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NONFORMAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY - A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

Master's Thesis in Education

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Master's Degree Programme in Education and Globalisation

2014
Faculty of Education

Thesis abstract

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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Master’s Thesis</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>Number of pages</td>
<td>115</td>
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Abstract

Nonformal education (NFE) and training is quite widespread in Europe nowadays, and is considered a tool for empowerment for youth and other individuals. Nonformal education was founded in the late 1960s as a response to the failure and limitations of formal systems, and was supposed to replace the bureaucracies practiced by such institutions within those. One of NFE’s aims is to empower learners through achieving un-met learning needs, and programmes should be tailored to meet their own interests. Thus throughout the years, the values related to NFE have developed into a different dimension and its educational programmes have been employed to serve political agendas. It has also been attributed to economic and neoliberal discourses. Having said that, this study examines how NFE and the concept of empowerment evolved through critically analyzing discourses in the Europe 2020 Strategy. Since the EU’s major objective is to become the most competitive knowledge-based economy of the world, the study will attempt to critically examine what influence does this objective have on youth empowerment, and whether NFE is being exploited to transfer the knowledge favored by the Strategy, thus contributing towards hegemonic ways of thinking and acting.

The focus of this study is to reveal the power of language in policies and its influence on shaping empowerment, utilizing Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis as the methodology to help in analyzing the significant discourses in the Europe 2020 Strategy. Accordingly, two narratives were identified and analyzed: a Transformation narrative that bisects into two sub-narratives of ‘Information Society’ and knowledge transformation towards a ‘Knowledge-Based Economy’. The second is an Adapting Skills narrative that has transformed the competencies of individuals to contribute to the former narratives. This has helped in exposing how ideologies and power through the language conveyed in the Strategy govern social change and youth’s interest towards a collective educational pathway.

This study argues that the policy lacks a critical approach, as it focuses its attention on building an information society that requires lifelong learners to be educated and empowered within certain domains. It could be noticed that it mobilizes educational programmes to promote determined objectives that marginalize other knowledge and competencies, also contributing to building ‘class’ and privileges among learners. Using Critical Theory and empowerment theory as the theoretical framework, suggests that transforming the society should result in improving the human condition, allowing not only for empowerment according to political interests, but most importantly for emancipation.

Keywords | Nonformal Education, Lifelong Learning, Critical Discourse Analysis, Empowerment, Information Society, Knowledge-Based Economy, Education Policy
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Chapter 1: Introduction

For decades, there has been a growing interest in nonformal education, which is often perceived as a tool for empowerment that responds to the needs of the learner. Nonformal education is supposed to be a second chance opportunity to empower the individual’s needs, whether professional, personal, civic related etc. Thus, nowadays, the political language associated with nonformal education programmes has a great influence on the delivered outcomes. The new generation of nonformal education is being associated with other discourses that are created to serve political interests and are institutionalized (Rogers, 2005). Thus, with the technological changes and globalization, learning has become a social pressure in order to be able to keep up with constant changes. Accordingly, The European Union, is relating nonformal education to the discourse of lifelong learning, and as a result it has created a different use for nonformal programmes. Therefore, this study applies a Critical Discourse Analysis of the Europe 2020 Strategy, to analyze the language used in the policy and understand the context that it promotes for youth empowerment. Using such a critical approach will identify whether the policy is creating ideological hegemony through the power of language and politics, and in what direction it is transforming the society. To facilitate the analysis, the study applies both a critical theory and empowerment theory perspective, as this goes in line with Fairclough’s (1989) belief that “from awareness and critique arise possibilities of empowerment and change”.

Policies are created to direct actions and regulate people and systems under power. The language and certain discourses conveyed have a significant role in changing a society. This creates a certain value that becomes part of the norms and practices within a particular context (Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B., 2009). The Europe 2020 Strategy that is the successor of the Lisbon strategy, came as a response to the economic crisis. The EU as a supranational power needs to maintain its competitiveness with its competitors, especially the U.S., and be continuously
aligned with the changes brought by globalization. It believes that the best way out of the crisis is to become the “most competitive knowledge based economy of the world” (Moutsios, 2007). Accordingly, such a rationale sets a specific focus for nonformal education programmes, which are designed to attain the targeted economic benchmarks. Therefore, this study will attempt to uncover the discourses that the Strategy conveys such as “information society” and “knowledge-based economy” in order to achieve social change, and its implications on nonformal education and youth empowerment. Hence, the research questions that will guide the objective of the research are;

1. What discourses are emphasized in the Europe 2020 Strategy and their relation to youth empowerment?

2. How do the discourses seem to nurture and construct the concept of empowerment through nonformal education?

Furthermore, the study suggests that the policy has been shaped by the discourse of globalization and international influences, in which the society is being geared towards a global perspective. As a result, education policies and educationists have been “prompted to review their practice in the light of international influences” (Elliot, Fourali, & Issler, 2010). Accordingly, the policy might incautiously be allowing inequalities among youth, and granting privileges for certain knowledge that contributes to achieving economic return for the society.

The study first starts with conceptualizing and understanding nonformal education by introducing the relevant concepts. Chapter 2 is divided into several sections that will provide the reader with the background needed for understanding and clarifying the background of nonformal education and lifelong learning. By doing so, one could compare in the later chapters the changes that have occurred and the influence of power in creating ideological hegemony. It is then followed by the theoretical framework in chapter 3 and then chapter 4 presents the
critical discourse analysis as a methodology that will guide the analysis of discourses. In chapter 5, I move on to the critique of discourses identified in the Europe 2020 Strategy as a text: firstly, transformation narrative seeking to change the society towards an ‘information society’ and ‘knowledge-based economy’. Secondly, adapting the skills narrative that contributes to the transformation narrative. Chapter 6, discusses the results of analyzing the narratives and their role in shaping the interests and skills of youth. It investigates the power of discourses as it is shaped by structures, and how it also contributes to shaping social relations through its possession of an ideological nature (Fairclough, 2010). It discusses the findings according to critical theory and empowerment theory. It also discusses the situation of nonformal education within the discourses identified. Chapter 7 provides the conclusion and an overview of the study.
Chapter 2: Nonformal Education and Related Concepts

In this chapter, I find it important to commence this study with a literature review that demonstrates the relevant concepts related to the ongoing discussions on nonformal education. In order to avoid ambiguity, the next parts in this chapter will further clarify the wider discourses related to nonformal education. Despite the fact the study focuses on analyzing the Europe 2020 strategy, in this chapter, I look at concepts from a global perspective rather than merely a European perspective. I do that to show the political shift in language that has occurred within the EU policy, and its affect on youth empowerment delivered through nonformal education.

2.1. Literature Review

It is worth mentioning from the beginning that the way nonformal education is spelt is important. In much of the literature it would include a hyphen “non-formal” thus it does make a difference. According to Merriam Webster’s dictionary “non-” is a “prefix” which means, “reverse of, absence of, unimportant or lacking the usual especially positive characteristics of the thing specified”. But as Etling (1993) indicates that “nonformal education is not the opposite of formal education. In many ways they are similar or overlap” (p.75). Therefore, nonformal education is the accurate way of spelling it in the context of the present thesis, and it is mostly used in current literature and for that reason I will be using the term without a hyphen.

