



THE BIG 6 YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS: JOINT POSITION ON NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

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WORLD ASSOCIATION
OF GIRL GUIDES
AND GIRL SCOUTS



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1

In its broadest sense, education and learning are lifelong processes which enable the continuous development of a person's capabilities as an individual and as a member of society.

The purpose of education and learning are to contribute to the full development of an autonomous, supportive, responsible and committed person, who can in turn sustainably contribute to their communities.

Education takes place through three main forms, all of which are complementary and interdependent: formal, non-formal and informal (Coombs et al., 1973).

Non-formal education is diverse in terms of context, duration, provider, delivery, and outcome. Depending on context, non-formal and informal education may be referred to by the settings in which they're used, such as extracurricular activities or out-of-school learning, or the methods applied, such as experiential learning. This document adopts the terms described above as a shared language and recommends the reader use locally adopted appropriate terms interchangeably.

1.2

Today, it is increasingly accepted that formal education is not the only essential form of education. However, there needs to be a stronger balance between the different education and learning dimensions of young people's lives. Non-formal education, which is best suited to help young people build up their talents, resilience and prepare them to cope with social changes, is often underestimated. Without proper recognition, its benefits for young people and communities are not reaching their full potential.

1.3

There is a need to recognize the universal validity of the non-formal dimensions of education and learning by young people, both through the work of global youth organizations, as well as national and grassroots youth organizations.

1.4

During the first World Non-Formal Education Forum, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2019, the six largest global youth organizations came together to share their vision for the education of and learning by young people in the present, and the decades to come. The 'Big 6 Youth Organizations', as the group is called, includes: World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, World Young Women's Christian Association, World Organization of the Scout Movement, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation.

1.5

Together, the Big 6 Youth Organizations actively involve in excess of 250 million young people. Supported by the involvement of adults, these organizations have contributed to the education of more than a billion young people during the last century.

1.6

Formed in 1996, the Big 6 Youth Organizations are an alliance of leading international youth-serving organizations. In view of the universal importance of the contribution of non-formal education to learning by young people, this joint position is based upon their experience in this field. While this position does not aim to redefine already-established concepts, the members of the Big 6 Youth Organizations intend to bring a global call to action on strengthening the recognition of the benefits that non-formal education of young people brings to our communities in addition to the benefits to the young people themselves.

2. THE CHALLENGE

2. The challenge

Accelerated changes in society have significant implications for young people and the educational and learning opportunities available to them need to reflect these changes.

2.1 Changes in society and the implications for young people

2.1.1

In many areas, the generally accepted patterns of social demographics are changing. Some of these changes affect only certain parts of the world, while others have far reaching global implications. For example:

- The increasing and accelerated shifts in population, in part due to the effects of migration, climate change and increased personal mobility.
- An unsustainable use of natural resources leading to a climate emergency, loss of biodiversity, growing inequality and poverty.
- Continuing discrimination and unequitable access to opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds.
- Continued inequalities and discrimination that limit girls and young women's rights and participation in private and public spheres.
- Inadequate access to quality education, training and employment.
- The changing nature of work and the need for security and continuity in personal development.
- Calls for a strong focus on the mental health of young people
- The speed and amount of information that is shared, especially online, reaching more young people than ever before.
- The sorting of information, particularly discerning between valid information and misinformation.

- The protection of personal data that young people are sharing online and the way data is being used to change the social and political landscape by various non-state actors.
- The need for young people to deal with multiple identities, online and offline, and the management of those identities in the context of occupational aspirations and the pressures from social media.
- The rapid reshaping and growth of the digital public sphere and and the ensuing opportunities and threats this bring to young people..
- Young people are increasingly being exposed to incitement to violence in the context of this shrinking civic space.

2.1.2

Social changes such as those described above have important implications for young people. If they are to be able to make a positive and purposeful contribution to society, young people must acquire and develop the appropriate knowledge, life skills and attitudes to meet the needs of their communities. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Obtaining the essentials of life, including food, health and shelter, employment, or other meaningful activity; and a sense of security.
- Combating isolation and disengagement by developing a sense of belonging and identity, gaining acceptance and being recognized.
- Finding a secure starting point for themselves based on values, self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Exploring their beliefs and engaging in a personal search for meaning in their lives; discovering a spiritual dimension.
- Coping with change, which requires flexibility, adaptability and mobility.
- Gaining constructive control of technological progress and digital environments through the development of key digital competencies.

