon a few principles and approaches that would qualify self-study as non-formal education, leading to a conscious learning.

- Setting yourself learning goals. Identifying the content of learning and the reason this is important for you.
- Designing a learning plan for yourself, with the needed materials, time and possible other resources (e.g. space).
- Deciding on a tracking system for measuring your progress, not only in order to evaluate your own learning, but also to understand what has worked well and what did not.

On the other side, we can identify possible dangers which would question this.

- **Objectivity:** when evaluating the results of your self-study, it is challenging not to be subjective in relation to the definition of the rate of success.
- **Accountability:** through a learning partner and peer-to-peer approach, the learning can be assessed easier. Self-study can become isolating and lacking feedback as a key aspect in non-formal learning. Peer-to-peer results in more diverse perspectives and in optimal conditions: it motivates. We can therefore question if peer-to-peer is an essential characteristic or 'simply' an added value.



Notes for self!

There are a few clear advantages of promoting self-study:

- ➡ Compared to formal and non-formal education, self-study is (rather) low-cost.
- ➡ It promotes and invites self-discovery of new interests and passions, but also of developing your competence of 'learning to learn'.
- ➡ Self-directed learning contributes to your personal growth, based upon your interests and needs, eventually leading to increased confidence, motivation and overall well-being.
- ➡ And particularly: the autonomy and flexibility to decide upon your own learning plan and content.

Practical: how do you organise yourself in order to learn something? If nothing pops up right now: how would you organise yourself to learn "spitting fire"?

4.2. The thunderstorm of conflicting values

Time for some flashy quotes:

"Walk the walk of the talk you talk." (Unknown)

"In theory, theory and practice are the same. In practice, they are not." (Albert Einstein)

Beautiful sentences and wordplays, wouldn't you say so?

One of the golden pieces of advice in the sales world is: if you don't believe in your product, it will be very challenging to make your customers do so. You might end up practising another principle: 'Fake it till you make it'.

We don't believe in such, and moreover, we reject this when it comes to values. As a starting non-formal educator, we might look at experienced non-formal educators and copy styles, content, approaches and much more. This can be a part of our process towards developing our own style. A style which is coherent with who we are and what we stand for. Faking values however, is a completely different issue here.



Let's transfer this to the non-formal educational world. Maybe also you have felt the allergic reaction and even resistance towards non-formal educators supporting you in a learning process, while you clearly feel (or know) that they do not embrace the "promoted" values. You receive a waterfall of beautiful concepts and messages, but it remains exclusively on a theoretical level, which makes them just empty shells. The non-formal educator has no own valid practice to support the offered learning content.

An obvious example: the organisers of a workshop focusing on 'sustainable environment and ecological footprint' offer during the break food and drinks from large industrial brands in single-use plastic bottles, glasses and plates. Instead of the intended aim of this workshop, learners leave with doubts, the feeling of being cheated and even angry about the incoherence of the theory versus practice.



We can't pretend to know the right answers: we don't. Yet, we can provide you with a list of questions we keep asking ourselves. Have a go at it yourself.

- ➡ Do you practise what you offer as learning content?
- ➡ Are your actions and beliefs the same as a person and as a non-formal educator? - Do you believe that you are coherent? With other words: do you walk yourself the walk of the talk you talk?
- ➡ Are your personal values in line with your non-formal educational values? Or are they conflicting? What do you do about that?
- ➡ Do you know the values your organisation stands for? Or the values of your 'client'?
- ➡ Would you accept funding of institutions that have conflicting values compared to yours?
- ➡ Are you able to translate your set of core values into concrete and consistent actions and behaviour?

Value crash in our practice

How inclusive are our infrastructures and actions, visible and sometimes invisible? Explore here more about dyslexic friendly and accessible publications, colour blindness, eco friendly educational materials, accessible structures, ...

This short Nutcracker deals with the coherence when it comes to our value based aims and the hardware that surrounds us. With hardware, we refer here to our infrastructure (youth centre, office, etc), our publications, our educational tools and materials, our language used.

How does this sound?

“We don’t need to make changes to our infrastructure, publications etc., because we actually don’t reach people with different abilities. We don’t have those.”

This thought turns easily into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Not being inclusive, leads easily to excluding many people with different abilities to participate in the first place. A wrong reading of this situation is the conclusion that people with mixed abilities don’t exist, so changes are not needed.

Let’s imagine that:

As a non-formal educator you have good intentions, supported by a rich value profile. Your value profile includes some of the very common values in our educational work: ‘empowerment’, ‘participation’, ‘inclusion’, ‘sustainability’ and ‘equality’. As an educator, you believe in ‘giving the example’, and this not only as a person but also as an organisation.

Below a very short checklist, merely as a teaser. Which of the mentioned topics are covered by you or your organisation? The below examples are not to question or judge, but serve hopefully as an inspiration to make small and easy but very meaningful changes.

Infrastructure:

- ➡ Are your premises accessible for people using a wheelchair? Please note the difference between a ‘manual wheelchair’ and a ‘power wheelchair’ (=electric driven). Stairs, doors, thresholds, presence of ramps... Which simple adjustments could you make?

- Do you have an internal waste management plan? Is recycling good enough or do you go towards reducing, upcycling and a more circular economy?
- Does the 'boss' have a 'director chair' and occupy the head of the meeting table? Do you all have the same chairs and no fixed chair positions?

Organisational management:

- An organisation which promotes active participation of young people and youth empowerment, but at the same time there are no young people in the decision making bodies of the organisation itself.
- Are responsibilities (e.g. waste management) delegated to 'others' or a shared mission?

Publications:

- At which height do you hang your announcement posters and printed infoletters? High or low enough so everyone can easily see and read them? Have you ever considered using a 'dyslexic' more friendly font? Is the letter type sized big enough to be easily readable for the intended target group?
- Following fonts are freely downloadable and support easier reading for people who deal with certain degrees of dyslexia. Not waterproof, but at least an easy effort to make your publications more inclusive. E.g. the font 'opendyslexicalta' (<https://opendyslexic.org/>) or the font 'Omotype'.



Educational materials:

- When working with gamified objects (e.g. playcards, hard objects as game piece figures), do you combine colours with shapes? That would make confusion much less for people affected by "tritanopia" (colour blindness). E.g. people affected by 'tritan colour blindness' confuse blue with green and yellow with violet.

Non-formal educational activities:

- Do your non-formal educational activities promote implicitly or explicitly competition or cooperation?