Nonformal education is a term that has been receiving more attention worldwide, its definition alone has been a cause of ongoing controversy over the last 30 years (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991, p.5). Therefore, I will be reviewing some of the challenges concerning nonformal education that I see as important to mention in order to set the ground for some understanding about the complexities within this field.
To start with, policies and politics have a tremendous effect on nonformal education and learning. Edwards (2009) highlights that the problem lies in who decides that a certain context could be a learning context. He adds: “the discourses of educators, policy makers and researchers are not necessarily shared by those who are engaging in practices within the stratum identified as contexts of learning” (Edwards, 2009, p.2). It is also worth mentioning that regardless of what nonformal education means, or out-of school learning involves, and which group it targets, it is in most cases that such programs receive governmental funds and they are awarded based on a competitive process, or what matches better with the political agendas and interest (Sefton-Green, 2012, p.6). In most cases, the learning process itself for politicians and funders is not the main objective, as the focus is on designing programmes that are measurable and meet the planned indicators (p.7). In this case, it seems that the focus becomes more on measurement rather than learning and equity consideration. Moreover, Sefton-Green also finds that a major source of tension is about initiatives that are led and developed as grassroots efforts through bottom up-projects, but then in order to expand and receive funding, they will seek for resources from a funder who may have different agendas (p. 8). It could look as if political agendas have been jeopardizing the principle of nonformal education, which will be elaborated on later.

Nonformal education or nonformal learning is considered as an effective educational tool regardless of the different interpretations or types of activities it may involve. Accordingly, it is important to shed the light on some of the differences when it comes to learning, to understand what constitutes learning and then build the understanding of nonformal education as a concept, as an educational/learning tool as well as an empowerment tool.

As clear as such an educational tool might seem, there have been several arguments about the right definition of nonformal education, which have led to various interpretations. I will not mention all these definitions, but in the next section I will elaborate on the definitions that will be used for the scope of this thesis. However, it is worth indicating some of the factors that
contribute to its complexity. As many articles or researches attempted to highlight and clarify the different definitions that accompany nonformal education, it seems that it is related to other complex and diverse factors that must be understood and taken into account before getting to know some of those definitions. I follow Sefton-Green (2012), in his “Review of Study, Theory, and Advocacy for Education in Nonformal Settings” where he divided these factors into three categories, as illustrated below, that do have an influence on how to define and understand the role of nonformal education.

2.1.1. Context:

The first factor is the Context. Sefton-Green relates to Edwards (2009) that “historically the study of in-formal and nonformal learning is tied to understanding the role of place” (Sefton-Green, 2012, p.19). Quite frequently studies related to learning in the nonformal field highlight the particularities of context because it allows us to recognize and understand “the different ways that learners are absorbing information or being socialized, in learning to behave, to imitate, and to be initiated into practice” (p.22). Accordingly, when talking about context we should bear in mind the differences across countries especially between the developing and the developed nations, as the implementation of nonformal education is different in each nation (p. 5). In addition, nonformal education (NFE) did not appear from nothing, and it is interrelated with the formal educational system in a specific country, in a sense that to understand nonformal education, one has to also have an in-depth knowledge of the formal school system (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991, p. 5). Therefore, it is supposed to somehow fill the gaps in the formal education system, because if we think about the current global goals, schools are no longer capable enough in developing students’ knowledge according to the interests of employers and policy makers (Heath, 2000 as cited in Vadeboncoeur, 2006, p.269). According to Romi & Schmida (2009), the context of NFE programmes depend on the organizational features in which nonformal education is being classified (p. 257), which means that there are different activities with different functions, designed for specific target groups. For example,
there are large-scale activities that are intended to “serve as agents of change of the formal educational system (Bekerman & Silberman-Keller, 2004; Jones, 1935; Lamm, 1975)” (p. 258). As well as activities at a micro level which are more individual oriented and form as “vehicles of improving the participants; individual feelings, raising their self-esteem, strengthening their ego and granting them positive, individual experiences (Heath, 2001)” (p. 258). Consequently, one could notice that NFE activities are carried out and tailored according to the socio-economic and cultural context, and its function differs accordingly (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991, p. 54).

In this respect, and due to the complexity of nonformal education in which it has different meanings in different contexts, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) has since the 1980s implemented a sequence of studies in different national contexts in an effort that aims at clarifying this diversity. The report “Nonformal education: Information and Planning Issues” functions as a review of lessons learnt and how it could be integrated in planning and policy making (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991, p3). Despite that it focuses on developing countries where it has been the focal point of many researchers within that field, it is not exclusive to the developing nations as it highlights several issues applicable for developed countries that look at the essence of nonformal education. The study doubts the possibility of successfully transferring the formal system to nonformal education without any modification (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991, p.11). This raises a discussion about whether or not we can detach nonformal education from formal learning as the former should be complementary to the latter. But at the same time it is important to give nonformal education a separate classification otherwise we could be jeopardizing the value and aims of NFE that do certainly differ from those of formal education. It also demonstrated, through different case studies, how difficult it is to create a uniform framework for nonformal education, as doing so overlooks the meaning of national realities that have a great effect on shaping the activities of NFE (p.11). It certainly makes it a complex field in which to perform research, especially since in order to understand the different classifications related to NFE, one should look at the historical conditions in each country,
realize the composition of the educational system and the other elements that helped in the evolution of the diversified components of nonformal education (p.17).

In addition, other researchers have argued about what is considered as learning in nonformal settings. Having an understanding of what is considered to be learning is also crucial to the research as it is differs among researchers what constitutes learning, or what is considered as learning settings. I will follow the path of Vadeboncoeur (2006), Sefton-Green (2012), and Edwards (2009), who look at structured nonformal education programmes and believe that context shapes what is to be considered learning. Edwards indicates that in order to have an effective pedagogic strategy we should assume “context as a container and as a result contain learning” (Edwards, 2009, p.12). Vadeboncoeur commits to the fact that sociocultural structure recognizes learning that happens through the day to day involvement in social practices rather than an individualistic or cognitive manner (Vadeboncoeur, 2006). I agree that learning does occur in contexts, and context has an essential role in the learning process, at the same time I would agree with Biesta, who considers that “knowledge and understanding are actively constructed by the learner” (Biesta, 2005, p.55). Individuals form an important role in this process. It could vary from one individual to another, based on motivation, cognitive ability, background etc. Thus not realizing both approaches, or theories of learning could undermine the individual’s ability or needs, which also undermines the aim of nonformal education as empowerment.

Thus Edwards (2009) believes that all contexts are learning contexts, but because context is the result of a certain activity or practice, the idea of “contextualizing rather than context becomes our focus (Nespor 2003)” (p. 3). So the emergence of these practices is not only restricted to context, as they are also identified in relation to different settings and aspects that help in shaping them. Therefore, learning does not appear within a context, on the other hand “learning is a specific effect of practices of contextualization” (p. 3). Furthermore, Edwards (2009) suggests two strategies, to either reject the notion of context in favor of that of activity
or situation practice, or to change the understanding of context (p. 4). Gumperz (1982) defines contextualization in relation to discourse analysis as the process through which participants in a conversation “foreground or make relevant certain aspects of background knowledge and underplay others” (p. 131). It shows that contexts are created and shaped by factors such as language and text, especially political language as will be illustrated in the analysis part, thus it is important to focus on that too.