Acquiring a sense of their own agency by making a contribution to the sustainable development of their community and beyond, influencing and participating in decision-making processes and speaking out on the issues they care about.

Learning to recognize the value of cooperation and team work.

Developing a set of capabilities and 'navigational capacities' that are sufficiently flexible and responsive to a rapidly changing and often uncertain world.

2.1.3

The specific needs of young people will vary from one country to another and indeed from one individual to another, depending on particular circumstances. This calls for a needs-based personalized approach, adapting to the local reality of young people and listening to them when designing educational programmes that support their learning. Progressively, young people should have a larger say and be co-creators of their education and learning experiences. It is in the interest of both society and young people themselves that they become active citizens of their local, national, and international communities.

2.1.4

Whatever the environment in which they live, all young people have the same basic needs. They need to acquire the ability to cope and the ability to become the architects of their own development as individuals who are;

- **Autonomous** - able to make choices and to control their personal and social life as an individual and as a member of society;
- **Supportive** - able to show concern for others, to advocate with them and for them, to share their concerns;
- **Responsible** - able to take responsibility for their actions, keep commitments and complete whatever they undertake;
- **Committed** - able to assert themselves in respect of values, a cause or an ideal, and to act accordingly;
- **Inclusive** – able to respect other paradigms, including by virtue of their gender, ethnicity, religion, language, or culture.

These characteristics contribute to young people realizing their full potential as individuals and as members of society. However, this goal can only be reached if the appropriate educational and learning opportunities, which cover the totality of their needs, are created together with young people.

2.2 The definition of education and learning

2.2.1

In contrast to the traditional view of the word 'education' which is normally used in the context of formal education systems (e.g. schools and universities), the authors of this position consider a more accurate definition to be:

Education is a lifelong process which enables the continuous development of a person's capabilities and agency as an individual, a member of society and of our shared planet.

2.2.2

In this broader definition, lifelong education is based on four learning pillars: to be; to do; to know; to live together (Delors et al., 1998; Mørch, S., 2003)

Learning to be, so as to better develop one's character and act with ever evolving autonomy, judgement, resilience, and personal responsibility. In that connection, education must not disregard any aspect in the development of a young person's potential.

Learning to do, in order to acquire not only occupational skills but also the capacity to overcome problems and challenges, and a broad range of life skills including interpersonal and team relationships.

Learning to know, by combining a sufficiently broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in-depth in a few subject areas. This also means learning to learn, so as to benefit from the opportunities that education provides throughout life.

Learning to live together, developing an understanding of other people, an appreciation of interdependence, skills in teamwork and conflict resolution, and a deep respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding, peace and justice.

2.2.3

The authors therefore consider that education and learning are both personal and social processes. They should support the development of a person as an individual and as a member of society.

Therefore, educational youth organisations take a learner-centered approach. In this form of non-formal education, the role of the educator is to facilitate young people to take ownership of their learning journey and create self-directed and developmental learning opportunities.

2.2.4

A variety of educational actors make a contribution to the full personal and social development of an individual. It is generally accepted that there are three distinct forms of education. Based on the Council of Europe definitions, they are:

Formal education, “refers to the structured education system that runs from primary (and in some countries from nursery) school to university, and includes specialized programmes for vocational, technical and professional training. Formal education often comprises an assessment of the learners’ acquired learning or competences and is based on a programme or curriculum which can be more or less closed to adaptation to individual needs and preferences. Formal education usually leads to recognition and certification.”

Non-formal education, “refers to planned, structured programmes and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences , outside the formal educational curriculum. Non-formal education and learning is what happens in places such as youth organizations, sports clubs and drama and community groups where young people meet, for example, to undertake projects together, play games, discuss, go camping, or make music and drama.”

