


Some Aspects of Non-formal Education in Montenegro

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Abstract: This paper investigates the collaborative opportunities between formal and non-formal education providers to enhance learning, development, and peacebuilding. It emphasizes the complementary nature of formal education, known for its structured curriculum, and non-formal education, which prioritizes experiential learning. By identifying common interests and initiating collaborative efforts such as internships and research collaborations, it can lead to creating the link between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The role of education in peacebuilding is highlighted, showing how both educational approaches can foster social cohesion in post-conflict societies. Recommendations for policymakers include fostering partnerships, promoting internationalization, and providing funding to support collaboration. The paper suggests evaluating the effectiveness of such programs through criteria like education quality, participation levels, and participant feedback. A case study of Montenegro shows the integration of non-formal education in a society traditionally valuing formal education, suggesting the establishment of state-supported centers and joint peacebuilding programs. The collaboration between the University of Montenegro and the UNESCO Chair Programme exemplifies the potential impact of such international partnerships.

Keywords: Non-formal education, Montenegro, peacebuilding, formal education, education programs

Citation: Stanković, T. (2023). Some Aspects of Non-formal Education in Montenegro. In M. Demirbilek, M. S. Ozturk, & M. Unal (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICSES 2023-- International Conference on Studies in Education and Social Sciences* (pp.607-613), Antalya, Türkiye. ISTES Organization.

Introduction

In order to provide an overview of how to develop common goals and objectives between formal and non-formal education providers, it is necessary to understand their roles, such as the promotion of learning and development among learners. Formal education focuses on classroom learning, follows a structured curriculum and it is usually accredited by relevant authorities, which leads to recognized qualifications such as education degrees. On the other hand, non-formal education often occurs outside academic institutions and it focuses on experiential learning through real-life situations (Lefstein and Snell, 2014; Johnson and Majewska, 2022). In addition, it can offer practical/vocational trainings which are focused on specific skills and personal development.

Formal and non-formal education aim to provide learners with knowledge, skills, and competencies and to

enhance learners' social development. Both formal and non-formal education providers tend to address different learning needs from basic literacy to lifelong learning by acquiring skills, knowledge, and competencies (Hamadache, 1995; Ivancheva and Minina, 2019). Finally, we can say that formal and non-formal education tend to promote learning and help learners achieve their full potential.

Developing common goals and objectives between formal and non-formal education providers requires collaboration. In order to collaborate, it is necessary to:

- 1) identify common areas of interest of formal and non-formal education providers, such as: promoting digital literacy, improving vocational skills and fostering lifelong learning;
- 2) foster collaboration and encourage participation in joint programs, workshops, or conferences, where individuals would have opportunities to exchange knowledge, and share ideas;
- 3) determine the specific activities, programs, or projects that would be undertaken jointly.

Both formal and non-formal education aim to foster personal growth and development in learners. It includes enhancing creativity, self-confidence and adaptability. Formal and non-formal education strive to develop socially responsible individuals who actively participate in their communities. They aim to promote values such as empathy, respect, tolerance, inclusivity, and civic engagement.

Best practices for setting achievable and measurable goals

When it comes to setting achievable and measurable goals, they serve as a roadmap, which would help in ensuring progress toward desired outcomes. The aim of the practices is to improve communication, align goals, promote resource sharing, and facilitate mutual learning. By following these practices, formal and non-formal education providers can set realistic goals and contribute to the overall effectiveness of their collaboration (Gillies, 2016).

There are some best practices for cooperation between formal and non-formal education providers:

- **Internship Programs:** Formal education providers could collaborate with non-formal education providers (businesses and industry associations) by offering internship programs. This collaboration enables students to gain practical experience and apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, thus bridging the gap between academia and the workplace.
- **Research Collaborations:** Educational institutions, such as universities, can collaborate with non-formal education providers (research institutes and industry organizations) to undertake joint research projects. This cooperation allows for the exchange of expertise and resources, which would lead to enhanced research outcomes and practical applications in various fields.