On the other hand, Vadeboncoeur argues “that learning always occurs in context and that contexts define what counts as learning” (Vadeboncoeur, 2006, p.247). Vadeboncoeur tends to focus on the sociocultural frame. This thought disregards what was mentioned earlier that individuals do have an influence, and also set boundaries on other learning channels and possibilities, as it focuses only on context and the study of context thus learning becomes a secondary interest here. In this context, Sefton-Green (2012) refers that Vadeboncoeur might say that the idea of nonformal education is on one level a conceptual distraction. Which means that without understanding the context we might put ourselves at risk of falling into our own assumptions, and imposing our preconceptions (p. 35). Thus tending to focus only on understanding the context overlooks other factors that affect the context and the emergence of certain activities. Therefore, this research will not rely on the sociocultural framework solely as it tends to be suspicious about attempts to individualize and to describe learning in ‘cognitivist’ terms. Thus, within the scope of the study I am more interested in looking at both the individual and the settings around that shape and affect learning, be they political, social or other factors (Sefton-Green, 2012, p.35).

2.1.2. The Learner

The second factor that Sefton-Green mentions is the learner. In nonformal education, the learner is the centre of what the teaching method revolves around. This gives the space for the individual to keenly construct his/her knowledge as mentioned earlier by Biesta (2005) (see
2.1.1.). It is a complex factor because the learning process itself is compound. Since, “learning is identified as taking place in a range of strata and the learners themselves move in and between them”. The learner moves from one level to another that could be within the same context or just from task to task (Edwards, 2009, p2). This shows how the learning process and environment is relational and could be challenging and different for each learner. Also because the learning process is correlated with different layers structured and shaped by informal, non-formal and formal learning, which produces and includes diverse knowledge, “literacy practices, experiential learning” and makes it important to identify and organize those resources to match with each learner according to specific contexts (p. 4). This puts a big role on the teacher or the provider who has to ensure the provision of such resources, which at the end could empower individuals. But the question is, empowerment according to whose needs? And who defines what is to be learned. Later, the analysis part will clarify whether it serves political needs and in what context empowerment is taking place.

In addition to that, the learner, especially in nonformal learning, has to be self-motivated to learn about a certain topic, learners themselves have to be aware of the gaps between different contexts and types of learning, and in most cases they might not be able to recognize certain practices as learning (Edwards, 2009, p.5). This forms a challenge for nonformal learning as the learner might also find that employers and others do not identify or verify such a learning. This shows how challenging learning in nonformal education programmes could be, which could basically affect the motivation of some individuals.

Hence in nonformal learning the pressure is on the individual. As one of the “major distinction among nonformal learning is the level of intention to learn among learners” (Eraut, 2000, p.115). The learner must not only be self-motivated, but also capable to maintain or develop this motivation throughout the learning process as “it is usually acknowledged that motivations (whether emotional, strategic, or tactical) are necessary in this sense to achieve a state of intention and orientation to learning (Boekaerts 2010)” (Sefton-Green, 2012, p.23). That is
why learning in nonformal programmes could have a great affect as the learners, alongside the teacher, invest in their motivations and tackle their needs (Sefton-Green, 2012, p.24). At the same time, it is worth mentioning that in order for these programmes to be affective, they have to be well organized, planned and executed by professional educators just as classes in schools are given by professional teachers who know their fields. It is as the same level of importance.

2.1.3 Knowledge

Sefton-Green refers to the concept of knowledge being the third factor that has an underpinning influence on creating the complexities. The concept of knowledge is also wide and could differ from one social sphere to another as he refers to several examples and types of knowledge (Sefton-Green, 2012, p.26) which cannot be separated from nonformal education. The problem is that “education, and specifically school systems are institutional spaces of society for the generation and transmission of the knowledge society regards as ‘valid’ for its growth and reproduction” (Aguerrondo, 2009, p.2). The question that comes to my mind and in line with my research question which will be highlighted throughout this research, is whether nonformal education programs are now focusing on evolving the knowledge towards that dimension and towards a universal knowledge. Especially that the “third millennium is defined as a knowledge society” geared towards achieving economic and social development (p.4). Throughout critically analyzing the discourses in the Europe 2020 Strategy, the analysis chapter will shed light on what type of knowledge is being created among youth. On the other hand, since learning is a process and knowledge is usually built throughout that process, “quite frequently the process of learning itself is more important than the result; learning as an activity becomes more important than the knowledge acquired (Inkei 1988)” (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991, p.31). Thus the problem with nonformal education is that it is becoming results oriented, following a certain process of learning that ensures a specific result, contributing to a particular kind of knowledge within a limited period of time or learning process.
It is worth noting that “what counts as knowledge is often hidden or embodied— it is enacted in the doing— rather than a question of the manipulation of symbolic languages, as is so often the case in school tests” (Sefton-Green, 2012, p.25). Also because “learning is defined as the process whereby knowledge is acquired. It also occurs when existing knowledge is used in a new context or in new combinations: since this also involves the creation of new personal knowledge, the transfer process remains within this definition of learning” (Eraut, 2000, p.114). The focus therefore should be on how to build on prior knowledge that the learner already posses. Keeping in mind that nonformal education does not mean that it is void of content and only focuses on the learner. As Sefton-Green mentions that learning could be “conceptualized at a metalevel as being about learning or the learner, but in many other examples, content is the king” (Sefton-Green, 2012, p24-25). However, the problem is that the content of nonformal education is shaped by political discourses as well as the new context that is utilizing NFE to maintain global competitiveness and to achieve certain political aims.

Moreover, there are other challenges that have been highlighted within this domain, among which several authors mention the issue of scarcity. While taking into consideration the previously mentioned variations it could be noticed that it is hard to come up with a straightforward result, theory or measurements that can be based on or attributed to nonformal education. Empirical data is limited in this field and subject to different interpretations and situations. However, despite the increased interest in nonformal education, the domain still lacks information regarding NFE participants, drivers, actors, aims and goals (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991, p.1). For example, there is limited data in terms of detailed knowledge of the courses, teaching/learning conditions, teaching methods, efficiency and cost related effects (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991, p.51), which represents a challenge to convey an accurate awareness of the programmes effectiveness, quality, measurements and areas to improve. Since there is an immense diversity concerning NFE programmes it cannot be easy to create a clear and consistent data base, as NFE could not be identified into a single sector.
Since throughout my research I will mainly focus on how nonformal education has been affected by certain discourses in the Europe 2020 strategy and its political agenda, and to what extent this has influenced the context of youth empowerment socially and economically, “there is still very little analysis done of the comparative internal dynamics of nonformal initiatives and their articulation with the social, economic and cultural environment. Thus there is still an insufficient knowledge base with which to underscore important new ventures in educational policy or the development of new methods and approaches in educational planning” (Hoppers, 2006, p16). Moreover, there is a lack of long-term studies examining the quality of learning in nonformal education or, as others might call it, out-of school settings, as “much of the literature about this sector has been produced in the form of evaluation”, as Sefton-Green says; “the field of study is relatively new” (Sefton-Green, 2012, p10). Accordingly, this research will try to give a tentative conclusion in an attempt to figure out whether NFE is politically driven, and to critically analyze to what extent it could be as an effective learning and/or empowering tool according to the definition of empowerment and throughout the Critical Theory that will be highlighted in the next chapter. In addition, many of the available documents were evaluations made for a number of nonformal education programmes. Thus looking at evaluation reports is another challenging task and it is not as informative as literature, because “many evaluations focus only on particular and often short-term projects. Much writing is concerned with improving delivery and particularly in justifying the case for investment in this sector, which inevitably can seem parochial to outsiders” (Sefton-Green, 2012, p.10).