Informal education, “refers to a lifelong learning process, whereby each individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from the educational influences and resources in his or her own environment and from daily experience. People learn from family and neighbors, in the marketplace, at the library, at art exhibitions, at work and through playing, reading and sports activities. Learning in this way is often unplanned and unstructured.”

Formal, non-formal and informal education and learning are complementary, mutually reinforcing and often overlapping elements of a lifelong learning process.

2.2.5

The concept of education presupposes the existence of an educator who organizes and facilitates the learning experience, and who has a more or less well-defined intention of learning what the learner should acquire from the experience (Bäumer et al., 2019). It is, however, the learner’s transformation of the educational experience into learning that is the crucial step.

learning can be either intentional or unintentional on the part of either the learner or the educator. Where there is no intention from an educator, or no educator involved, we would define this as informal learning.

2.2.6

Though the trichotomy of three distinct educational forms is recognized to overlap and be blurred in many ways (Bäumer, 2019; Werquin, 2007) this categorization nonetheless remains a useful way to look at the education and learning of young people.

For each of these three forms of education, a primary educational role can be identified, which complements the other two and all are necessary to produce the desired results. In broad terms:

1 Competencies describe the specific attributes individuals need for action and self-organization in various complex contexts and situations. They include cognitive, affective, volitional and motivational elements; hence they are an interplay of knowledge, capacities and skills, motives and affective dispositions. Competencies cannot be taught, but have to be developed by the learners themselves (UNESCO, 2017).

2 Examples of this blurring include non-formal education organizations being invited by the formal education institutions to contribute to the education in that setting (but typically not towards the certified qualifications); non-formal educational institutions as well as informal education offering education to complement, supplement, and/or compensate the formal education towards acquiring a higher level of certified qualifications. Some formal education systems also purpose to develop e.g. democratic competence including the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to become an active and contributing citizen in a democracy. Formal education has also adopted a number of the educational methods previously seen as the domain of the non-formal education organizations, and non-formal education organisations offer certificates for vocational training that are recognised by the formal education system

Knowledge and professional skills are generally the intended objectives of formal education.

The acquisition of life skills, values and principles, and the development of attitudes based on an integrated value system are primarily the objectives of non-formal education.

A number of skills and attitudes, both personal and social, are the outcomes of informal education.

We also recognize that educators from the formal education setting are increasingly using non-formal methodologies in their work. However, some are facing resistance from their peers and are discouraged from continuing in this direction. Blending formal with non-formal methodologies for teaching and learning should however be encouraged and supported wherever it can bring added value both to the learner and the educator.

2.2.7

One of the major issues facing education today is ensuring the relevance of the educational content and methodology for the current and future needs of young people. In an era of rapid technological and social change, education must provide flexible, adaptable and relevant responses to addressing society's challenges.

Education must be treated holistically, taking into account all of its main forms, which are strongly interdependent and complementary. Unfortunately, there is still a continuing tendency to devote more time, resources and responsibility to the formal academic education sector. As a result, the importance of non-formal education and learning is not as widely recognized and the resources required to support it are being neglected. This happens despite growing levels of dissatisfaction among young people concerning the relevance and quality that the formal education system currently offers.

2.2.8

Non-formal education and learning bring a unique contribution to the development of the individual, in a way that cannot be replaced by formal or informal education and learning. This is a reality that must be increasingly recognized by any society that intends to build a modern, holistic system that enables lifelong learning, is informed by young people, and responds to their current needs.

2.2.9

Among the main non-formal education providers, we find youth organizations, which present specific characteristics (as described in Section 3). Youth organization committed to non-formal education however require more recognition and increased access to infrastructure and funding in order to provide high-quality services to young people in their communities



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3. CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations committed to non-formal education, such as youth and social movements, have a number of characteristics that give them the unique ability to make a contribution to the lifelong learning process of an individual.

First, they are usually people-centered and place a strong emphasis on the commitment and responsibility of each individual in pursuing their personal growth process. Second, they all aim to contribute to the holistic development of each individual. Third, they all have in common several or all of the following characteristics that distinguish them from other organizations, and reinforce the individual's motivation to take an active part in the learning process.

