

A brief background to a learning framework that overlays existing Youth Work tasks and activities. The Framework will measure the progress made by the participant involved in these tasks and activities.

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(1) **STYLE** Training reported in February 2007 on the local authority Youth Services' provision to meet the non-formal and informal learning elements of the 14-19 Learning Pathway.

(2) The subsequent work of **STYLE** was to further understand the parameters of this type of learning and any research that had been undertaken to measure or evaluate the outcome from this approach.

The 2007 report clearly identified that the maintained Youth Service in Wales saw the delivery of its service as being non formal or informal learning. However, **STYLE** was of the opinion that the service had reached this view not through strategy or planning, but through evolutionary growth. It is likely that it is only in recent times that the terms non formal or informal learning were attributed to the outcomes of traditional youth work.

(3) Much has been written over many years in relation to non-formal/informal/tacit learning. **Michael Eraut** commented in 2005 that 'non-formal learning must focus on activity and outcomes that contribute to significant changes in capability or understanding.' **Coffield** in 2000 talked about the 'necessity of informal learning';

while **McGiveny**, in 1999, spoke of the, 'informal learning in the community.' **Polanyi** (1967) of what he refers to as 'Tacit' knowledge. There is still much debate around terminology and delivery. However, the interest that has been exhibited in this essential area of work has not been translated into any structured means of measuring the success our young people (who grapple with the more formal approach to learning) have achieved or will achieve.

(4) **Dr Lasse Siurala, Director of Youth** in Helsinki in his paper 'Non formal learning and social inclusion' defines non-formal learning as:

'A learner centred and practice based learning process, which emphasises: intrinsic motivation, social context of learning; the usefulness of knowledge and aims at identity growth and social change and integration into society. Learning is voluntary, involves conscious educational aims and may be credited.'

(5) It is recognised within the European Union (**Official Journal C168, 20.7.06**) that the value and visibility of non-formal learning should be enhanced by recognising the work and achievements of young people and those active in youth work and youth organisations.

(6) Non-formal learning is seen as important because:

- it has a participative and learner-centred approach;
- can be carried out on a voluntary basis and is therefore closely linked to young people's needs, aspirations and interests;
- can provide an additional source of learning and a possible route into formal education and training;
- is particularly relevant to young people with fewer opportunities;
- can take place in a wide and varied range of settings;
- is complementary to the formal education and training system;

(7) The definition below was used during the initial development of this work. However, I now believe that Non-formal learning should be redefined against contemporary Youth Work practice and allow the modern practitioner to take ownership of this style of leaning – Non Formal Learning.

Non-formal learning is: *learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.* **The EC (2001) Communication on Lifelong Learning: formal, non-formal and informal learning.**

(8) The development of the Non Formal Learning framework, which was branded **CORNERSTONE**, arose following a request to establish a network of youth work projects across the three main Celtic regions of the UK, **CELTIC CONNECTIONS**. Meeting with the three CEOs that represented these regions highlighted that there was a requirement to measure or evaluate the impact that these projects were having on the target groups within the **CELTIC CONNECTION** network. **STYLE** was aware from work across the UK that while professional practitioners planned their project work and were able to demonstrate the theme and outcome required, it was not possible to find a common *style* of recording this planning. **STYLE** proposed that the planning associated with **CORNERSTONE** should follow the structure found in the classroom and the planning prepared by teachers.

(9) It was fortuitous that while working with a headteacher to design the framework **STYLE** was introduced to the work of **NACE** (National Association for Able Children in Education) and the use of thinking skills with *able and talented* children. The six cognitive skills highlighted by **NACE** were subsequently incorporated into **CORNERSTONE**. To ensure the effectiveness of these skills, particularly in

connection with young people (usually NEETs) the framework needed to understand and identify the structure of the skills and also their relevance within a social context (employment).

(10) To ensure the content of the framework reflected the needs of employers **STYLE** secured the support and assistance from **Panasonic UK** (Newport). **STYLE** set the agenda to secure a framework that reflects the requirements of a global company; this taking a generic view of employment and not being sector specific.

(11) **The Next Step** – developing the Cognitive Skills embedded in the Framework to establish a Skills Apprenticeship.