The role of formal and non-formal education providers in peacebuilding

Formal and non-formal education play an important role in peacebuilding in some post-conflict societies by contributing to the development of a peaceful society (Van der Linden, 2015). By providing high-quality education to all citizens, formal education can reduce inequality and promote social cohesion by promoting tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity (Millican, Kasumagić-Kafedžić, Masabo, and Almanza, 2021). When it comes to non-formal education, it can complement formal education by providing practical learning experiences that can help to build skills, knowledge, and attitudes that support peacebuilding. Also, it can promote dialogue, reconciliation, and civic engagement, which are essential for peacebuilding in post-conflict societies.

Collaboration between formal and non-formal education providers in peacebuilding

In the peacebuilding process, formal and non-formal education providers can collaborate through cultural exchange by creating platforms and opportunities for individuals from different cultures to interact and share experiences. The collaboration between education providers can be done through:

1. **Language programs:** They would bring together students interested in learning and practicing different languages. Some universities or community centers organize language cafés where individuals gather to practice speaking a specific language. Participants have the opportunity to engage in language conversations, share their cultures, and build friendships across linguistic boundaries. The examples are: Language Cafés and Tandem.
2. **Involvement of the communities:** It is important to involve local communities in cultural exchange activities. This can be done through community events (cultural/art festivals), and partnerships that actively engage foreign students in sharing their cultural traditions, knowledge, and experiences with community members.
3. **Extracurricular Activities:** Formal education providers can collaborate with non-formal education providers in a way to offer extracurricular activities that would encourage and motivate youth to participate. These activities can include clubs, sports teams or arts programs. By participating in these activities, students develop teamwork, communication, and leadership skills, fostering their personal growth.

Recommendations for policy and decision makers to create incentives and support for collaboration between formal and non-formal education providers

Policy and decision-makers can play a crucial role in creating incentives and providing support for formal and non-formal education providers to collaborate in peacebuilding education. For such a collaboration, it is necessary to:

1. foster partnerships

2. foster internationalization, i.e. create joint programs and encourage their development
3. support professional development and training
4. provide funding

In the sequel, each of the above-mentioned will be briefly explained.

1. **Foster partnerships:** It is necessary to foster the formation of partnerships. Therefore, conferences, workshops, forums and summer schools should be organized in order to bring researchers, practitioners and educators together, so they share knowledge and experiences.

Higher education institutions invite experts, scholars, and community leaders to deliver lectures and participate in panel discussions on topics related to culture, diversity, and peacebuilding. These events provide platforms for discussions, critical thinking, and exchanging the ideas among students and the wider community.

2. **Foster internationalization:** Formal and non-formal education providers can collaborate to develop joint programs and initiatives that promote cultural exchange. This could involve incorporating non-formal education activities, such as intercultural workshops or community engagement projects. It is feasible to establish collaborative programs with partner universities. This arrangement would enable the students to study at one or two partner universities for a duration of one year. Graduates of such programs would develop a unique understanding of the political and cultural landscapes in the host countries.
3. **Support professional development and training: Workshops and seminars**
The workshops and seminars promote understanding and appreciation for diversity, addressing topics such as cultural sensitivity and creating inclusive environments. In that way, participants learn strategies for fostering diversity and social inclusion. These are short-term training programs that can be conducted by experts in specific areas of peacebuilding and education.
4. **Provide funding:** Financial incentives can encourage collaboration and enable formal and non-formal education providers to work together effectively. This can include grants, scholarships.

An overview of how to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative peacebuilding/education programs and best practices for evaluating program outcomes

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative peacebuilding/education programs, it is necessary to consider:

- **Quality of education programs:** It is necessary to evaluate if the collaboration led to improving the quality of education programs, teaching methods, and learning materials. Also, it should be assessed if the collaboration has contributed to the desired peacebuilding outcomes, such as

increased social inclusion, reduced violence, improved diverse intergroup relationships, and promotion of tolerance and understanding.