- ➡ Is the participants' success in your activities rather based upon 'fun and sharing' or 'power and strength'?
- ➡ Erasmus+ mobility projects which interact with the local community where the project physically happens, are few. And that is surprising. Knowing that rich opportunities for authentic intercultural learning go far beyond simply the diversity present in the group of participants.
- ➡ Travelling by plane to attend an international project about sustainability and 'green'. How logical is that?

We suggest the following publication, which reveals more how you can work inclusive at a very concrete level with mixed ability groups.



4.3. This is a self titled nutcracker

(Read first the nutcracker and write here the most relevant title for you)

While writing this nutcracker, we struggled to give it a title.

Different words came as we wanted to tackle things like: colonial approach / dogmatism / imperialism / power dynamics / manipulation ...

Read this nutcracker and then write the title you find the most relevant on the empty space :)

Working in this field creates a bit of struggling when it comes to values. Programmes have been created, projects and activities are being designed, participants are voluntarily choosing to be a part of such contexts, discussions are opened, specific topics are tackled.

In the background, there is a constant reminder of the set of values that are to be promoted, “an agenda”: hidden or not..



Implicitly, this means many “funding donors”, institutions, entities and educators in the non-formal education universe are - with or without awareness - imposing a way of thinking, a set of values as the truth, the “right way to think and act”, which cannot be questioned. It can be done consciously (hidden agenda) or unconsciously.

To illustrate that, let’s look at examples that exist at different levels:

Us as educators when working with a group

- ① In terms of manipulation in NFE: educator(s) set the aims of a project promoting “active participation of young people”, design the programme of activities, decide the target group, and then hunt for young people.
- ② In terms of imposing our way of thinking: while working on discrimination issues, we’ll accept only participants that hold our same set of values, and refuse some participants that may have discriminatory speech or behaviours. Wouldn’t it be better to be the opposite? But if it does not happen in our activities, where will it happen?

The values of your organisation towards you as a non-formal educator.

- ① You want to work and include all young people, also the ones “hanging in the streets”. This refers to young people who will not push the door of your organisation. But then the board of the organisation tells you that it is not worth it to work with them because they are “lost cases”, problematic youngsters.
- ② When in an international and intercultural setting: an European educational organisation decided to realise a project about Human Rights in another part of the world, which may have different perceptions of what Human Rights are. But the team of trainers or facilitators is mainly composed of European people, not aware of that specific context.



At institutional level (funding used as a way to impose values)

- ① A funding institution creates an open call. You apply as an organisation and your project is approved. Yet, in the “partnership agreement or contract” the institution reformulates other aims of your project according to their “set of values”.
- ② A local organisation is applying for a project about “active participation of women”, but the funder is demanding the organisation to sign an agreement of not including women that belong to specific political parties.

During the editing of this self titled nutcracker, this question has come up. How can we think about integrating new people or get people who no longer ‘fit in’ excited again to fit in? And what if their actions are in direct contrast to our values? We divided the answer to this question in different levels:

- Concerning participants: the answer was clear to us. We can and should work with them about inclusion, acceptance and about values themselves, understanding perspectives, and using non violent communication, trying to establish a common ground. After all, it is not the purpose to convince who is convinced already, or is it?
- In relation to organisations and co-workers, we consider that an effort to change should come from both parties to find a respectful solution. Nevertheless, there is a red line for everyone which can not be crossed, changed or bended. The question here is: are you aware of yours?

To conclude, as non-formal educators and members of organisations, it is very important to identify and fix clear borders when we speak about values, in order not to sell them out, for power relations or money.

Additionally, it is important to self analyse and be self critical about our own practice, and recognise the manipulation elements we may implement, even without realising it at the beginning.

4.4. From theory to practice



If you've already read the section on methodology, methods and tools, you might want to dive a bit deeper and consider this content from another perspective.

In any case, when we think and talk about methods and tools in the NFE field, we think about practice - our own or the way we have seen different non-formal educators applying it.

Below are some more complex questions.

- ➡ What is this practice based on?
- ➡ What are the reasons for practising NFE in one way or another?
- ➡ Where does the general thinking about NFE, and hence methodology, come from in the first place?

In general, **how to move from the notorious theories in the field of NFE to the practice of NFE.**

The following lines will be filled with slightly more complicated terms, scientific concepts and perhaps strange wording. Our intention is not to confuse you, yet to describe in a clear way what the scientific and theoretical underpinnings are for the practice of 'the thing' we know today as NFE. If you are still reading these words, perhaps the following lines are for you. So hop on your "learning bicycle" and get ready for a little theoretical and knowledge journey.

You remember the bicycle, right? If you don't, probably you still haven't cycled around the roles of the educator in another chapter. If you are curious to learn about that, you could find it on page 35 to 37.



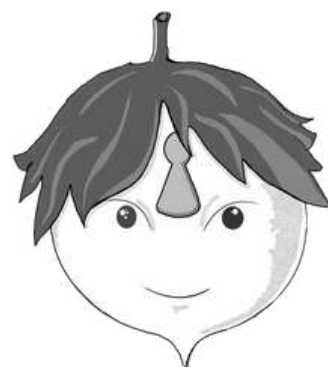
Everything has its own and unique beginning...

In the first place, learning itself as a concept and as a process is based on a number of theories that are mainly in the field of pedagogy and psychology. And the latter are the result of a number of searches and debates in the field of philosophy.

But, here we will not go all the way to the philosophical and ancient antique disputes. We will only mention in a few words the main points of the development of the NFE as a concept that lead to understanding a variety of different learning processes.

In theory, when talking about the NFE, the tradition and concept of constructivism are often mentioned among the founding and major theories. According to it, learning is a product of our experience and understanding of the world. We ourselves construct knowledge, rules and experiences which in turn are useful in explaining the world around us. A guiding principle in this type of concept is that learning and education is a process of knowledge and seeking for meaning.

Next, from the above theoretical field we focus on the part of social constructivism, which is based on making sense of the combination of "learning", "reality" and "knowledge". This brings us to the model of cooperative learning, where the emphasis is on the collaboration between individuals/learners.



Next in line there are the theoretic concepts, related to active learning and interactive learning, which rely much more on interaction with other learners. In both of these, besides interaction, learning is also based on doing and observing.

Notice how with every next theory the non-formal education and the learning are step-by-step moving from the philosophical part to the social part, with a growing dimension of the participation or interactions of others.