One could also notice that there is a lack of focus among researchers in this field, as it is categorized as nonformal. Nonformal education does not have a specific methodology, it is broad and could combine methodologies from formal and informal education. Adding to that, nonformal education is a change oriented field of education, and is adapted according to contexts and settings (Ward, 2013). On the other hand, some might not even differentiate between nonformal and informal, as Maarschalk argued that “many researchers use the terms nonformal and informal interchangeably” (Vadeboncoeur, 2006, p.246). It does not mean that there are no similarities between those two modes of education, but as Vadenboncoeur (2006) points
out: “there are differences that ought to not be overlooked” (p. 246) or should at least be clarified by each researcher if they decide to combine both modes.

Finally, throughout this part it was important for me to review as much of the on-going complexity regarding the nonformal education field to help in further understanding and constructing the ideas within the following sections and chapters. Also, because it is important to retain the value of nonformal education rather than focusing on the complexities and variances which is a never-ending discussion, as differences will always exist, and since they only “obscure rather than addresses problems, it is crucial to delineate for it some distinctive character and functions” (Grandstaff, 1976, p.304).

2.2. Understanding the Concept of Nonformal Education

Nonformal education could not be distinct from or less important than formal education. It does not mean that it has the same pedagogical approach as formal education and “has yet to be studied as an independent educational approach” (Romi & Schmida 1, 2009, p.257). Thus, having attributed to it education or learning makes it clear that it is categorized as an educational tool. At the same time, it could be seen “as a positive alternative to the school system” (Carron, Gabriel & Carr-Hill, Roy., 1991, p.20). Keeping in mind that whereas formal programmes represent the existing system and political condition, nonformal education often tends to challenge the status quo (Zepke & Leach, 2006, p.513). Moreover, Ward, Mc.Kinney-Douglas and Detoni (2013) refer to nonformal education as having a “negative descriptor” which is more like “defining a car by saying it is a non-horse, non-airplane etc”. This makes nonformal to be recognized as an education without a form or “discernible structure”. This is not the case when it comes to nonformal education, rather the meaning of non- is that it is out of school, rather than without a form. Therefore, the distinction is nonformal modes of delivery, in comparison to formal institutions (p.38).
It was indicated earlier that a consensus has not been reached regarding a definition for nonformal education. It is thus essential to provide a definition for the three concepts that are constantly mentioned when talking about nonformal education; formal, nonformal and in-formal. Nonformal is different from in-formal, and it is crucial to provide a definition for each according to what suits my research, and clarify their features. Coombs & Ahmed (1974) provide a definition for the three modes of education, as they find it “analytically useful, and generally in accord with current realities, to distinguish between three modes of education (recognizing that there is considerable overlap and interaction between them)” (p. 8). They provide the following definitions;

Informal education…is the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment – at home, at work, at play… Generally, informal education is unorganized and often unsystematic; yet it accounts for the great bulk of any person’s total lifetime learning – including that of even a highly “schooled” person.

Formal education is, of course, the highly institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured “education system”, spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of university.

Nonformal education is organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the populations, adult as well as children. Thus defined, nonformal education includes, for example, … adult literacy programs, occupational skill training given outside the formal system, youth clubs with substantial educational purposes, and various community programs of instruction in health, nutrition, family planning, cooperatives, and the like (Coombs, P.H., & Ahmed, M., 1974).
Many have followed these definitions set by Coombs and Ahmed. For example, La Belle (1981) introduces the same definitions and adds to it another dimension, he mentions that “although nonformal education may be a substitute for formal schooling when schools do not exist, it should not be conceptualized as yet another strategy to provide schooling to a population” (p. 315). Which means that nonformal education is “not an alternative” for schools, at the same time, this does “not suggest that one type of education may have greater or lesser impact on selected learnings” (Belle, 1981, p.315). I agree to the fact that both educational modes are complementary. The aim of providing the classical definition of Coombs and Ahmed is because it fits with what is meant to be as nonformal education in the context of the EU 2020 Strategy and also to show the shift in the language related to nonformal education, and the implications it has on the learner that will be illustrated further in this study.

Another issue that arises from nonformal education is whether to perceive it as an alternative, complement or supplement. Bock (1967) believes that nonformal education can be “as a complement to or, sometimes, even a substitute for schooling” because nonformal education is distinctive and has unique features that allows it to achieve the same traditional goals of schooling thus at a lower cost. Therefore, nonformal education “may be able to serve as an alternative channel for upward social and economic mobility” (Bock, 1976). Hence, Rogers (2005) distinguishes between three-subtypes of nonformal education especially in relation to the formal system. The first one is ‘complementary to the system’ and targeted for people to obtain a similar level of primary education which they were not able to fulfill or obtain. He refers to this kind of NFE as “compensatory, remedial, aimed only at those who have been unable to take advantage of the formal schooling offered” and it usually leads to an equivalent form of qualification. LaBelle & Verhine (as cited in Rogers 2005) refer to this type of NFE as an opportunity to reach a certain group where schools have been unproductive. The second classification is supplementary, which includes education from both, the school and the NFE. The difference is that NFE deals with some new issues arising that are not tackled by schools or that responds to new demands. This type is targeted to anyone outside the formal education, and does not focus on a specific group or level of educational completion. These programmes
do not usually lead to qualification and were more likely ‘development oriented’. The third is an alternative to formal education, which means that NFE offers an overall different type of education, where the curriculum and the educational outcomes are different from the formal schooling. This could be targeting adolescents or adults, whereby the new curriculum is designed specifically to target their needs. Programmes within this category occasionally “led to alternative qualifications, but this sector also covers traditional and/or indigenous learning programmes” (Rogers, 2005, pp.155-156). Thus in the coming part of my research it will be clearer that the EU is following the third sub-type in its implementation of nonformal programmes and policies, especially in its pursuit towards a knowledge-based economy. As the target of this type of NFE has an “industry or particular type of knowledge or skill” (Brennan, 1997, p.194).

Moreover, as this research focuses on nonformal education in the EU context, it is worth highlighting how it defines the three modes of education. There is not much difference in the definition, but we can see a differentiation in the way it is articulated. In the EC memorandum of lifelong learning (2000), the three modes of education are identified as follows;

Formal learning takes place in education and training institutions, leading to recognized diplomas and qualifications.

Nonformal learning takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formalized certificates. Nonformal learning may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organizations and groups (such as youth organizations, trades unions and political parties). It can also be provided through organizations or services that have been set up to complement formal systems (such as arts, music and sports classes or private tutoring to prepare for examinations).
Informal learning is a natural accompaniment to everyday life. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily intentional learning, and so may well not be recognized even by individual themselves as contributing to their knowledge and skills (European Commission, 2000, p.8).

The EU definition comes along with the context of lifelong learning and the Europe 2020 Strategy. It also uses “learning” rather than “education” in which within the discourses of education this shows a tendency “to centre the learning context within certain institutional sites, while within the discourses of learning there is a decentering of learning context, within which there is an identification of diverse but separate strata e.g. workplace, home, etc.” (Edwards, 2009, P.8). Currently, the “shift of policy discourse from ‘education’ to ‘learning’, is one which implicitly individualizes and de-politicizes learning, while making it easier for governments to blame and shift the responsibility to those who are unable to access opportunities to learn (Ramdas 1999, Gorman 2002)” (Colley, Hodkinson, & Malcolm, 2006, p.65).