- **Level of participation:** The level of participation is a crucial factor in evaluating the effectiveness of peacebuilding/education programs, as it reflects the engagement and involvement of educators, students, community members, and local organizations. Higher participation rates indicate a stronger sense of collaboration, and community involvement, leading to more impactful and sustainable outcomes.
- **Feedback from participants:** It is necessary to conduct surveys/interviews or to organize focus groups discussions, so we can get their feedback regarding the quality of peacebuilding/education programs. Compare the outcomes of participants with those who did not participate.

Montenegro as a Case Study

Non-formal education is an important segment and is increasingly encouraged institutionally in the EU. Montenegro is a country that has aligned its educational system with the EU system, and in that sense, it is important for Montenegro to promote and enhance non-formal education. On the other hand, Montenegro belongs to the post-communist countries where formal education in state institutions has been crucial for obtaining employment and advancing in a career. Therefore, it is a system where a diploma of completed education is the primary goal. Since non-formal education is weak in such societies, it is important to make additional efforts to organize it in a generally acceptable manner. A good compromise in such a situation could be non-formal education coordinated by a center supported by the state and the most significant educational institutions. In that sense, a broader center could be established at the national level, which would include sectors dealing with various forms of non-formal education at both university and vocational levels. Within that center, it is necessary to organize sectors that would:

- deal with lifelong learning and training at the university level;
- organize and provide guidelines for professional training;
- deal with the organization of internships.

With the support and coordination of the state, these centers would provide particular legitimacy, which would help this form of education be widely accepted in Montenegrin society.

Similar to ideas already existing in Europe, joint programs regarding peacebuilding could be established, which would lead to fostering collaboration between the University of Montenegro and partner universities. Through these joint programs, students would have the opportunity to spend one year at one or two of these partner institutions (Morais, 2016). Graduating from such programs would offer students a distinct political perspective on the host countries they study in. This type of education would shape their problem-solving approach, by giving it an international character. Particularly in small environments like Montenegro, the dimension of

internationalization would open new perspectives and help to reduce animosities. By participating in joint programs, students would gain valuable multi-cultural experiences and insights, contributing to their personal and academic growth while, at the same time, fostering a broader understanding of global issues. As mentioned earlier, the University of Montenegro holds UNESCO Desk for Education and Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights which serves as a platform for fostering the development of democratic values, which is focused on building international cooperation networks. Through the collaboration between the University of Montenegro and the UNESCO Chair Programme, educators, and researchers can benefit from the specialized knowledge, international networks, and diverse perspectives that contribute to the advancement of a democratic society, the promotion of cultural diversity and harmonious coexistence. This partnership exemplifies how formal education institutions can collaborate with international organizations to enhance educational opportunities and promote peacebuilding values and practices.

Conclusion

The integration and collaboration between formal and non-formal education providers hold transformative potential across different contexts, including peacebuilding efforts, the establishment of common goals and objectives, and aligning educational systems with broader international frameworks. By cultivating shared objectives, fostering best practices, and encouraging collaborations, education providers can greatly contribute to personal development, social cohesion, and peacebuilding. It is important to note that aligning the goals and objectives between formal and non-formal education providers enhances the learning experience. Best practices, such as internship programs and research collaborations, bridge the gap between theory and practical application, ensuring a more comprehensive approach to learning and development.

In the context of peacebuilding, formal and non-formal education play complementary roles. By engaging in cultural exchanges, community involvement, and extracurricular activities, these educational providers foster essential skills and attitudes that contribute to reconciliation and peace in post-conflict societies. Policy and decision-makers can significantly bolster these collaborations through incentives, funding, and support in creating joint programs and initiatives. The case study of Montenegro exemplifies the transformative potential of embracing non-formal education in a society traditionally emphasizing formal education. By establishing state-supported centers and encouraging international partnerships, Montenegro can legitimize non-formal education and align itself with broader EU practices.

The paper emphasizes the significance of fostering an educational approach that combines formal and non-formal elements. Whether in promoting lifelong learning, peacebuilding, or internationalization, a collaboration between different educational providers can lead to enriched learning experiences and contribute positively to development of society. By advocating for such collaborations, societies can nurture individuals who are versatile, culturally aware, and prepared to make positive contributions to both their local surroundings and the broader global context.

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