After all that, we arrive at a very popular theory around NFE these days - experiential learning. The main principle here is that learning is experienced and perceived as an ongoing and repeating process (it is a cycle), not only as a result; it is a conscious process that is based on experience and is furthermore holistic - combining many dimensions and senses.



Notes for self!



One simple example: let's say one decides to learn how to peel an orange. During the first try, one might squish and hurt some pieces or cut the cover a bit too deep. Then one might observe and reflect about what went right or wrong. There will be a notion of changing the behaviour (or not). During the second try, probably the peeling will be smoother, based upon the observation and analysis, some actions are done differently. After another try, the result should/would be even better. And so on, and so on... Until one learns how to peel smoothly any orange that jumps on their way...

In this relatively simple task the person went through the four main stages of experiential learning (popular by the title "Kolb cycle"): concrete experience - reflective observation - abstract conceptualization - active experimentation.

There are many other theories and concepts of learning and education: critical pedagogy, organisational learning, Montessori education, multiple intelligences, etc. All of them with their authorities and researchers. We are not going this way here, but...

Although we will not address all of them here, you might want to dive EVEN DEEPER into the theories and systems of learning. We're happy to provide you with the resource further on in the link and QR code below.

There you will find detailed description of several main learning and educational theories and also their scientific origin, flow of development and link to other learning theories.



The important thing is not whether you know all the theories of learning. We ourselves are not such great academic experts on learning and education.

What really matters is how we take the theories we are familiar with and integrate them in the process of preparation and conduction of NFE activities.

Going back to the previous section related to methodology and methods, what matters more is how we use a methodology, which in turn is grounded in a particular theory, and therefore all this results in our choice of method and tool relative to the group of learners.

In short: The trick is to learn to calibrate our knowledge so that it translates into appropriate practices.

No knowledge is useful if it cannot be used by people in a way that is constructive and productive for them and others around them.

Did you open the link about the learning theories above? We hope you did, but if you haven't hurry up and just review it for a second... here are some questions for you:

- ➡ Think about the familiar (among the many) learning theories?
- ➡ Which were familiar to you before reading this chapter?
- ➡ Think about how did you know about these theories - from school or university?
- ➡ From your own reading and research?
- ➡ From your practice?
- ➡ From chatting with friends?
- ➡ How do you learn about learning, in the first place?

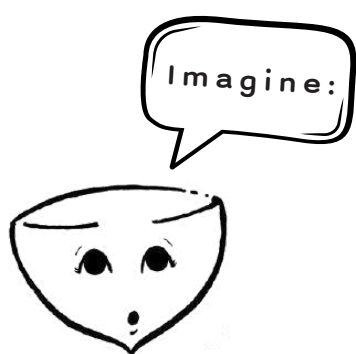
4.5. Evaluating and reporting: a burden?

There are many organisations and actions concerned with the development, innovation, and evolution of communities. While some are also concerned with documenting the evaluation of the process and the impact, some seem not so much engaged with this. What could be the reasons for some to carefully report and for some this comes as secondary and accessory?

We can follow the valid reason to report for financing purposes. However, putting that aside, will an activity or a learning process have the same impact if we evaluate it or not? The answer is that although the impact will be the same, we will not really know this. For us, that is an essential aspect when it comes to NFE. We apply methods which promote mostly a change, and similar to the law of 'action-reaction', such a change creates resistance.

If we are not sure of the benefits and side effects our work has on a person or an entire community: how can we know the advantages and disadvantages? How can we use the feedback of the learning experience to improve? How can we measure the level of engaging in a learning activity over time? How do we identify shortcomings towards completing a learning process?

As organisations and as individuals, we live by a set of values (for more information, check the subchapter “Values : the backbone of NFE Based, page 15). Also for non-formal educators, such a value set makes us ask why we do what we do. How do we make these answers more tangible? There is, in our perspective, a concrete solution to that. By monitoring, evaluating and documenting the results, we gather data which shows the accomplishing of previous set goals.



you wish to contribute to the transformation of your community towards a ‘better living together’, and this through NFE. If no clear indicators are previously defined, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate-measure-document the possible results and impact. What is then the base we use to understand if learners have reached the set learning goals? How do we know that our interventions in the community are successful?

Let’s consider that empowerment processes (see also page 21) is our intended impact through a concrete learning activity or process. Only by having specific methods of measurement will we be able to see this impact. This concrete identification of the impact makes it possible to advocate and valorize the use of NFE as an important educational approach for communities.

Clearly, we can decide to do this in an observatory way. The risk however is that we lose our objectivity, we fall into the trap of glorification of the results and we find ways to justify the lack of concrete evidence. Some of us might be familiar with sentences such as:

“ We, in NFE, do not quantify... that’s too formal.”

“ We work on attitudes, this is not possible to measure concretely. ”

“ We can only see concrete results after a much longer period, not now”

We can argue partly on the relevance of these answers, but ... let's be more ambitious.

This raises another question: are reports an accurate representation of reality or rather the perspective of reality from who writes them? Did the participants have the same perspective of what was written in the report?

To counter all of this, we should challenge ourselves to:

- ➡ define concrete qualitative and quantitative ways to measure, and this is defined from the very beginning of our interventions.
- ➡ be as specific as possible about the expected and desired impact.
- ➡ use reliable indicators (concrete, not for multiple interpretation).
- ➡ publish our results in a manner which allows and supports replication by others to obtain the same results.
- ➡ eventually (and advised) include the involved people in the result formulation.

We should also be aware that measuring impact is not the same as reporting. We must take into consideration that the way we report for ourselves as an entity needs to be different from the way we report for a financing body, for outsiders or for other stakeholders.

To make this more interesting, we could also wonder about how we document and report the collection of following impact result categories:

- ➡ Expected and unexpected
- ➡ Intended and unintended
- ➡ Tangible and intangible
- ➡ Desirable and undesirable
- ➡ Quantitative and qualitative

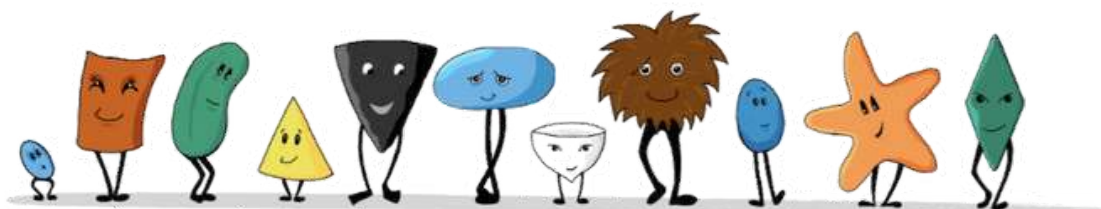
This Nutcracker is not here to give the solutions on a silver plate, but rather to wonder how much attention we give to what we evaluate and how we report. In case you are triggered to explore this more, we happily refer to some background reading.



