CONCEPTS

6. Important concepts

Definitions taken directly from the glossary of the youth partnership.

Youth Work

For the purposes of European Programmes, young people are aged 13 – 30 years old.

Youth work is a term that covers activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. The main objective of youth work is to provide opportunities for young people to shape their own futures.

Youth work is education 'out-of-school', most commonly referred to as either non-formal or informal learning. The general aims of youth work are the integration and inclusion of young people in society. It may also aim towards the personal and social emancipation of young people from dependency and exploitation. It can be delivered by professionals, recognised with state qualifications, or by volunteers.

Youth work also deals with unemployment, educational failure, marginalisation and social exclusion. Increasingly, youth work overlaps with the area of social services previously undertaken by the Welfare State. It includes work on aspects such as education, employment, assistance and guidance, housing, mobility, criminal justice and health, as well as the more traditional areas of participation, youth politics, cultural activities, scouting, leisure and sports. Youth work may at times be organised around a particular religious tradition.

Non-Formal Education

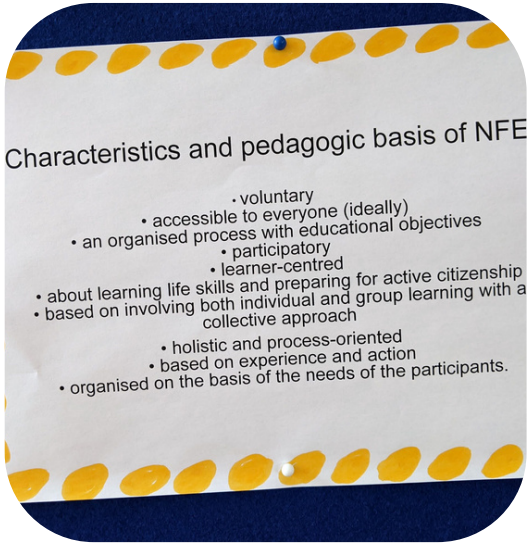
Non-formal education is any educational action that takes place outside of the formal education system. It is an integral part of a lifelong learning concept that ensures that young people and adults acquire and maintain the skills, abilities and dispositions needed to adapt to a continuously changing environment. It can be acquired on the personal initiative of each individual through different learning activities taking place outside the formal educational system. An important part of non-formal education is carried out by non-governmental organisations involved in community and youth work.

Non-Formal Learning

Non-formal learning (NFL) is purposive, but voluntary. It takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity. It can take places in many environments (indoors, outdoors, on public transport....etc).

The NFL activities or courses that take place may be staffed by professional learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities and courses are structured, intentional, planned, and have learning objectives.

Non-formal learning and education is the key activity, but also the key competence, of youth work. It typically does not lead to certification, but often there is focus on the recognition and transfer of learning.



Migration

Migration - The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State.

Youth work...

Youth workers from across Europe who work with migrant youth shared some of their interpretations of youth work together. For participants at the seminar, youth work…

...uses Non-Formal Learning

Youth work helps to create a space for non-formal learning, which is an organised educational process with pre-planned learning objectives, is voluntary, accessible to everyone, participatory and learner-centred. It is holistic and process-oriented, based on experience and action, organised based on the needs of the participants and involves both individual and group learning with a collective approach. The pedagogic basis of non-formal education is about learning life skills and preparing for active citizenship in society.

"Youth work opens doors, and opens minds" **Participant**

...is future oriented

Young people are our future. Youth work needs to look at what is coming, and adjust to meet that. We need to deal with it before the future comes.

...provides diverse opportunities

Youth provides wide-range mentoring, accompaniment and it empowers the young people to be autonomous, to take care of themselves, not having to rely on others to satisfy a need (as opposed to independent, which has the meaning of 'not considering social relations'). It helps them fulfil their potential. Youth work provides different opportunities and a diversity of choices to give all young people chances; it shows young people how they can be, and what they can do in their life. It helps them navigate challenges.

"Youth work provides positive healthy experiences in your complicated situation right now, so that in the future you are able to deal with more by yourself" **Participant**

...creates citizens

Through different participative methods, young people learn how to be part of something, to take ownership of a space or a process. Through experiential learning, with self-reflection and self-awareness, they understand their own interests, values and attitudes and opinions, and become able to express their own needs. By raising their voice and taking part in society processes, youth work helps develop citizens.

...is needs based

Young people work on things which matter to themselves in youth work; it is needs based. Youth work offers the right frame for their needs that gives a boundary, while opening a space for them to own. Young people then fill in the picture themselves.

