

Non-Formal Learning and Education - Policies, Practices and Discourses
Неформально учение и образование: политики, практики и дискурсы

SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENTS CHANGE FUNDING, ORGANISATION AND CONTENT OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

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Abstract. The European societies change. The roles of the state and the market are decreasing and the citizen will get a more important role. Based on the positioning triangle we will explain this societal process that happens or will soon happen in European countries. The traditional top-down policy of governments will be replaced by bottom-up movements by citizens. Not today and probably not tomorrow, but in the medium-long term we will see a different society.

This forthcoming transformation will have huge consequences for the position of non-formal education. Non-formal education is more connected to the future societies. This article is a plea for the interest of non-formal education, and shows that a different non-formal education is a logical result of transforming societies.

Keywords: public administration, non-formal education, positioning triangle, changing roles, transformation

The European societies change. The roles of the state and the market are decreasing and - because of many different reasons - the citizen will get a more important role. Based on the positioning triangle we will explain this societal process that happens or will soon happen in many European countries. The traditional top-down policy of governments will be replaced by bottom-up movements by citizens like light communities and new cooperatives. Not today and probably not tomorrow, but in the medium-long term we will see a different society.

This forthcoming transformation will have huge consequences for the position of non-formal education. Non-formal education is more connected to the future societies. This article is a plea for the interest of non-formal education, and shows that a different non-formal education is a logical result of transforming societies.

The Interest of Public Administration

Non-formal education is mostly always analysed by experts related to the content: pedagogues, psychologists and educational scientists (Clarijs, 2008a, 2005). This work

of these experts is necessary and very useful. However, to understand the (future) needs of non-formal education it is also required to look for information what the future demands from non-formal education. Offering non-formal education to children and adults without having any clue concerning the needs of the future means that we educate citizens without a proper future. Therefore we have to add an extra angle to the earlier mentioned expertises. Another perspective is needed to get a real grip on the development of non-formal education: the analysis and view of public administration. Next to the experts related to the content of non-formal education especially policy makers and politicians need this kind of information. Adapting the non-formal education structure to the always changing society needs insight of the societal developments. A public administration contribution can help to optimise non-formal education.

Triangle of the society

Many academics use the figure of a triangle in order to symbolise the society (e.g. Abrahamson, 1996; Moore, 1995; Mouwen, 2004). The three corners represent the state, the market and the citizen.

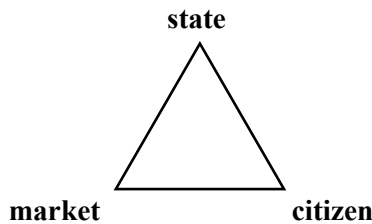


Figure 1. The positioning triangle

Not coincidentally the three corners represent the three values of the motto of the French Revolution: *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* [freedom, equality and brotherhood]. These three different items are still represented in our European societies. One can easily combine freedom with the corner of market, equality with the corner of state and brotherhood with the corner of citizen. The next step is also not complicated: one can connect the three major political movements with the three corners: market and liberalism, state with social-democracy and citizen with christen-democracy.

The three corners represent different interests: to the state belongs general or public interest, self-interest is connected to market and group interest goes together with citizen. There is also a different way of organising in the three corners: state always works with vertical relations, citizens with horizontal relations and in the market one operates with parallel relations.

Activities, organisations and sectors can be placed in this positioning triangle. It is clear that the local, regional and national government belong to the corner of state. But also the tax authorities, the police and the army are in that corner. Philips, Manchester United, Mercedes-Benz, the Rolling Stones, Louis Vuitton and the bakery and the pub at the end of the street belong to the market. This is the business side of the society.

And we, we are the citizens, when we do not represent state or market professionally, as for instance a group of parents organising voluntarily a play ground for their children, people in the neighbourhood setting up a choir, some friends playing football every Saturday morning in the park. These kind of activities are not organised by the state and do not belong to the market.