4.6. Is the non-formal educator almighty?

As non-formal educators, we have our understanding of methodology, with the included principles (if you want to know more about the values of NFE go to page 15). This can be conscious, unconscious, or even subconscious. What matters is that the way we understand methodology defines which methods we will choose and eventually use. If our 'methodology' includes the principle of 'self-glorification' as educators, the methods we choose would explicitly or implicitly address this principle. There could be many different reasons for that - self-confirmation, higher self-esteem, demand for recognition, desire for admiration. To fulfil these needs, we could position ourselves as the only knowledgeable people around who have all the right answers. This could easily lead to manipulation or total domination of the process and/or the educator over the learners. In other words, to make everything about us, instead of them. After all, our main mission is to create learning processes that serve the needs of the learners.

Therefore, It is very important to seek a balance between our professional ambitions and personal humility. This also means leaving space for flexibility and providing time and space for learners to be an active part of the process. And when it is possible, even to co-create the process together and even let them take the lead. This can be challenging to achieve and not always possible in full scale, but that is not a valid excuse.



Additionally, we should acknowledge the educational responsibility we have and particularly the fact that we are often expected to be role models. This is valid, especially when we work with young people. If we are not coherent between our actions and our claimed values, we risk to easily lose our status and eventually even create undesired impact.

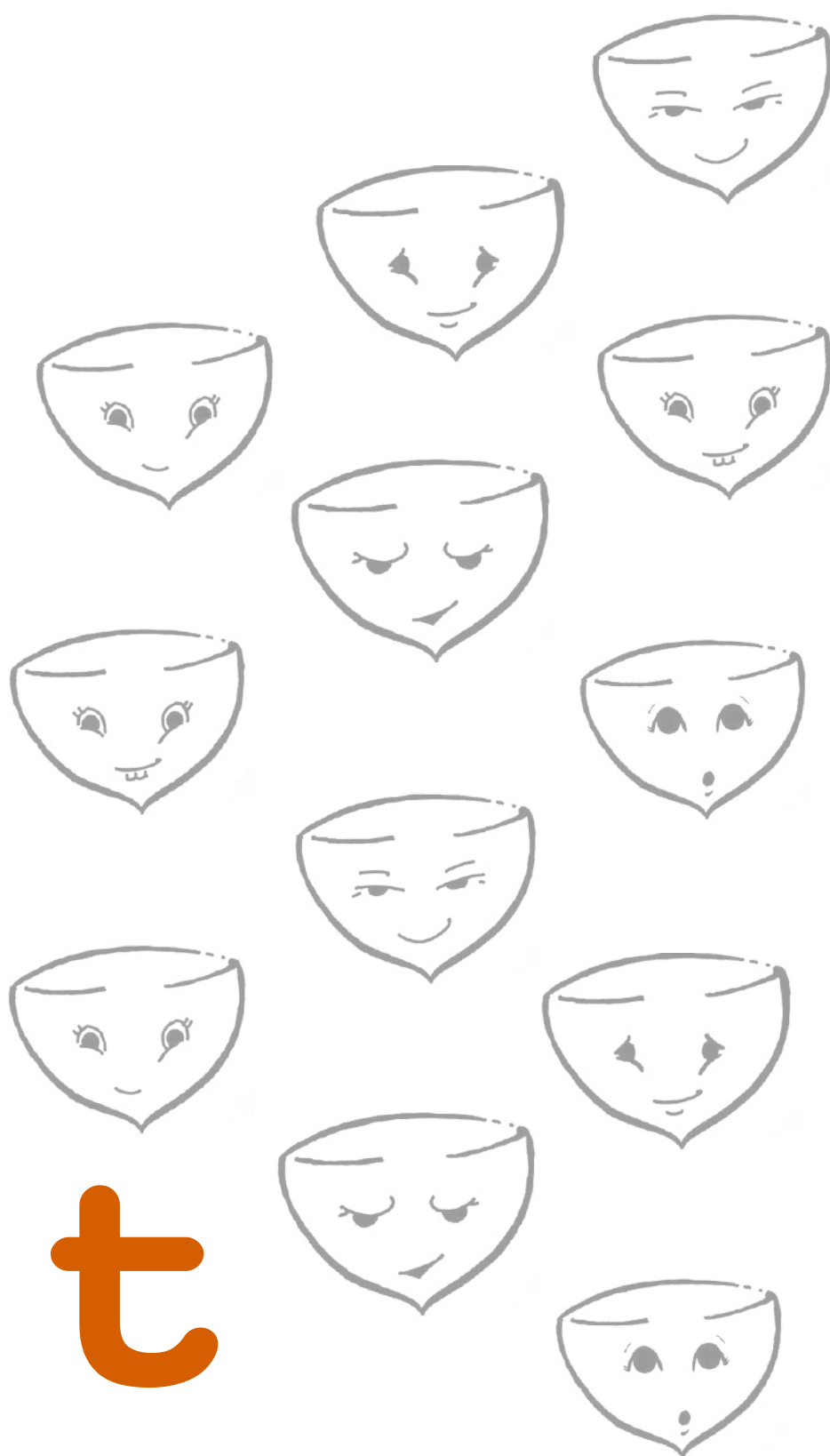
There are different and complex dimensions of such a coherence starting with our general behaviour, style of communication, vocabulary, style of humour, habits, and even our clothes and personal objects. So when stepping into the shoes of a non-formal educator, check if these shoes are the same size as you imagine it as a person. It all comes down to coherence.

If you have ever been in the role of a non-formal educator, challenge yourself with some of the questions below. If not, think about some of the non-formal educators you know or have met before.