Romi & Schmida (2009) came up with a recent definition for nonformal education, that I find also corresponds to the above definitions, they indicate that “nonformal education aims to enhance active social involvement for the benefit of the community, and to express the needs of individuals, especially those concerning leisure activities. Within NFE we can identify settings and organizations that have unique attributes, typical contents, and characteristic methodology” (p. 260).

We can conclude from these definitions that nonformal education represents a diversity of learning activities which on the one hand are not that different from what is being delivered in the traditional school system, and on the other hand, are closer to informal learning practices (Carron, Gabriel & Carr-Hill, Roy, 1991, p.20). In the context of this study, nonformal education refers to a structured learning setting that could concentrate on the provision of basic learning experiences, or professional/vocational courses and could also include personal de-
velopment activities or ‘popular education’, to name just a few (p.21). Nonformal education programmes depend upon the elements that were mentioned in the literature review part, such as context, needs of the target group, political agenda etc.

These definitions agree that nonformal education is supposed to further develop or enhance education among people, hence the main hypothesis for the Individualized Education Research Programme (IEP) was that there is a correlation between the “level of development and the degree of expansion of nonformal education activities”. The research posits two views, one is that NFE has a complementary function for the disadvantaged especially those who did not have the chance to be part of the formal schooling. NFE in this case would become less important with progress and development. On the other hand, the contradictory view is that the ability to offer NFE programmes and the chances for target groups to participate in them depends upon the availability of resources, therefore it would be assumed that there would be a wider range of NFE in developed countries. Thus, based on the data about education collected by UNESCO, it was noticed that there is only a limited amount of NFE in the poorest developing countries. In contrast, NFE in developed countries, has been prospering and is having a significant variety of roles (Carron, Gabriel & Carr-Hill, Roy., 1991, p.11).

In general, there has been a significant change in the roles of NFE, where it shifted from having a substitute role towards being a vital complement to the rigid programmes organized through the regular education system (Carron, Gabriel & Carr-Hill, Roy., 1991, p.16). It seems that nowadays with the constant technological innovations and labour market requirement “NFE is centrally concerned as a response (or responses) to failure or limitations of formal education in achieving specific educational objective with particular target learners” (Brennan, 1997, p.190).

The IIEP research report ‘nonformal education: information and planning issues’ points out two major tracks within the out-of-school education world. The first one being targeted for the
poor and relates to the classical objective of nonformal education which is offering another educational chance to ensure social inclusion of the poor. The second, focuses on offering professional and personal development opportunities to individuals who already have had formal education and have a decent position in the society (Carron, Gabriel & Carr-Hill, Roy., 1991, p.45). The problem here is that such a swift growth in nonformal educational activities has been of more benefit to those who belong and are capable of following the second track, which shows that this process has not been moving towards more ‘equality’ but rather following the “objective world-wide necessity to adapt educational practice to requirements of the rapid technological economic and social changes” (p. 45). One can start noticing that nonformal education is being a victim of the global changes and through the next sections we will be able to see whether this has resulted in a reformulation of the focus on nonformal education.

Alan Rogers mentions that “formal” is what is usually considered as “normal”. In this case, NFE is seen as deviating from the norm. He refers to an argument from the World Bank (1974) regarding nonformal education being “a supplement, not a rival, to the formal educational system” its purpose is to provide a space where flexible and functional inexpensive education is available for those who could not be part of the formal system. Rogers illustrates that the bank was assuming the primacy of formal education. Thus, within the current context, it is good to keep in mind what LaBelle and Verhine (1975) had observed that nonformal programmes as rarely designed or planned to replace formal school. To further develop the NFE, it must not be compared as a reflection for formal education. It has to be developed independently through a strategy that will develop “curricula, teaching-learning methodologies, and evaluation and monitoring practices which are unique and characteristic of NFE, independent of formal models, thereby developing NFE in its own right and not as a substitute (UIE 1990:26)” (A. Rogers, 2005, p. 156). If there happens to be a transition from formal to nonformal systems, or using nonformal characteristics in the formal education, it should be a process of “continuity” by means of gradual suppression of formal factors. The model proposed opposes to the traditional transition model by means of “jumps” from formal to nonformal. (Dib, 1997, p.4).
This part has focused on narrowing down the concept of nonformal education that best fits the aim of this research. Through demonstrating the above mentioned definitions it is noticeable that they all agree that nonformal education should be tailored to expand the individual’s skills and knowledge according to their personal interests and needs. Thus I also pointed out the possibility of designing NFE activities that correspond to the vast technological and socio-economic changes, which means that personal needs are overlooked and in this context it is more influenced by political interest. If this is the case, youth will have to follow the needs that are identified by the Europe 2020 strategy. The discourses in this strategy could probably be unintentionally imposing and creating a dominant form of knowledge that should be pursued by youth, and those who reject it or their interests do not correspond to the same path, would probably face unequal opportunities in their working life. Therefore, the study will further investigate whether the discourses in the policy text are utilizing NFE to change the society towards a specific dimension that matches its plans, or NFE activities are still implemented in accordance to the earlier definitions. Regardless of the conclusions that will clearer after the analysis, I intend to present in the next part (2.2.1) the significance of nonformal education, as I believe it is a beneficial educational tool even though if it currently turned to be politically manipulated.

2.2.1. Significance of Nonformal Education:

We can ascertain as a result of the previous section that nonformal education aims at developing and empowering the individual especially in aspects where formal education has failed to do so. The term nonformal is “simply a device for labelling those activities outside the control or regulation of the bureaucratic school system” (Carron, Gabriel & Carr-Hill, Roy., 1991, p.20). Accordingly, one would assume that NFE should not follow a similar system or characteristics as then what distinguishes nonformal from formal will be at risk of fading. Ward & Detoni (2013) generated several significant strengths that are inherent in nonformal education. Despite the fact that they focus on developing countries, those strengths can be attributed to
developed countries as well, because the aim is to progress and enhance a specific situation regardless of the country’s setting. They mentioned that “it is a more effective approach to solving certain problems of education for national development and individual growth” (p.42). Its key strength is addressing the needs of the people, so that they can not only attain their ambition educationally and for better job opportunities, but also will have an overall influence on the development of the country as a whole. To achieve development a strategic integration is needed into different systems in the society in order to achieve socio-economic change. Nonformal education is one tool that provides a diverse and multi-disciplinary approach to the progress of a country, as it develops the learner’s perspective in an holistic manner through incorporating various disciplines. In addition, in the current world where rapid progress is required and the individuals knowledge has to exceed or meet this constant growth; nonformal education could help in accomplishing progress in a shorter period of time because it is ‘more flexible and adaptable’, thus the problem is that short-range achievements tend to have more political than economic and/or developmental value. Furthermore, the effects of nonformal education are possible to be achieved in a reasonable time, which funding agencies find appealing because it enables them in a short period to assess and review the efficiency of programs implemented. Moreover, this flexibility is also an advantage for facilitators who can receive feedback and observe the learning process, which also allows them to make amendments in the educational programme to better meet the learners needs and aspirations (Ward, Ted & Detoni, John., 2013, pp.42 - 43). They also mention a number of challenges that need to be taken into account in order to maintain the strengths of nonformal education and have positive results on the ground, in which some of them were highlighted in the literature review part. They in particular refer to the important of context and understanding and analysing the culture to ensure that the nonformal education programmes designed correspond to the needs and the resources available in each setting (p.43).

