The non-formal code:

Updating its characteristics and building

a research tool to evaluate the strength of each

characteristic

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Abstract

Non-formal education is an educational‑pedagogical concept that was developed in out-of-school educational and community organizations. These organizations usually operated during their audiences' leisure time, and are aimed at individuals who willingly, and of their own initiative, join the activities. Non-formal education is considered lifelong learning, and is based on changing situations and on a wide range of subject matter (Romi & Schmida, 2007). It aims to engage participants in active social involvement for the benefit of the public, and to allow participants self-expression, using pedagogical means formulated in the field of activity and defined by the various experiences (Silberman-Keller, 2007). At the same time, there are unique characteristics that are identified with non‑formal education, as well as content and modes of activity. These principles were formulated by Kahane (2007) who developed the Non‑formal Code as a theoretical-social, cultural, and educational concept enveloping the field. The Code formed the theoretical foundation for the present research.

The goals guided this study are to update the dimensions of the *Non-formal Educational Code,* and to construct a quantitative research tool that could help characterize non‑formal educational settings and compare them. The Non‑formal Education Code has 11 dimensions – 8 were established by Kahane (2007) in his Non‑formal Code, and 3 were added following later studies (Silberman-Keller, 2007a, Rapoport, 2012). The study represents another step in evaluating the strength of the Code's dimensions in various settings, and adds to the research methods used to date. The updated portrait of the dimensions of the Non‑formal Educational Code (henceforth, the Code) was shaped by the findings derived from a valid and reliable questionnaire developed for this study. The questionnaire, which measures the strength of the Code's dimensions, was distributed to three non-formal education settings – community centers, youth movements, and CYC programs. The questionnaire enables us to identify the strength of the Code's dimensions in each setting and the strength of the links among them, with the goal of characterizing each of them.

This study presents several innovations: (1) An up-to-date description of the dimensions of the Non-formal Educational Code; (2) The construction of a quantitative tool that measures the strength of the Code's dimensions and the relations between them, enabling a comparison of settings and activities; (3) Longitudinal presentation of

the findings (all dimensions in all settings) and horizontal presentation (each dimension in all settings), allowing an examination of the uniqueness of each dimension and each setting; (4) Presentation of the differences among the participating non-formal settings regarding the type and composition of the dimensions in each settings, the relations between them, and additional distinguishing aspects (gender, age, and education); (5) Presentation of statements and dimensions that are common to all three settings and could represent their typical principles and activities.

Three issues underlie the rationale for this study: (1) The difficulty in formulating common dimensions for non-formal education, resulting from the range of activities which are different and distinct from each other; (2) The desire of leaders in the various non-formal educational settings to be relevant for the customers, leading to frequent changes and to flexibility that have not yet been studied. (3) The fact that research literature has focused on describing either activities or some of the dimensions, but has not addressed the educational phenomenon as a whole.

The literature review explained non-formal education and expanded on the issues of the rationale for this study. It continued with introducing Kahane's research (1974, 1975, 1983, 1986, 2000, 2004, 2007) which includes a distinction between "non-formal education," the "non-formal cipher," and the Non-formal Code, and a description of the Code's dimensions. The views of other researchers were also reviewed (Rapoport, 2012; Silberman-Keller, 2007a) to the Code's dimensions and to the theoretical relations between these dimensions (Kahane, A. & Rapoport, 2012; Kahane, 2007; Silberman-Keller, 2007a) and non-formal pedagogy, which is the ideological and practical framework for achieving the goals of the activities (Dror, 2015; Silberman-Keller, 2007a). As this study included the construction of a quantitative tool with measures for assessing the strength of the Code's dimension in various activities, studies of measures- and criteria-construction in non-formal education were reviewed, as were research tools used for the Non-formal Code. The last part of the review is a presentation of the non-formal educational settings that participated in the study, and which had been chosen because they represent the main branches of this educational approach.