- ① How can the chosen methodology contribute for empowering the learners?
- ② Does putting the spotlight on the educator create an added value or creates rather (greater) power imbalance?
- ③ To what extent are the learners involved in shaping the methodology?
- ④ Is the learning process efficiently communicated with the participants? Was everything transparent and understandable, or are there aspects that remain unclear or seem hidden?
- ⑤ Are the guiding principles (and values), that accompany the methodology, visible and clear for everyone? How did they impact the choices of methods that were made?
- ⑥ Do you practise what you preach (or teach)?
- ⑦ Do you promote horizontal power relations between the learners and non-formal educators (e.g. promote equality)?
- ⑧ What kind of role models have you seen? What kind of role model do you want to be? Do you want to be a role model? What do you think of role models? Are role models actually something positive and constructive, in the first place?



Notes for self!



Nut escape

This section of the manual shows some of our views on several challenges throughout the manual



→ Chapter 1 - Defining some common ground

We don't believe this grid is valid today, since educational contexts are dynamic and constantly adapting and evolving.

In any case, we're sharing it with you so you can see how non-formal education has been perceived and defined over the past years.

formal education/learning	non-formal education/learning	informal learning
School related time and/or similar settings (e.g. the army, driving classes, etc)	Out of school activities and flexible learning environment - No specific target group	Everyday life, any setting
Compulsory	Not compulsory, invitation to join (open access)	Inconscious (no analysis) Can be provoked/stimulated (e.g. advertising)
Age limit (some exceptions)	No age limit (exceptions ; e.g.. Erasmus+/Council of Europe)	No age limit
Formatted tools	Alternative tools (formatted in methodologies) Participatory approach	No identified tools (materials)
The 'educator' is central (top-down approach)	The learner is central (bottom-up approach with facilitation), reciprocal learning	Self learning experiences (no analysis)
Evaluation = certification / diploma : sanction (eliminary, can create exclusion)	(Self)evaluation/assessment, constructive, part of learning, inclusive	No conscious evaluation (no analysis planned, but can happen reflectively afterwards)
There is a certification that attested the learning and it's recognized	Little or no certification that is recognized outside the field	No need for a certification

Little identification of ways of learning	Respect of identified, voluntary and diverse engagement and ways of learning	Diverse and mostly unidentified ways of learning
Very structured (in preparation and delivery)	Very structured (in preparation; facilitation can vary)	No structure
Very little creativity (few exceptions)	Open to a maximum of creativity Creative use of educational resources	Spontaneous creativity (or not) in diverse fields of life
Does not necessarily create citizenship and/or solidarity or aiming at social change	Aims at creating participation, citizenship, solidarity and social change = impact on society	Your life, interest, experiences can eventually bring you to be a citizen, showing solidarity and fighting for social change

You can come back to the page 13 to keep your Reading.

→ Chapter 1 - Let's take non-formal education (NFE) together for the next decade

The answer that best fits our vision of non-formal education is the last one.

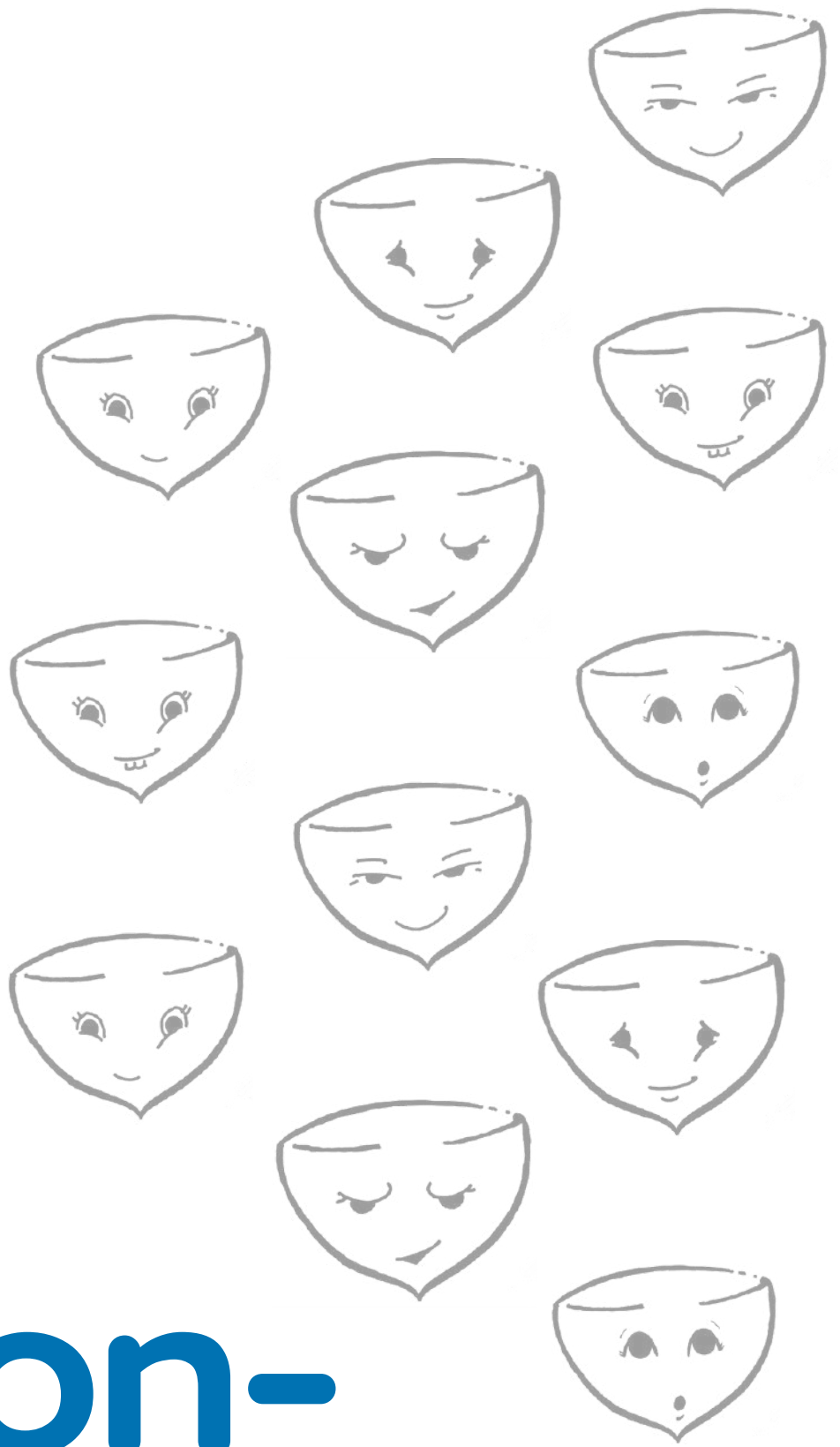
Look at some of the details: it's properly structured, the group has a set time for the visit, but they aren't told how to organise it inside the museum and, most importantly, after the visit they take the time to analyse what they've learned.