...involves creativity

Giving access to young people to express themselves, through art, music, culture, sport, theatre, youth work strikes a balance between something useful and something fun. On the other side, very often youth work isn't well funded, so rather than following a perfect needs-based project management approach, time and energy is often spent on being creative with limited resources.

...is not diverse enough

A society shaped by migration is not reflected in the youth work of today in many communities. Youth work should represent the background, needs and interests of the diversity of all the young people it serves, and aims to serve. There should be more leaders, youth workers and role models who represent a diversity of young people. It should be participative and inclusive, with provision also for the harder to reach.

...is undervalued and underfunded

Recognition of the power of youth work and non-formal education is not strong enough in other sectors in society, including sometimes other education sectors. Change is often counted in qualitative assessment, through numbers, rather than the impact on individuals. The job profile of a youth worker should be better recognised, more attractive to more people, and valued (and funded) better.

...is delivered by youth workers

Accompanying young people navigate their choices and journey; a youth worker is often a problem-solver or a care-taker. For some, a youth worker is friend. For others, there needs to be a professional distance, and it's more about building trust and mutual respect, without official hierarchy, to be approachable; to create a relationship with open communication. A youth worker helps to provide a safer space for young people - both within the organisation where they work, and outside that, in other spaces. They ensure protection, especially from more formal figures who can seem intimidating, such as politicians.

Often young people don't have a lobby, so the youth worker should be their support for that, without manipulation of the message. Youth workers mentor and empower young people to be able to be the voice, their own voice. They help channel the youth voice to be heard.

Some youth work topics, when working with migrant youth in Europe:

7. Post-migrant societies

Postmigrant society

Post-migration is an academic concept from cultural and social studies. It is used by politicians and journalists to describe the complexities of contemporary societies shaped by past and ongoing migrations. In a post-migrant society, different people in the public sphere, such as politicians, the media etc, talk about post-migration to describe the societies in which they live, impacted by migration.

A new concept?

Post-migration is not a discourse or discipline that all people in all EU countries are familiar with. It is an academic concept that comes from cultural and social studies. Discussions about migration are very diverse within Europe. Post-migration as a concept is currently used in different countries, including (but not only) Germany, UK, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Sweden. The concept is quite new, it isn't mainstream (yet).

Why 'post'?

Post usually means 'after'; that something has finished. In this phrase, it doesn't mean that migration is over. It means that there has been migration (immigration, emigration) and that society has been impacted by that. There are now more and different voices to be heard. A post-migrant society is structured by migration; it make spaces for a plurality of voices and experiences.

Multi-faceted

A society shaped by migration will have more and different voices and faces. There will be many new different sides, different points of view. These should be heard. There should be ways for people's voices to be amplified through to structures and systems.

"People's voices must be heard. Every opinion is welcome. In big cities, diversity is clear to see and recognise. In small towns, it's not obvious. Everyone has to learn how to speak to others who are different from them, and also to listen to the other" **Participant**

Negotiation

Immigration and emigration are factors that have big impact on a country. Elements that were agreed upon before, now need to be reevaluated and re-negotiated. It's important to see what that impact is on our society, and we need to talk about it. The new situation can be negotiated, but not reversed.

Adjustment

Structures, institutions and political cultures in a post-migrant society are adapted to the reality. There will be more upward mobility possible for newcomers to the country. Barriers need to be readjusted. For example, "why are my qualifications not valid in this country?" - barriers to transfer of qualifications need to be adjusted so that newcomers can access the job market.

Conflictual spaces

In a society, some people have privileges and power. In a postmigrant society, there's newcomers who also want that. There can be distributional conflict - who is sharing what with whom? Who 'deserves' to receive things?

In negotiation processes in a postmigration society there can be conflictual spaces. They can be characterised by polarisation, ambivilances, antagonisms and new alliances. This means there can be a lot of discussion, often not friendly, because people want different things: Who has power in our society? What is our society as a whole now looking at? The aim is to focus on power relationships and struggles in society as a whole, not singling out migration / migrants specifically.

8. What is a society shaped by migration ?

Introduction

The movement of people and goods, tied to globalisation, influences societies worldwide. This concept of a society shaped by migration was outlined by participants. Youth workers from across Europe shared their idea of what is a society shaped by migration. This thought process helps to process self-reflection on this, of what it means to each individual, and then to hear alternative perspectives that challenge or build on those thoughts. Different viewpoints were given, with some describing a possibly realistic situation and others a reality specific to only certain societies.