Additionally, one of the significant features of nonformal education is “its capacity as a concept to open up neglected domains of educational possibilities” (Grandstaff, 1976, p.296). However, he warns that actions are not supposed to be imposed through nonformal education,
as different educational programmes are effective if they are suitable to the place and time (p. 295). As posited earlier that nonformal education programmes are known to be flexible and such flexibility could be an advantage because it allows to make changes at anytime according to learners’ needs (Romi & Schmida 1, 2009, p.258). Therefore, in order to avoid manipulation of this trait, it is important to start with an in-depth analysis with “the learners and their need, and to move only then to the question of what educational means might be most appropriate for meeting these needs”, taking also into consideration that education should not be confined to a specific time, place and measurements such as years of schooling (Coombs, P.H., & Ahmed, M., 1974, p.8). Indeed, the intent of some nonformal education “is liberatory, to free people from oppression so that they can live fuller lives (Foley, 2003)” (Zepke & Leach, 2006, p.513). Thus, oppression could involve any form of power practiced among certain people. For instance favoring specific education domains over others because it serves a certain political agenda, as a result creating unequal privileges among learners in the society. Moreover, NFE applies democratic methods that should replace the coercive and authoritative practices, in which it promotes for empowering individuals’ decision-making and negotiation skills. It is in this context that Garrido (1992) discusses the potential benefits of nonformal education “as a new path in a new Europe” especially in the period of technological developments and social changes (Romi & Schmida 1, 2009, p.269). Accordingly, nonformal education can contribute to any level of development, and as long as it can contribute to rural development by assisting formal schools in innovation and becoming more efficient, and productive, then it should be applicable and successful in developed countries and in the ‘new Europe’ that the Europe 2020 Strategy is trying to build and maintain. But it is important to keep in mind that to ensure the democratic purposes of NFE and its ability to contribute positively in the new societies it requires patience and relentless effort. There are power barriers and obstacles that must be overcome to avoid the creation of knowledge hierarchies. Hence, NFE in such a context faces the danger of becoming a new political ‘fad’ that would “slow its progress and cripple its potential” (Coombs, P.H., & Ahmed, M., 1974). Therefore, it is important not to consider it as only a ‘label’ whereby, as mentioned above, the outcome will be a ‘new fad’ and loses its significance.
An essential point that could be a challenge regarding nonformal education programmes is that learners do not share the same aspiration and might not be seeking formal qualifications (Zepke & Leach, 2006, p.513). While some individuals would find it necessary to participate in NFE programs for professional development and better chances in the labour market, others might seek to take part in NFE activities to occupy their free time, or for other reasons such as its low cost. Accordingly, it is important to ensure and maintain the effectiveness and sustainability of nonformal education programmes. Coombs & Ahmed (1974) point out that the key requirement is to efficiently associate nonformal education programs with related development and education activities. In general, to ensure the best performance of nonformal education programs, they need to be well incorporated horizontally together with complementary educational actions and non-educational factors in the same area. They should also be well integrated vertically, within the organization level through activities at higher stage that will nourish the local educational efforts (p. 235). What is also important to take into consideration is that joint efforts between different organizations can achieve greater results rather than each working independently and most often creating competition within this sector. Thus integrating their services / programmes would guarantee a higher degree of effectiveness as they could complement each other. Furthermore, to attack poverty and social injustice, Coombs and Ahmed indicate that “nonformal education is one of the essential weapons to be used in such an attack, for knowledge is power and power follows the distribution of knowledge” (Coombs, P.H., & Ahmed, M., 1974). But what if the power of knowledge that is supposed to be disseminated though NFE is controlled through political agendas and is favoring a specific knowledge, as Bock acknowledges that “nonformal education would appear to meet the needs of the educational producer, e.g. the state” (Bock, 1976, p.361), as it allows the state to maintain and expand its power nationally and globally.

This clearly again proves the complexity of nonformal education field demonstrated in the various definitions and forms of activities it may have adopted, and in its failure to present a distinctive border line between formal and nonformal education. In such a complexity, the formulation of NFE characteristics is often based upon a limited number of individual facts
within a multifaceted whole. As a result, the “proposed characteristics of NFE are only fragmented properties valid for a very specific context and, hence, are difficult to generalize to the entire field of NFE (IBE 1987)” (Rogers, 2005, p.153). Therefore, Evans (1981) emphasizes the need to carefully plan for nonformal education activities to ensure that it does not comprise of a lower quality, alternative to formal schooling. At the same time, his concern was that nonformal education would create a dual system which divides the society into different socio-economic groups and classes (Evans, 1981, p.14). Consequently, this research shares the same concern and will analyze how nonformal education, being under the control of governments, has contributed to sending individuals down particular pathways, designed to serve their political and economic objectives.

Nonformal education is related with the political and economic structure, and Bock (1976) questions whether nonformal education is a response to certain political and/or economic pressure, and in this case whose needs are being tackled (p.351). Accordingly, the research questions which are also concerned with nonformal education and meeting learners needs, and how it is articulated in policies thus represented in the formation of social organization. There is always a common set of contextual pressures that nations should confront and respond to. I shall analyse the discourses in Europe 2020 Strategy that could highlight the pressure exerted and conveyed through the policy, and how it is shaping empowerment. Currently nonformal education, is being formulated to meet the EU’s focus on transforming Europe into an ‘information society’. Throughout this research and by looking at the discourse of Europe 2020 strategy, I will identify how different learners are being produced through nonformal education. Rogers (2005) mentioned several writers who “argued that the salvation of non-formal education may lie in keeping it separate from the formal system, distinct and distinctive, independent of all formal structures and free of hegemony”, which is at the same time perceived as impossible while NFE is positioned in and created by a specific segment of the society and not independent of it (Rogers, 2005, p.158). In addition, Roger posits that the future of NFE lies in the willingness of the state and civil society to not only recognize its socio-economic impact, but also through providing adequate recourses that ensures the quality and equality of NFE for
learners from different backgrounds (p.158). It seems that theoretically the goals of formal and nonformal education would be different, thus in the current reality and through the power that the state implements, both are attempting to do the same thing from different perception; which is to bring “people and economy to increased personal and national productivity” (Ward, Ted & Detoni, John., 2013, p.41). Whether it is a good process or not, or whether it is under the shadow of empowerment and improving skills, will be elaborated upon in the next chapters.

2.3. History and the Emergence of Nonformal Education

In order to understand and make sense of the ongoing debates regarding nonformal education, it is important to be critical and understand the history of nonformal learning, and construct our understanding, which differs from one period to another. Foucault (1980, 1991) states that such an understanding “can reveal the workings of power: the covert but material and disciplinary effects of these discourses” (as cited in Colley et al., 2006, p.61).

Brubacher (1947) relates the development of non-formal education to “pre-literate times, when education was not yet institutionalized and was an element of the daily life in which youngsters participated together with adults, and it continued to exist through ages into modern times, alongside formal education” (Romi & Schmida 1, 2009, p.261). Colley et al. (2006) originate nonformal education to the time before the industrial revolution where elementary schooling was not yet provided by the government (p.61). We could notice nowadays how education systems are being transformed throughout ‘the massive institutionalization of knowledge’ which created a great gap between the nineteenth century and today. Accordingly, as Johnson (1988) stated; “it is from this period that we may date the great transformation in the conditions of learning” (Colley et al., 2006, p.62). However, “it was only with the development of mass education in Britain, following the 1944 Education Act, that a concept like
nonformal learning could emerge explicitly as a visible and meaningful category in opposition to formal learning” (Colley et al., 2006, p.62).