You can come back to the page 15 to keep your Reading.

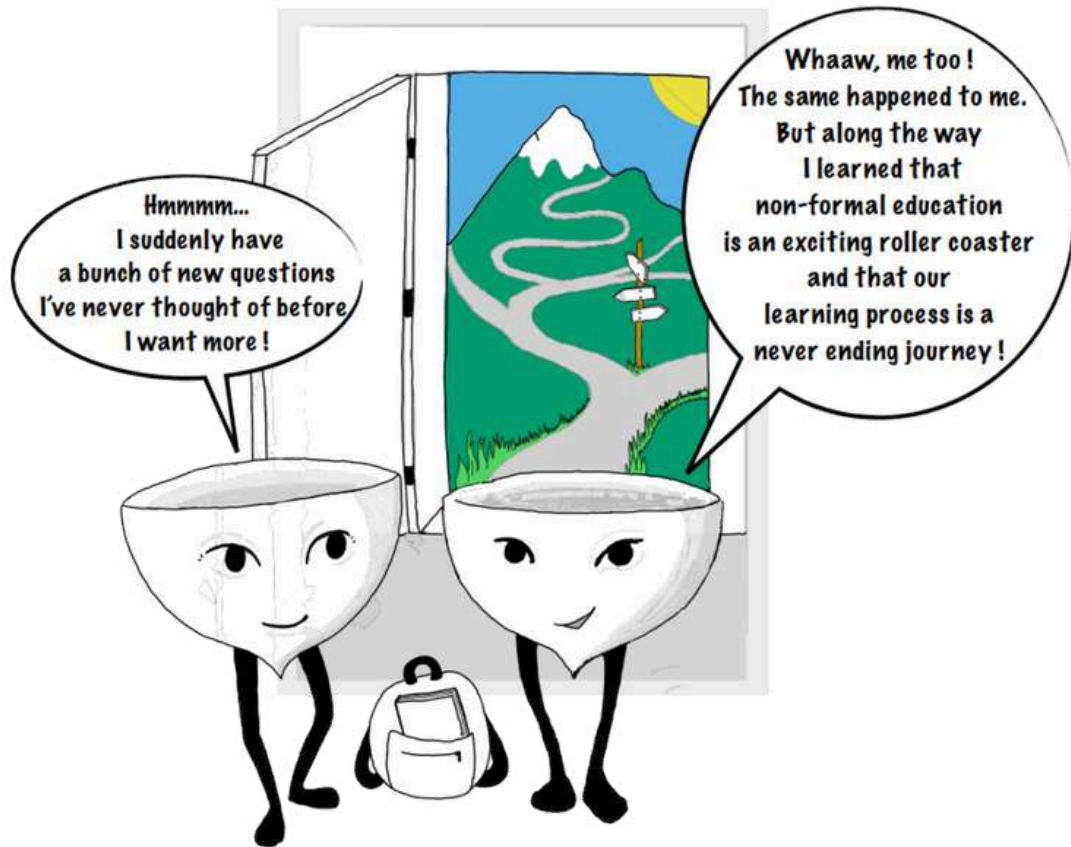
→ Chapter 1 - Characteristics

- om_on _le and s_et_ = Common rules and safety
- G_a_ or_ _ne_ a_d s_ _uc_ur_d = Goal oriented and structured
- ol_n_ar_ b_s_ _ = voluntary based
- L_a_n_r-c_n_er_d = learner centred
- _a_ _ic_pa_ _ve = participative
- _e_ _ _s_e_se_ = self assessed
- E_ _ _io_ _ _ se_ _ea_ _in_ = emotion based learning

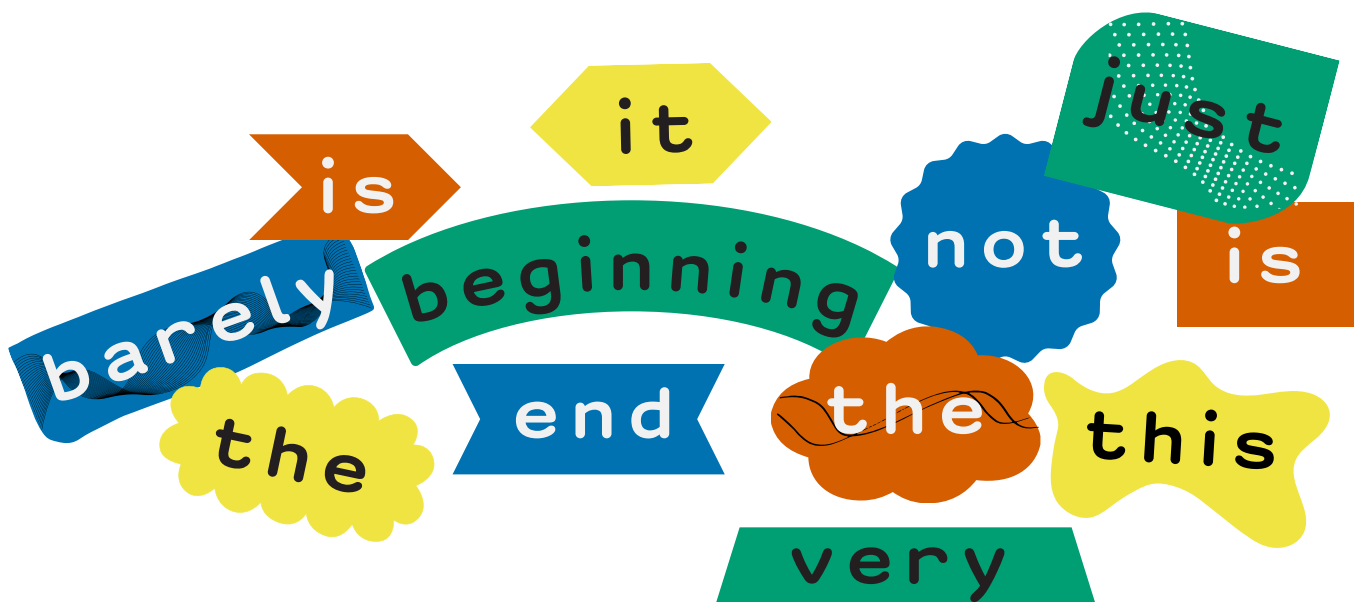
You can come back to the page 31 to keep your Reading.11