The theoretical framework for this study is the eight-dimension Non-formal Code, and its dimensions are volunteerism, pragmatic symbolism, symmetry, modularity, expressive instrumentalism, multidimensionality, moratorium, and dualism (Kahane,

2007). These dimensions are the foundation for this study, beginning with the lead-in questions in the personal interviews and focus groups, up to constructing the dimensions underlying the statements selected for the questionnaire. In the second stage (validation), additional dimensions were added to the descriptive framework of non-formal education – time and place (Silberman-Keller, 2007a), gender roles, and body and sexuality (Rapoport, 2012). As stated above, these 11 dimensions make up the Non-formal Educational Code, which is the subject of the present study.

There are two research hypotheses for this study – a comparison hypothesis and a model hypothesis. The comparison hypothesis is that statistically significant differences will be found for each dimension among all sample participants and in each of the educational settings (community centers, youth movements, and CYC programs), So that the average of each dimension in the youth movements will be the highest and in the CYC programs will be the lowest. The model hypothesis is that statistically significant differences will be found between the models of the various educational settings, so that in each setting, items will be organized into dimensions differently, So that the number of connections and their intensity will be the highest in the youth movements and lower in the CYC programs.

The methodology employed meant that the findings gleaned in the first stage (the qualitative stage) assisted in building the second (quantitative) stage. This method is used when there are no tools for measuring theoretical dimensions. The study included qualitative data collection, aimed at developing variables and a scale for a quantitative research tool, analysis and presentation of the qualitative data, constructing and validating a quantitative research tool, quantitative data collection, analysis and presentation of the quantitative data, and interpreting the findings.

Participants were samples from three non-formal education settings – community centers, youth movements, and CYC programs. Gal (1995) and Dror (2007) saw these as representing the three basic approaches in non-formal education – community centers (complementary), youth movements (supplementary), and alternative (CYC programs). These settings are the earlier ones and the most prominent in Israeli non-formal education. In addition, two other settings were sampled during the interviews stage. The first, representing a mixed approach (complementary, supplementary, and alternative), is social education in school. The second represents a contemporary non-formal setting, the community center for young adults (18-35) whose concept and

values are postmodern. All participants were sampled from towns in central Israel in 2015-2016. All were experienced in the field, and have played various roles, beginning with being members and moving up to their current positions, giving them a comprehensive view of their field. Participants were 18 and older, some had senior positions on the district, regional, or national level (Stages 1-2 of the study), and counselors, coordinators, and institutional directors (Stages 3-4).

This was a four-stage study, and the goal, method, participants, tools, procedure, data processing, & findings are described for each stage. The short discussion summarizing each stage includes an analysis of the significance of the findings, and based on these, the rationale for conducting the next stage. The study is structured along the structure of two doctoral dissertations that dealt with constructing questionnaires (Doron, 2008; Zilka, 2009). Doron (2008) composed a questionnaire that examines the links between a non-optimal research pattern and emotional, cognitive, and functional reactions in explicit learning tasks, following a manipulated success or failure feedback (12 research stages), and Zilka (2009) composed a questionnaire regarding relationships to pets from the perspective of Attachment Theory, conceptualization and measurement of individual differences (8 research stages).

The study has four stages:

Stage 1. Qualitative – constructing a questionnaire. This was the stage for examining and forming sub-dimensions and statements that together make up the questionnaire. The participants were 18 years old and older, all with high positions on the district, regional, and national level in one of five settings – CYC programs, community centers, and youth movements (interviews) and the community center for young adults and social education in school (focus groups). Participants voiced their opinions on the ways the dimensions of the Non-formal Code were expressed in the setting they lead. This stage resulted in the 8-dimension, 40-statement structure for the first version of the questionnaire.

Stage 2. Validation. Turning to judges to validate the first version of the questionnaire. During this stage, the statements (derived in Stage 1) were reformulated, as were the scale and the lead question. This stage resulted in a questionnaire with 11 dimensions, 28 sub-dimensions, and 56 statements.