As said before, all activities, organisations and sectors can be placed somewhere in this positioning triangle. But they do not necessarily have a fixed place in the triangle. They can migrate over time, they shift positions. This happens for instance when a group of football players are so good that they become professional players: they change from the corner citizen to the corner market. This happens for instance when an initiative where citizens have set up an orphanage is taken over by the government: the organisation change from citizen to state. This happens when the small electric company, that takes care for the local illumination, is taken over by the national government (now it belongs to the state) and later the company is sold to other electricity companies – now it is in the corner of market.

In the last decades, as a consequence of the welfare state, many organisations shifted from the citizen corner towards the state (centralisation) or to the corner of market (privatisation) (Donk, 2010).

In general it will depend on the activity or organisation in which corner such an activity or organisation is placed. We probably all agree that for instance it is better to issue passports by the government, and not by citizens themselves; to fix the taxes for all citizens can also better be done by the government. Let us be happy that the production of tomato soup, tea-cosies or flip-flops is done in the corner of market and not by the state. And when citizens organise a song contest in their community centre it is good that this is not implemented by state or market.

The three corners have their compelling points. But there must be a division: the various activities, organisations and sectors have to be spread over the three corners. Zijderveld (1999) states that overemphasis on one of these corners will lead to extremism. When too many activities and organisations are in one corner, the balance in the society is gone. When too many activities and organisations are in the corner of state, social democracy will lead through socialism to dictatorial communism and Stalinism. When too many activities and organisations are in the corner of market, liberalism may lead from libertinage to anarchism. When too many activities and organisations are in the corner of citizen, conservatism can degenerate into reactionary corporatism and fascism.

There is no favourite dominant corner. It depends on the activity. Actually we cannot speak about a triangle anymore. More and more activities have moved from citizen to state and market. Scholars tell us that the triangle has changed into a two dimensional line state – market. The last few decades it seems that the role of the citizen has disappeared. In western societies fraternity is more and more forgotten; it seems that we prefer to concentrate on state and market (Wilken, 2012).

An interesting question is: where can we situate non-formal education in the positioning triangle? Or: where can we situate a non-formal organisation in the triangle? Or: will non-formal education migrate in the triangle?

It may be clear that there is no definite answer. It depends on the country. In the Netherlands, where non-formal organisations are privately organised, non-formal education can be positioned on the line citizen – market (Clarijs, 2008a). In Russia for instance non-formal education is in the corner of state because of the laws, the curriculum, the financing, the inspectorate, et cetera (Clarijs, 2013).

Despite the different societal situations in the various countries we can predict what will happen sooner or later in the European countries when we have a closer look at the three corners of the society triangle. For that reason we focus on the three separate corners.

State

After the Second World War, a welfare state - with a guaranteed security from birth to grave - has been made in many western countries. Since the nineteen-eighties the welfare state has been subject to debate and erosion (Idenburg, 1983; Doorn & Schuyt, 1979). Criticism is threefold: it is unmanageable, unaffordable and intolerable. With unmanageable we refer to the always expanding bureaucracy and the centralism that are necessary for equal treatment of all citizens. With unaffordable we allude to the growing costs at a fast rate of the caring state. With intolerable we are referring to the fact that the caring state creates dependent citizens and for that reason encapsulates the development of the citizen. In addition, there is a more fundamental criticism of the welfare state: its (financial) compensations traditionally focus more on the consequences and too little on the causes (Klerck, 2006). An increasing number of problems can no longer be solved by the welfare state. The participation state is named as its successor (Balkenende, 2009; Derickx *et al.*, 2010; Verbeek & De Haan, 2011; Jager-Vreugdenhil, 2012), with a predominant focus on individual responsibility. The question is whether, following the many centralisation processes, government with its dominant position in the triangle will be able to give enough space to the other parties (i.e. market and citizens) to allow for the transition from welfare to participation.