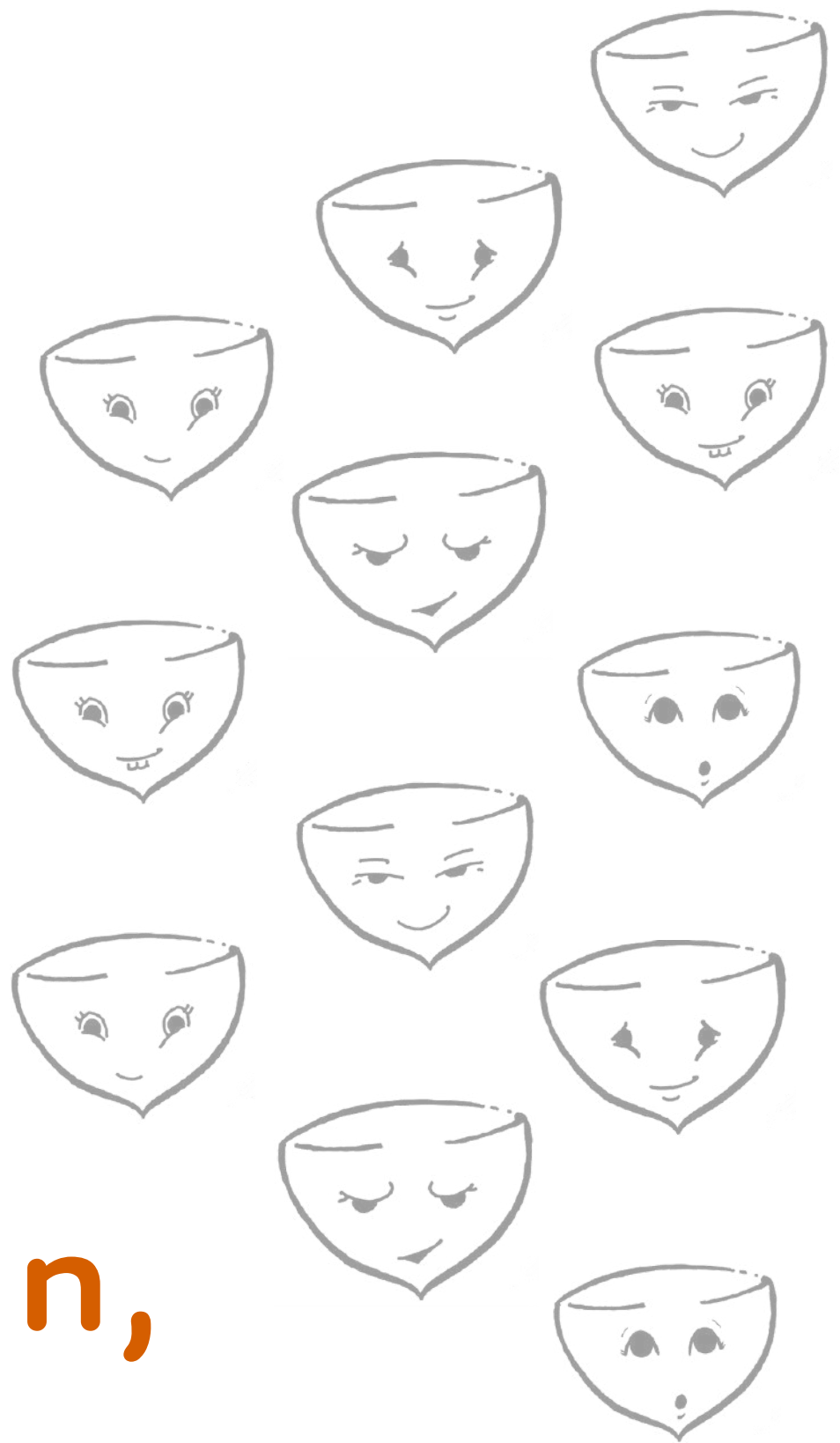


**A non-
conclusion**



We don't conclude, that would be very awkward after all you might have read. A possible conclusion: that's up to you. To support that, below are some 'tools' :-)





Origin,
background
of this manual

NEED

This manual was created to respond to a main need connected to the recognition of non-formal education, as a concrete educational practice, that has been around in the European youth field for at least the past 2 decades. We have found ourselves frequently confronted with the challenge to explain this in a clear, practical and comprehensive way. Not only to outsiders, but also concretely to newcomers in the non-formal educational field as well as experienced non-formal educators.

We recognise that getting the needed recognition to the field, is an important step, and it is an essential part of explaining what NFE is, why it's needed, how to plan and implement a non-formal educational process and the impact it has.

SURVEY

In order to present a concrete answer, we proceed to a needs analysis in order to identify if the answer we wanted to give was a shared need with the different target groups that we wanted to approach with this manual.

In total we attained 263 respondents active in the following fields:

- The youth field (NGO's, informal groups etc)
- Schools and universities
- Adult education
- Vocational education and training (VET)
- Other connections to the educational field

After an analysis of the results attained with the survey we reached the following conclusion that supported our application and therefore the development of this manual:

83,30% are resident in the European Union. 16,70% outside of the European Union.

Question: how well is NFE understood by the wider public? On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 10 (completely), the average/mean is 4,55

49,60% expressed they are not familiar with a publication/manual which explains in easy and simple words to beginners and experienced educators the basics of NFE (meaning, purpose, practice, values). Yet, 66,54% can not name a concrete publication. A big majority of the mentioned manuals focus on methods in particular areas (eg. Human Rights Education), but not concretely on the essence of NFE.

WHY SURVEY

This identified need of recognition was shared and further confirmed by the results from a short online survey among 263 respondents, linked one way or another with the European youth field. An analysis of this survey contributed to framing the main general concept of the current publication.

THE REASONS FOR THIS MANUAL

Besides getting the required recognition of NFE, this manual aims as well to tackle several different issues that has been around for quite some time:

- Addressing the needs of newcomers in the world of NFE.
- Challenging the people who acknowledge having certain experience.
- Reaching out to other groups that might be interested in the added value of NFE, including policy makers, people coming from different educational areas, youth non-formal groups, youth NGOs, researchers.