Nonformal education was targeted for developing nations, aspiring to develop rural areas it would require new approaches to meet the educational requirements of rural populations (Coombs, P.H., & Ahmed, M., 1974, p.3). Hence, the year 1947 was when the “term nonformal education first appeared in a report by UNESCO on the underdeveloped world” (Colley et al., 2006, p.62). In addition, “modernization theories of development underpinned the first wave of efforts to expand nonformal learning” (p.62). Nonetheless, nonformal education throughout this period of time did not last long and it appears that it had negative impact as it did not achieve its ‘promised economic growth’ and instead accelerated and strengthened the social and economic inequalities between wealthy and poor, men and women, city and countryside (Hamadache 1991 as cited in Colley et al., 2006, p.63). One of the reasons was that the ‘modernization’ theories believed that for the South to develop it has to follow up with levels of economic growth that are achieved by the North. Disregarding the disparity between the North and South and the prolonged underdevelopment that the North has forced upon the South (p. 63). At the same time the prevailing strategy was to focus on achieving rapid quantitative growth rather than developing the old image of an educational system. By such a strategy it was assumed that this would “equalize opportunity and generate the human skills needed for general development” (Coombs, P.H., & Ahmed, M., 1974, p.3). Thus nonformal education emerged at a time when nations were seeking a substitute for formal education as it was not achieving the change and influence that especially marginalized individuals needed at that time. Therefore, nonformal education was needed to meet the needs of the target groups for development interventions (Rogers, 2005, p.67).

In 1968, Coombs (as cited in Grandstaff, 1976) noted that “the concept arose in response to clear recognition that formal schooling was, in many cases, an almost totally ineffective tool for accomplishing the educational goals of development programs” (p. 296). From here came
the need for a solution, and where “nonformal education has been adopted as a possible vehicle for education that is cheaper, capable of reaching masses of people, non-elitist, responsive to the problems of the poor, and progressive” (Grandstaff, 1976, p.296). During the same year 1968, Philip Coombs observed the education condition around the world and described an educational crisis that was overwhelming education systems everywhere. He concluded that “the ever increasing demand for education, acute resource scarcities, rising costs, educated unemployed (unsuitability of output) and the inefficient response of educators has created a vicious circle that demands the attention of educational planners and innovators” (Bock, 1976). He therefore, promotes new educational strategies such as reinforcing nonformal education. Bock (1976) indicates that nonformal education is “not new” and has been an educative trend even in preliterate stone age societies, but what he perceives as new is the “conception of nonformal education as a new force through which educational and socio-economic change is believed to occur at both the individual and societal level, and the vision of it is an exciting new strategy for combating poverty, ignorance, inequality, ill-health and oppression” (p.348).

The 1970s marks the era in which movements such as Freire’s work began to transform skills and knowledge, in an attempt to replace the colonial mentality within the developing world. Consequently, the West responded to these movements by diminishing the funding for such programmes, so that such movements would not expand as large-scale actions into other countries (Colley et al., 2006, p.64). In much clearer focus in 1970 than earlier – a strong new interest was driven by policymakers in what came to be called nonformal education (Coombs, P.H., & Ahmed, M., 1974, p.4), as Colley et al. (2006) mention that the North started to show interest in nonformal education. However, the same current problem seems to be prevailing in which the advocacy position for nonformal education has largely been assumed by those educators and policy makers who tend to affirm the assumptions underlying the rapid expansion of education in the emerging new nations after World War II, where the world market was highly competitive and where various forces had helped in shaping and building new nations. It was therefore crucial for these nations to maintain authority and the ability to compete in the world market, in which expanding and creating educational systems was one of these efforts.
Thus this rapid expansion of education has a great influence on why “new nations have incorporated educational systems which are highly centralized, controlled and financed by the state” and “the expansion of nonformal education more recently, particularly in the less developed nations, constitutes a response to the same set of formative forces as has schooling and may be studied utilizing a similar interpretative model” (Bock, 1976). Whereas Colley et al. (2006) refer to this period (the 1980s) as the third shift regarding ideologies and foundations of “particular concepts of learning”. Nonformal education was in the beginning of its inception regarded as a “universal category, undifferentiated by temporal, spatial and social relations” it was simply a liberating instrument and was aiming at creating better lives and enhancing the economic situation. But in the nonformal education’s second moment, learning itself is differentiated between two dichotomies; formal and nonformal/informal, in which this is supposed to be emancipatory, since it allows the learner to take control over their learning outside formal institutions (p. 65).

Grandstaff (1976) mentions an essential point that “nonformal education is not a panacea for educational deficiencies in development”, finding an effective and perfect solution is not always easy. He was concerned that establishing a new concept and education model, such as nonformal education, would be perceived as the solution and the focus will be drifting away from the planning efforts that would ensure an effective implementation of this new concept. He indicates that “the history of education is marked with the dusty bones and labels that were flaunted enthusiastically in the absence of the hard and careful efforts needed to bring them to execution”, and is more likely to be as only a political strategy. He was hoping that in the coming years we would not regret that nonformal education was a good idea but never came to realization. Hence, much has happened regarding nonformal education since the 70s (Grandstaff, 1976, p.297).

Throughout the 1980s, the world witnessed the development of neo-liberal theories, marketization of learning and the process of globalization where it had great influence on education
and the interest towards nonformal education (Colley et al., 2006, p.65). These shifts were destroying nonformal education and knowledge whereas education policy started to focus on “formalization and codification of knowledge that had previously been nonformal, often through the introduction of competency-based assessment and qualifications” (p. 66). It could be noticed that nonformal education was first aimed at developing and educating the poor especially in rural areas, whereas now it had “expanded to reach diverse audiences (Khoi, 1986)” (Romi & Schmida 1, 2009). In doing so, it has “lost its singular identification as service for undeveloped countries, and now reaches out to dropouts, truants, and to the marginalized and deprived segments of modern society (Thompson, 1995)” (Romi & Schmida 1, 2009, p.257) (Romi & Schmida 1, 2009, p.257).

In the post-modern era, NFE is gaining its momentum and might become the prevailing method of education (Chazan 2003 as cited in Romi & Schmida 1, 2009). As mentioned previously, nonformal education adjusts and changes according to needs and contexts, therefore NFE is flexible and capable of changing with the changing educational challenges (p. 266). An example, is that nonformal education is now related to the concept of recurrent lifelong learning. Tight (1996) suggests that nonformal education is about “acknowledging the importance of education, learning and training which takes place outside recognized educational institutions” (p. 69), meaning that nonformal learning is related to the extension of educational and learning throughout life.

On the other hand, Youngmann (2000) argues that “the different models, which have since been advanced, have to be understood in relation to the different theories of international development that informed them. These, in turn, are linked to particular aspects of dominant ideological and economic interests” (Colley et al., 2006, p.62), which influence and define the individual’s pathways and the way to perceive things. Nonformal learning is a quite modern term that has originated in discourses within the advanced capitalist and developed industrial societies. As noted earlier, it “derives from a longer-term concern with nonformal education in
the underdeveloped countries of the South” (Colley et al., 2006, p.61). Nowadays, there is a new shift and interest in the concept of nonformal education, deriving from “the - Western post-industrial societies, and from a very different source – the discourse of lifelong learning/education (Rogers, 2004). Such changes in the discourse on nonformal education conveyed through policy texts create opportunities for people, and at the same time could cause disorder for others and the society as a whole (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p, 84).