Stage 3. Quantitative – constructing the questionnaire. Reliability analysis and factor analysis were conducted. However, the reliabilities turned out to be lower than 0.6,

leading to a change in the original plan and moving to constructing the second version of the questionnaire. Therefore, this stage of the study describes the changes made in the transition from the first to second – and final – version of the questionnaire. This version included 11 dimensions, 24 sub-dimensions, and 63 statements.

Stages 1-3 led to shaping a research tool aimed at examining the strength of the Codes' dimensions in the three settings.

Stage 4. The second (and final) version was examined, and factor analysis and reliability test conducted. The end result for this stage was a valid, reliable questionnaire that examines the strength of the dimension of the Non-formal Educational Code. The questionnaire included 8 dimensions and 34 statements, with the statements for each setting formulated with specific terminology used in each setting. Out of Kahane's (2007) eight dimensions, six remained in the questionnaire, and two dimensions were added from later studies (Silberman-Keller, 2007a; Rapoport, 2012), both with reliability greater than 0.6. As a continuation of Stage 4, four models were constructed (one for the entire sample, and one each for each framework). In addition, four models were constructed: A model for the full sample with 13 links between the 8 dimensions, a community-center model with 4 links between 7 dimensions, a youth-movement model with 12 links between 8 dimensions, and a CYC programs model with 5 dimensions without any links.

Stage 4 findings were presented by hypothesis. The comparison hypothesis, according to which there would be differences among the dimensions, So that the average of each dimension in the youth movements will be the highest and in the CYC programs will be the lowest, was partially confirmed. Namely, statistically significant differences were found between the averages of most pairs of dimensions in the sample (7 of the 32 pairs did not show significant differences). Additionally, a comparison of the educational settings revealed significant differences between 3 of the 8 dimensions (pragmatic symbolism, gender roles, and volunteerism). The model hypothesis, that statistically significant differences would be found among the models (settings), So that the number of connections and their intensity will be the highest in the youth movements and lower in the CYC programs.

 was almost fully confirmed. Namely, four models were constructed: one for the full-sample model with 13 relations among the 8 dimensions; a community-center model with 4 relations among 7 dimensions; a youth-movement model with 12 relations

among 8 dimensions, and a CYC programs model with 5 unrelated dimensions. All dimensions, with the exception of volunteerism, were placed differently. Furthermore, A all models were found to have significant differences ($p < .05$), except for a nonsignificant difference between the community-center model and the CYC programs model ($p > .05$). The variables that were fund to contribute to the differences between participants' answers were educational setting, gender, age, and education.

The overall discussion addressed the research hypotheses - both to the findings revealed for each and to additional meanings derived from the findings, based on other studies with similar or contradictory finings. In addition, the discussion addressed the statements that were common to all models and to those that had been omitted from all models. For example, soliciting participants (volunteerism), where counselors solicit participants to attract them to the activities, was explained through consumerism and to the screen culture, two forces that compete with non-formal educational settings for participants' free time. The principle of freedom of trial and error (moratorium) was found to be significant for success in other areas as well (formal education, organization management, etc.). Regarding the links between the dimensions, Byrne's (2013) model analysis was presented, an analysis that describes the differences between a saturated model, with rich links between dimensions (youth movements) and an independent model with few links between the dimensions (community center and CYC programs). The discussion also focused on the meaning of the statements that were common to all models, as these could represent principles and activities that are common to all settings. Also examined statements that had been omitted from all the models, and were found to be central in other studies.

Non-formal education can benefit from these findings both theoretically and practically. In theoretical research, the updated dimensions of the Code and the components of each setting could act as a starting point for future research among other audiences (e.g., participants, settings, or various activities) with the aim of gaining more in-depth characterization of the activities, understand the differences among them, and identify their points of weakness as a basis for constructing activity plans and training programs. Practically, the questionnaire findings can be used as a baseline for decision making regarding training personnel and organizing activities that would reinforce dimensions that will be found to be of low strength. This will enable leaders of non-

formal educational settings to respond to diverse audiences and meet their up-to-date needs.