3.1 Voluntary participation

Participation in youth organizations is usually voluntary. Whoever decides to join such an organization does so of their own free will or, if some pressure has been exercised at the time of joining (such as family or peer pressure), a time soon comes when a free personal decision is made to stay or leave. This voluntary involvement strengthens the individual's motivation and commitment, and has a positive impact on the shaping of their character.

3.2 Experiential learning

Organizations committed to non-formal education offer a practical field of experience in their particular area of focus. Learning comes through reflection as the result of the practical experience of the individual and not only from a theoretical explanation. The development of relationship skills will, for example, result from a direct experience of living with others and the natural, organized or spontaneous, reflection on that experience (Kolb, 2014). Discovering one's own abilities and limits will come as a result of direct involvement in the implementation of a project or an attempt to meet a real challenge.

3.3 Progressive Learning

Most youth organizations have a progressive dimension in their programmes. This is a way of helping a person measure their own growth over a period of time in a flexible manner and without the rigidity of a fixed curriculum. The individual starts, implements

and completes steps in a programme when they are ready to do so according to their own level of development and mental preparedness. This is supported by an educational approach/method that is tailored to personal progression

Linked with the voluntary nature of participation in the organizations and individual commitment, the dimension of progression becomes a very powerful development tool. This is particularly true when it is conceived as a way for an individual to check their own progress in relation to a previous stage of personal development rather than in competition with others.

3.4 Peer-to-peer learning

Many young people desire group involvement and the peer group plays an extremely important role in the process of the acquisition of values by young people. Organizations committed to non-formal education have found ways of harnessing this trend to enrich it with a strong education and learning dimension, harnessing peer-to-peer learning and the value of face-to-face relations. A group of peers provides an ideal framework in which the individual, in association with others, can plan and implement projects, take on responsibilities, develop relationships, carry out specific roles, reflect and evaluate with others, receive and provide feedback, and learn from the experience.

3.5 Mentoring

Youth organizations offer opportunities to establish real partnerships between young people and adults in situations where both are volunteers and recognize that they can learn from each other. These partnerships imply reciprocal appreciation and mutual respect. There are very few contexts in young people's lives where such youth-adult relationships can develop in a non-authoritarian manner.

3.6 Leadership development

Youth organizations almost invariably provide, as part of their programmes, opportunities for young people to practice leadership. This enables them to develop their leadership behaviors and skills without facing a false construct that they have to wait until they have 'grown up'. As a result, they will gain important practical experience in having a positive impact on the world around them. The ability to participate in the process of democracy, of decision-making, and of responsible democratic leadership is rarely made possible in other spheres of young people's lives

3.7 Development of a personal value system

An organization's values are normally aligned to the organization's mission and vision. These are an integral part of the fabric of the organization and exercise a strong influence on its activities, operations, culture and external relationships. They therefore offer young people an opportunity to discover, analyze and understand values and their implications, and to build a personal set of values and positive habits over time, that will guide their lives.

4. ACTIONS REQUIRED

Accelerated changes in society are having a significant effect on the lives of young people. It is becoming increasingly urgent for the whole educational establishment, in all its facets, to recognize the implications of these changes, and to enable young people to meet the challenges of an unpredictable and rapidly changing world.

We strongly encourage all those who are shaping educational policies and practices for young people to endorse the concept that non-formal education and learning is an essential part of the educational process, and to recognize the contribution that can be made by youth organisations committed to non-formal education.

In particular we urge them to:

- Increase the recognition of non-formal education and learning and the associated learning outcomes, including through legal instruments;
- Increase funding to non-formal education and learning programmes and organizations, at global, regional, national and local levels;
- Encourage the development of infrastructure that enables non-formal education programmes to have meaningful impact in their communities and which is freely available to non-governmental organizations;
- Seek dialogue and partnership with non-formal educational organizations;

- Support and utilize the skills, resources and experience of youth organizations committed to non-formal education and learning
- Strengthen partnerships between formal, informal and non-formal education in order to create policies that holistically meet the education and learning needs of young people;
- Further academic research on the impact and processes of non-formal education, in partnership with academic institutions and youth organizations.