The introduction of New Public Management (NPM), which introduced efficient entrepreneurship in the nineteen-eighties, has been quite influential in public service (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993). This NPM trend may be seen in all western

democracies and bureaucracies. The development has been and still is supported by international organisations such as the World Bank, IMF and OECD, which disseminated their ideas about the liberal market economy around the globe.

One of the most important effects of the NPM philosophy is that managing and implementation are unlinked. The underlying basic argumentation is that in a rowing boat there is only one cox, who is steering, and this person definitely does not row. The oarsmen are there to row, but they do not interfere with steering the boat. One of the most dramatic consequences of this NPM-policy is the result that steersmen are supposed to act like process managers, who do not interfere in the process. Steersmen are in charge of the “where and what”, while oarsmen are in charge of the “how”. According to Aardema (2010) no one is responsible for the whole by accepting the what-how dogma.

The construction of this idea became extremely influential. Many key officials became “process architects”, led by NPM-ideas. They became managers, and to them it was not important which process they had to manage. The steering people develop into process managers, who become less and less in touch with content. Policy memory disappears. This creates a Managerial State, which cuts short the policy freedom of professionals and the relative autonomy of civil servants, and is preoccupied with problems. The public sphere is denied.

Everything seemed to be business. In this atmosphere Margaret Thatcher could say “there is not such a thing as a society”, and Ronald Reagan could explain to the American people that “the government can not solve the problem, but is the problem”; they became the heroes of the enterprise culture. The NPM movement, started by Thatcher and Reagan and continued by Blair and Clinton, has shoved citizens aside (Sandel, 2012).

Market

From the nineteen-eighties, with NPM as a catalyst, in the western countries the market is introduced into the social playing field. Government, which should restrict itself to core tasks, should be playing only a marginal role; it would only have to act in case of market failure. Although optimism prevails in the eighties, around 2000 the enthusiasm in favour of privatisation takes a turn. The point of departure changes from “yes, if” (government is successful in its work as market superintendent) to “no, unless”. Privatisation in practice turns out to be difficult to match with public services. The market needs to be corrected in several places; it has no moral of its own and moreover has a short memory. At an earlier stage it had already signalled that government chose in favour of privatisation in the public sector without due consideration and preparation. The concept of the market does not suit public service. Balance of powers cannot be translated into supply and demand. The role of government as the keeper and inspector of public interests should be acknowledged. A strong market needs a strong government as director, market superintendent, referee and patron of public interest.

It is a mistake when we mean that public services is a well delimited product. Public services including non-formal education are not a product, it is a process (Zijden, 2009). There is a huge bureaucracy needed to split up a process in products. Some scholars (e.g. Donk, 2010) state that public services are not even a product or a process, but a relationship.

In the positioning triangle the corner of state is not very successful for public services (like non-formal education). For that reason the societies escaped to the corner of market. One hoped that the market would organise the social order. But the commercialisation was more disruptive than arranging for the social relations. Commercialisation in public services led to a growing inequality. This was a solution neither. Actually none of the corners are the right corner. The best place for public services is exactly in the centre of the triangle, where the three powers state, market and citizens have a say.

It is striking that in the discussions since the eighties concerning the organisation of the society the corner of the citizen has got little attention. Most of the attention has gone to the market versus state. Therefore we pay special attention to the citizen.

Citizen

In the coming participation society citizens are expected to participate. However, to involve citizens is not easy. Is the citizen willing to participate? Is the citizen competent to participate? Is the citizen willing to participate or will he leave within six months? Till how far the other stakeholders like the government and professionals are willing that citizens take part in all kind of processes? Is the citizen involved during the whole process, from brainstorming till implementation, or will the specialists – as ultimate responsible persons - take over after a certain point?

Western citizens suffer from a participation paradox: many participate only minimally, but a few participate to the max (Goede, 2008). Moreover, there is a participation elite: active citizens are predominantly white, highly educated and older due to the competences required (Fraanje & Ten Napel, 2012). It is significant that, while obedient citizens are embraced, obstinate citizens are turned away. Politics prove to be intolerant towards citizens in opposition. This is unfortunate, because a real representative democracy needs some form of opposition to ensure democratic checks and balances (Gunsteren, 2008).