This manual does not intend definitive DO's and DON'Ts. We wish to provide you with a useful resource based on the partners' experiences throughout years of practice in the world of NFE. The manual has no intention of being an 'academic paper'. We aimed for a practical approach.

Several testing phases along the way in different national realities with youth work and other practitioners has further shaped the format and content. This final version is translated into every partner country native language: Bulgarian, French, Italian and Portuguese.

The manual you are holding now is the project result of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project 'In a Nutshell'.

The project was implemented by:



Italy



France



Portugal

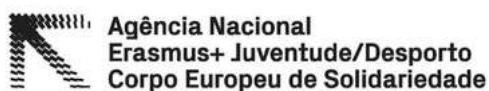


Portugal



Bulgaria

With the support of the Portuguese National Agency under the Erasmus+ Programme.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Fragments of the manual are free to use in any form of educational activity, with acknowledgement of the source provided.

For increased readability, we have shortened 'non-formal education' many times towards 'NFE'.

Content developed, discussed and written by:

The 5 involved organisations, supported by their wider networks, friends and colleagues. Developed, written, reviewed, re-written, severally discussed many times, modified and edited by:

Names in alphabetical order:

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- Ana Moutas
- Ana Teles
- Daniela Costa
- Denis Morel
- Jo Claeys
- Marie-Céline Le Nivet
- Mary Shaheen
- Simona Molari
- Stefan Georgiev
- Toinon Leproust
- Tsvetelina Radenkova

A warm thank you to:

Federica Vendrame, Daniel Dzhinsov and Ana Mendes for the support in different phases of this manual.

The 263 respondents who completed the initial survey and expressed the need for a manual like this one.

The more than 90 'test' readers for their patience. They have further shaped this manual with their valuable feedback and comments.

Design:

Names in opposite alphabetical order:

- Ana Teles
- Toinon Leproust

ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONS BEHIND...

The manual is a result of a 24+ months close cooperation between different actors in the field of non-formal education. Below listed in a nice traditional (and little creative, we admit) western standard alphabetical order.

ALN Srl - Italy

Volunteer coaching - training - lightening - project development - education and learning



Eveil - France

Local and community development - active participation of inhabitants - Supporting local initiatives - Empowerment - intergenerational



Giosef Torino - Italy

Youth Work And Non Formal Education - Intersectional Approach
- Inclusion And Participation - Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation -
international mobility.



Giosef Torino

Luciole - France

Community development - political dimension of education -
training processes - intercultural and antidiscrimination
education



Luciole

Produções Fixe - Portugal

Training - educational board game development and production -
community building - fablab - participation



Produções
Fixe

Psientífica - Portugal

Social entrepreneurial organisation - added social value and opportunities - empowerment and capacity building of young people- intervention and innovation - non-profit basis



Psientífica

YSPDB - Bulgaria

Youth work - participation - active citizenship - personal development



YSPDB

ABOUT THE FUNDING BODIES

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. The programme places a strong focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life. Erasmus+ has opportunities for people of all ages, helping them develop and share knowledge and experience at institutions and organisations in different countries. The programme also offers opportunities for a wide range of organisations, including universities, education and training providers, think-tanks, research organisations, and private businesses.

Detailed information on these opportunities, including eligibility criteria, is available in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

More information:





To bring Erasmus+ as close as possible to the beneficiaries and make sure it works well across different countries, the EU works with National Agencies to manage the programme. The National Agencies are based in Programme Countries and their role involves providing information on Erasmus+, selecting projects to be funded, monitoring and evaluating Erasmus+, supporting applicants and participants, working with other National Agencies and the EU, promoting Erasmus+ and sharing success stories and best practices.

More information of the Portuguese National agency:



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If you can't access the QRCODES

1. T-KIT 14 VALUE-BASED LEARNING IN MOBILITY PROJECTS-
<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-14-value-based-learning-in-mobility-projects>
2. TEACHING LEARNERS TO BE SELF-DIRECTED-
<https://longleaf.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SSDL.pdf>
3. HAVE YOUR SAY!- <https://rm.coe.int/16807023e0>
4. Amplify Participation of young people in Europe-
<https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3048/Amplify%20Participation%20-%20Recommendations.pdf>
5. The Roger Hart's Ladder of Children Participation & Dimensions of Young People's Participation from David Driskel - <https://organizingengagement.org/models/ladder-of-childrens-participation/>
6. Other models of participation-
<https://www.plataformadeinfancia.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Participation-models-Andreas-Karsten-1c07.pdf>
7. YOUTHPASS-<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/>
8. CEDEFOP-<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/about-cedefop>
9. Kolbe Learning Theory-
<https://educationaltechnology.net/kolbs-experiential-learning-theory-learning-style>
10. Vila da Marmeleira- Rural Center of Non- Formal Education-
<http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/jo-claeyss>
11. Leaders of Change- <https://www.lead-change.info>

12. Structured

Dialogue-

<https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/grants/2014->

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14. Non-Formal Education- <https://www.nonformal-education.eu/>

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17. GenderBread person- <https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2018/10/the-genderbread-person-v4>

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21. Manual for facilitators In Global Education- https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-1770/manual%20en%20online.compressed.pdf

22. T-Kit 10: Educational Evaluation in Youth Work - <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-10-educational-evaluation-in-youth-work>

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25. IncED: how to work with mixed ability groups-
<https://inced.viverekool.ee/unmanual/>
26. Open Dyslexic- <https://opendyslexic.org/>
27. Learning Theories-
<https://cmapspublic3.ihmc.us/rid=1LGVGJY66-CCD5CZ-12G3/LearningTheory.cmap>
28. T-Kit 10: Educational Evaluation in Youth Work - <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-10-educational-evaluation-in-youth-work>
29. ALN - SRL-<https://www.a-l.it>
30. Eveil - <https://www.eveilcentresocial.org/>
31. Giosef Torino- <https://www.gioseftorino.eu/>
32. Produções Fixe - <https://www.facebook.com/ProducoesFixe>
33. Psientífica - <https://www.psientifica.org/>
34. YSPDB- <https://yspdb.org/>
35. What is Erasmus? - <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/about-erasmus/what-is-erasmus>
36. Portuguese National Agency - <https://www.juventude.pt/pt/>
37. Council of Europe- <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/participation>
38. SALTO participation pool: <https://participationpool.eu/>