What came gave a mix of three areas: the current reality, characteristics to foster and associated challenges.

The current picture

Migration exists - what is the capacity of society to manage movement?

Migration is a fact. There should be greater recognition of the realities, roles and norms associated with migration. Accepting migration as a reality will help it to be managed more effectively, and promote better coexistence. Having responsive institutions and systems would make it possible to meet the diverse needs of a society that is constantly evolving with global movements.

Fluid Identities, continuous creation and recreation

Individuals are not made up of only one identity. Often their identity has many layers, or they are made of different identities, depending on the role or the situation they are in. Embracing the fluidity of identities is a reality these days: being both Syrian and German, or being both citizen and 'foreigner' at the same time. This fluidity isn't always easy for individuals to do, or for the host society to adapt to or be open for. It challenges societal norms. Therefore, societies must constantly reevaluate their own foundations to accommodate evolving identities and circumstances. Society is created and recreated all the time by its constituent parts. This ongoing fluidity and change has to be recognised by all.

Power Dynamics

Who gains power, who holds power and how power is exercised has implications on a society. Ensuring representation across institutions, government and social services is vital. This includes having representation of migrant communities in civil society organisations, as face-to-face youth workers, as role models in youth work. Balancing power and incorporating diversity of gender, culture, socio-economic status etc. into decision-making processes are imperative for societal harmony. Having such diversity brings empowerment, and allows for co-creation. It can bring new opportunities and collective changes, by working together with diverse representatives of society. It also highlights the need for dialogue, adaptation, and increasing communication to develop understanding and counter problems.

Characteristics to foster a constructive society shaped by migration

Diversity as a Strength

Embracing diversity leads to a rich, multicultural society; fostering acceptance and a mix of cultures and communities. The metaphor of a colourful mosaic highlights the unique contributions of individuals coming together. This cultural richness encourages individuals to view their own culture from different perspectives, prompting self-reflection. It can help to overcome fears, increase self-knowledge and self-awareness and celebrate diversity, contrasting with nationalist tendencies.

Lack of Fear

Citizens should not fear migrants. Creating diverse environments where citizens feel at ease contributes to societal cohesion. A sense of comfort and acceptance should be fostered.

EU's Role in promoting mobility

The EU encourages its citizens to be mobile, through freedom of movement, removing barriers, and promoting flexibility and initiatives - like the movement possible in the Schengen area. Movement between EU nations contributes to peace and unity, creating a stronger, more interconnected society across national borders. Internal migration is encouraged by the EU. Legal realities should be adapted to accommodate the impact of migration and to emphasise constant reinvention and creativity in managing immigration challenges.

Equality and Empowerment

In many cases, the problems in society stem from inequality, not from migration. If these problems are tackled at their source (lack of opportunity, long-term insecurity, ‘brain drain’ loss of people due to emigration etc), it can lead to greater equality and empowerment, for everyone. Understanding one's own culture and priviledges from different perspectives is a key step in this process.

Migrants as Active Contributors

Recognising migrants as active contributors is essential. Their valuable contributions should be acknowledged and celebrated by society. If they are part of society, their participation within it should be recognised.

Anti-Racism and Anti-Capitalism

Promoting anti-racism and steering away from dependence on other countries' poverty for wealth are fundamental. There should be resource equality; addressing labour shortages through controlled migration are pivotal.

Blockers and challenges

Polarisation

Integration in a society must not be taken for granted. Polarisation can and does happen in EU societies. Constant dialogue and adaptation are needed to combat polarisation. Active participation in ongoing dialogue is necessary to counteract societal and communitarian divisions.

Emigration Challenges

There are also societes where emigration is a challenge, more than immigration. lack of opportunity and loss of value pose long-term insecurities. Very often it is the younger generation who leave. Addressing these issues is crucial for a more inclusive society.

EU's Exterior Walls

Despite the will of having an internal unity, the EU still has strong external walls. This emphasises the fear of potential conflicts, polarisation and control of people's movement on the basis of nationality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a society shaped by migration is a dynamic tapestry influenced by the acknowledgment of migration's existence, fluid identities, and power dynamics. It's crucial to navigate the complexities, embrace diversity as strength, recognise migrants as active contributors, and strive for equality and empowerment. To foster a constructive society shaped by migration, we need to dispel fear with the EU playing a pivotal role in safeguarding its citizens. However, challenges like polarisation, emigration issues, and external walls within the EU demand continuous dialogue, adaptation, and a commitment to dismantling barriers for a truly interconnected and harmonious society shaped by migration.