Arnstein's participation ladder (1969) is a much used and acknowledged tool to indicate the level of citizen participation. The five-step ladder distinguishes the stages of informing, consulting, counselling, co-producing and (co-)deciding. The higher up the ladder, the more the citizen is involved in decision making processes. Next to that, the larger the citizen's influence, the smaller the role of the administration becomes. Recently the Dutch Council for Public Administration presented an alternative model, the government participation ladder, which starts at the other end: let go, facilitate, stimulate, direct, regulate (Raad voor het openbaar bestuur, 2012).

The highest (Arnstein) and the lowest step (Dutch Council for Public Administration) of the participation ladder represents self-management, self-direction. That step is the most wished step.

Participation seems to be happening primarily under the guardianship of government. In this way policy lets lie idle a huge reservoir of knowledge and experience. This leaves us facing a problem when we think about the success of the participation society as the successor of the welfare state. Veld (2010) states that participation, if it occurs, is predominantly focuses on gathering information concerning the preferences of citizens instead of giving influence.

Putnam (2000;1993) pointed out the importance of social capital, which does not materialise on its own. Social capital grows when used and diminishes when not used. Social cohesion in our societies is eroding and that in turn undermines the quality of the society, Putnam states. Perhaps we can look at it differently: present-day citizens are not so much averse to communities, but prefer a different model, of less constructed communities (the so-called “small groups”) in which the exclusiveness of the classic divisions is traded in for modern networks that are open and free of obligations. Small-scale, informal communities that are a modern source of social cohesion, present a welcome addition to vertical, formal initiatives, especially for young people. An objection to informal groups is that they often recruit their members from their own socio-economic class, and in this way do not favour the bridging that is called for (Goede, 2011).

Innovation

We live in an always faster changing world. We change and we are changed. For that reason it is more than important to look at innovation.

When we give thought to four dominant nowadays ways of innovation (Blue Ocean Strategy, co-creation, open innovation and crowdsourcing) we can conclude that open innovation, but particularly crowdsourcing is an innovative approach that might benefit non-formal education. The most influential innovation is based on the principle of crowdsourcing, where citizens decide the outcomes (owing to ‘wisdom of crowds’, see Surowiecki, 2005).

The fact that citizens take the lead in these new innovative techniques perfectly fits the positioning triangle of the future (Figure 2).

Inferences

The market is not expected to do justice to the public character of public tasks, but neither can government – amongst others because of NPM - adequately anticipate new developments and needs of society. Therefore the focus automatically shifts to citizens and their networks.

There is and will be a shift towards more democracy from below. The public service sector seems to be best placed in the heart of the triangle. If there is to be a

balance in the positioning triangle, then the corner of the citizen will have to work hard to pull activities more from the line state – market towards the centre of the triangle.

In many European countries non-formal education is moving from the state corner to the market corner, and considering the end of the welfare state and its successor: the participation society, the role of citizens will become extremely important in the coming years. Soon citizens will play a dominant role in non-formal education and its organisations. This is quite an interesting challenge, but will not be implemented easily.

Earlier we saw that public services should effectively be positioned more to the centre of the triangle. The social enterprise – a new legal organisation in the public sphere that is allowed to make profit but it has to spend this money in the organisation in the interest of the target group – has structural connections simultaneously with all three corners. Possibly a solution lies there.

In Short

In summary, in this article the positioning triangle of Mouwen (2004) was used as a steppingstone to carry out the analysis of what is happening and will happen in our societies.

The first conclusion is that government on its own does not seem to be able to break through existing processes; it is too firmly rooted in its own past and its partners in the system to be able to force a breakthrough. With increasing bureaucratism and civil servants who execute standing policy *sine ira et studio* it may also be concluded that individual civil servants cannot be expected to force a breakthrough here.