The chief executive officers of the Big 6 Alliance pledge to translate this position into their programmes and joint collaborations, and invite other non-formal education organizations to endorse and implement the vision expressed in this document.



Presented by the Chief Executive Officers of:

- World Alliance of Young Men’s Christian Associations
- World Young Women’s Christian Association
- World Organization of the Scout Movement
- World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and
- The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award Foundation

ABOUT THE BIG 6 YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS



World Alliance of Young Men’s Christian Associations

Carlos Madjri Sanvee, Secretary General, World YMCA

YMCA is one of the oldest and largest youth-focused movements in the world. Founded in 1844, it now operates in 120 countries and reaches 65 million people. YMCA associations are strongly rooted in their communities and offer a variety of programmes and services based on local priorities and issues affecting young people and their communities, with a strong focus on inclusion for all. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, World YMCA supports the local and national associations to bring social justice and peace to young people and their families, regardless of age, gender, religion or socio-economic background.



WorldYWCA

World Young Women’s Christian Association

Casey Harden , General Secretary, World YWCA

The World YWCA is a global women’s right movement, working with women, young women and girls across faith, culture, and region in more than 100 countries. World YWCA is the largest organization of its kind, engaging millions of people each year. World YWCA believes that when women rise to leadership they transform power structures and policies around human rights, gender equality, peace, and justice. World YWCA supports young women as they connect, inspire, mobilise and act for transformational change, for a sustainable world. The World YWCA movement works collectively to realize the common Goal: By 2035, 100 million young women and girls will transform power structures to create justice, gender equality and a world without violence and war; leading a sustainable YWCA movement, inclusive of all women.



World Organization of the Scout Movement

Ahmad Alhendawi, Secretary General

Scouting is one of the world’s leading educational youth movements, engaging more than 50 million young people in over 224 countries and territories to be agents of positive change in tackling the most pressing social, environmental, and economic challenges facing our communities and planet. Scouting offers a unique non-formal educational experience that contributes to the development of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual potential as active global citizens.



World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts

Sarah Nancollas, Chief Executive

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts is the largest voluntary Movement dedicated to girls and young women in the world. Our diverse Movement represents ten million girls and young women from 150 countries. For more than 100 years Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting has transformed the lives of girls and young women worldwide, supporting and empowering them to achieve their fullest potential and become responsible citizens of the world. Our strengths lie in innovative non-formal education programmes, leadership development, advocacy work and community action, empowering girls and young women to develop the skills and confidence needed to make positive changes in their lives, in their communities and countries.

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The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Elhadj As Sy, Secretary General

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is the world's largest humanitarian organization, reaching 150 million people in 190 National Societies through the work of over 13,7 million volunteers. It provides assistance before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people, without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinion. It tackles the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade and is committed to 'saving lives and changing minds'.

Its strength is in its unique youth and volunteer network and its community-based expertise, through which it helps reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen resilience and foster a culture of peace around the world. The longstanding commitment of the IFRC and member National Societies to education is enshrined in many statutory decisions and commitments made, especially over the past two decades. In regards to its contribution to non-formal education, the preliminary, consolidated findings of a recent global mapping showed that 184 National Societies delivered educational programmes in non-formal settings (20 in penitentiary, detention and/or correctional centres, 69 in workplaces and 183 in communities), reaching out a total of 189,223,218 individuals over this 20-year period. The IFRC has now endorsed a Strategic Framework on Education which further cements its role in the education space.



The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation

John May, Secretary General

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is a global, non-formal education and learning framework. The Award is available to all 14-24 year olds and equips young people with the skills they need for life regardless of their background, culture, physical ability and interests.

Since its launch over 60 years ago, the Award has inspired millions of young people to transform their lives. Doing the Award is a personal challenge and not a competition against others; it pushes young people to their personal limits and recognises their achievements. Acting alongside quality, formal education, non-formal education and the Award can play a critical role in a young person's personal development. Together we can help them give them the opportunity to find their purpose, passion and place in the world.

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