The introduction of New Public Management establishes the market economy into the public sector. Market economy turns out to be a good servant but a bad master. The market, as we conclude, is insufficiently capable of reducing complexity to the level where public services can improve the execution of their work. Market needs a government in its role as director, market superintendent, referee and defender of public interest.

We discussed the role of the third corner, the citizens' one, using the notion of participation. On the (government) participation ladder, the citizen is still a long way from the role that he is expected to play in shifting from a welfare state to a participation society. Although government calls for self-government by citizens, this turns out to be hard to realise in practice. Current participation projects perpetuate government dominance: the citizen participates in the government's processes. However, citizens nowadays do show more independence from participation projects and cooperation with government. This happens predominantly in informal groups and lightly structured communities. Using social media, young people nowadays again behave differently and show pick-and-mix behaviour; informalisation causes a

shift towards democracy from below. Participation will place the state in a different position. This puts pressure on the positioning triangle. In light of future developments the following turned-over triangle seems to become a reality. Citizens move to the top of the positioning triangle, where market and state support and facilitate them.

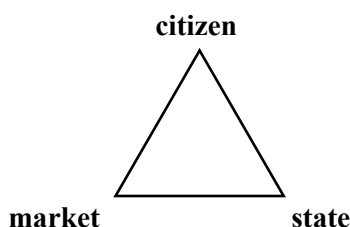


Figure 2. The positioning triangle of the future

Consequences for Non-formal Education

In a society, with more heterarchical instead of hierarchical relationships, with settling and adapting, with the lack of power to decide and the division of power to obstruct shared between all stakeholders, non-formal education will develop into a different sector.

There will be changing relationships towards the state and the market. The pedagogues have to deal with the new position of parents and their children. Citizens will take over – or at least will heavily influence – the structure and organisation of non-formal education. The experts will be less experts, the government will be less government, the inspectorate will loose power, the market will be less dominant, the funding will change. It will not come as a surprise that, in a sector characterised by accumulation policies over the decades, many stakeholders – each with their own traditions, logic and policies – will have a place at the table to discuss and decide non-formal education.

Citizens will increasingly take the lead in public services. It is not to be expected that these social processes will leave non-formal education untouched. This means something new has to be thought up, because present forms of participation are not working to satisfaction. There is still a long way to go towards self-management.

It would not be very effective to continue in the same policy making direction. New ways of innovation see citizens play a major role, while government and professionals are in the background, facilitating and motivating. Policy innovations need to be explored which will tackle the shortcomings of non-formal education, innovations that move with the process towards a participation society, that meet social capital, a policy where informal groups have a place, where government exercises restraint and encouragement through civil servants that allow space instead of demanding the expert role.

The time is there for smart people power instead of super state power. The new future where the corner of the citizen will become more important than anything else will give non-formal education a strong(er) position. Where formal education is related to knowledge - to the hard competences, non-formal education is closely related to empowerment of citizens - to the soft competences. In our modernizing societies, where knowledge is old and unusable after ten or even after five years (for that reason there is also a growing importance of lifelong learning), we will see an increasing role of non-formal education.

Because of this future also the content of non-formal education has to and will change. Non-formal education needs to pay attention to the citizen of the future, to prepare children and young people for their future role in the society. They will have more duties and there will be more opportunities for them in the next decade than ever. In order to get non-formal education from the line state - market towards the centre of the triangle the corner of citizen will have to pull hard. This is only possible when individuals take their responsibility, and probably it is the same as with democracy: this is not self-evident, this has to be taught. Here we see the huge interest of non-formal education.

We would make a big mistake when we would ignore the trends of the future. Maybe we are allowed to quote Descartes: *l'indifférence est le plus bas degré de liberté* (indifference is the lowest level of freedom). The appeal to the sector of non-formal education is clear: be prepared for the basic different role in the coming years. Not only its fundings, but also its organisations and especially its content will (have to) change firmly.

The 20th century was to and for the people, whereas the 21st century will be with and by the people. We are looking forward to a transforming and challenging future.

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