In a time when economic and social transformation is happening on a global scale, understanding the history and background of nonformal education, sets the ground for identifying how policies and governments play a pivotal role in transmitting these changes to the society. Changes are implemented through the power that governments have in both decision-making and funding control. Therefore, throughout this study the implication of power and its affect on empowerment youth will be critically analysed.

2.4. Importance of Nonformal Education on Youth

The focus of my research is the influence of major discourses in Europe 2020 strategy in shaping nonformal education programmes and empowering youth. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify who is meant to be in the youth category. Again different researchers identify youth into different age groups, and they could sometimes be referred to as adults, which also varies from one country to another. Tight (2002) for example suggests that the “idea of adult is not directly connected to age, but is related to what generally happens as we grow older” (Tight, 2002, p.15). He also adds that in England, for instance, people may be assumed to become adults at 18 years of age, when they get the right to vote (p.14). Adulthood is a category that contains a heterogeneous group and we have to be aware of that (p.16). On the other hand, in the ‘study on the impact of nonformal education in youth organizations on young people’s employability’ implemented by the European youth forum refers to youth as young people
aged between 15 and 35 (Souto-Otero, Ulicna, Schaepkens, Bognar, & V., 2012, p.35). Therefore, it is hard to define a specific age category as it differs from one point of view to another.

The majority of participants in nonformal education programmes are youth, and most of the time adult education involves also a great number of youth participants, who also could be referred to as young adults (Carron, Gabriel & Carr-Hill, Roy., 1991, p.38). So what does nonformal education bring to the youth? First, for many youngsters nonformal education “offers a second chance for obtaining certificates corresponding to the various levels of formal schooling. Second, many people tend to complete their knowledge and skills by taking NFE courses immediately after the completion of a given level of formal education (Gallart 1989, p.74).” (Carron, Gabriel & Carr-Hill, Roy., 1991, p.39). Moreover, as elaborated earlier that nonformal educational programmes are more flexible and less structured than those of formal education. Therefore they can offer a secure place for young people to experiment and learn how to take a step forward towards independence and adulthood without being confined by the formal system. In addition, nonformal education is supposed to aim at developing adolescents to cope with the struggles they face in forming their personal identity. Taking into consideration that during the years of adolescence, “youngsters go through changes in a wide variety of areas, and must cope with a multitude of developmental tasks, among them individualisation, forming their personal and social identity, and learning to reach autonomous decisions regarding their future” (Romi & Schmida 1, 2009)

Nonformal education in the youth field has a long tradition, especially in a European context. During the second half of the past century, several European youth organizations and NGOs have been founded. In the 1970s, the Council of Europe established the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg in 1972 and in Budapest in 1995 as well as developing a Directorate of Youth and the European youth foundation, both in 1972. In 1998, partnerships were created between the Council of Europe and the European Commission “to promote active European
citizenship and civil society by giving impetus to the training of youth leaders and youth workers working within a European dimension” (Helmut & Otten, 2008, p.8).

We can assume that as many definitions exist for nonformal education, then the case would be similar when it comes to what is the nature of these nonformal education programmes in relation to youth. Rogers (2005) provides us with some writers who attempted to identify these programmes, and are not exclusive to youth sector. He refers to Bhola who says “the term nonformal education should be reserved for short-term classes, systematic problem oriented training activities and teaching of social and political skills (Bhola 1983: 48)” (Rogers, 2005, p.81). As for others, they saw “NFE as covering all adult, basic and vocational education and training outside the school system (LaBelle 2000: 21)” (p. 81). Regardless of the differences, it is important that these programmes follow a youth-driven model. According to Carlson (1998) (as cited in Walker, Marczak, Blyth & Borden, 2005) such a model incorporates “self-efficacy, involvement, and high level of perceived control in order to make learning meaningful. The self-directed learner is motivated by choice, intrinsic reward, a sense of discovery, and a flow experience” (p.411).

Nonformal education implemented through youth organizations contributes to the improvement of young people’s skills and competencies, through their development as individuals and as active members of society, thereby reaching towards enhancing their inclusion in social and professional life (Souto-Otero et al., 2012, p.5). Qian Tang, Assistant Director General for Education – UNESCO asserts that in times of economic instability where especially young people are facing huge challenges, if they have the opportunities to develop their skills, they are most likely to make smooth transitions to adulthood. By this he means that UNESCO seeks to “engage and empower youth…and promote social innovation. Increasingly, emphasis is being placed on the development of employability skills through lifelong learning.” (p. 9). Adding to that, in times of “recession, automation and changing employment patterns have led to increased youth and graduate unemployment, and to increases in part time and short-term work:
‘the traditional form of work, based on fulltime employment, clear-cut occupational assignments, and a career pattern over the lifecycle is being slowly but surely eroded away (Castells 1996, p. 268)” (Tight, 2002, p.85). Therefore, the EC has been trying to help young people keep up with the changing requirements by employers in such a globalized world (Souto-Otero et al., 2012, p.11) and this could be implemented through the types of programmes mentioned above by Bhola and LaBelle. Implementing nonformal education activities with that aim sounds beneficial, thus the analysis in later chapters will demonstrate whether NFE programs have been directed towards the EUs focus in building an information society, and if the activities are designed to create specific competences and skills among youth learners to help achieve certain transformations rather than what meets their future prospects, or their own social and emotional needs.

Consequently, the nonformal education programmes for youth could be grouped into two categories: “large-scale, national, youth-service efforts; and small-scale programmes which often combine low-level skill training with recreational activities” (Evans, 1981, p.85). In most cases, youth-service schemes operate at the national level through separate organizations because they represent a political voice. Such youth services are perceived of as having great importance as they provide a “constructive outlet for the energies of youth, and provides them with a variety of opportunities to learn useful skills”. These programmes have always included aspects of socialization into national goals, experience with a structure and discipline which promotes hard work, and a chance to mature and develop leadership skills in the face of challenging tasks (Evans, 1981, p.86). These features are also visible in current youth work in Europe, which at a certain level aims at promoting cultural diversity, democratic citizenship and participation in public and political life, human rights and others (Helmut & Otten, 2008, p.9). Thus the EU focuses on developing specific ‘key competence’ among youth that are considered fundamental for the knowledge-based society, and has defined it in 8 key competences, which include communication competence to mathematical, digital and entrepreneurship competence (European Commission, 2006). As a result, NFE activities should be able to promote the needed knowledge to achieve such competences. But to successfully develop youth skills
and increase their employment opportunities, NFE has to take into consideration that individuals come from different backgrounds and have different skills that may not match the required competences set by the EU.

In the following chapters, we seek to clarify if the EU is focusing on one dimension of empowerment that creates unequal skills among youth. The youth initiatives and policy papers are supposed to be following the economic targets set. Therefore, one could later on realize that the economic shift has affected different aspects and institutions in society; this includes nonformal education and the flexibility it had in empowering people according to their needs.

2.5. Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning in the EU context is combined with the ability to acquire the above mentioned ‘key competences’ and requires that youth are constantly upgrading their skills (European Commission, 2006). Lifelong learning is considered as the solution for the global challenges as it promotes change at all levels; individually, politically, and institutionally. Politicians therefore see that lifelong learning is the tool to build learning societies capable of keeping up with the pace of the competitive market and economy, as well as any global influences (Nicoll & Fejes, 2008). Consequently, in this section I provide an understanding of lifelong learning as a concept and later as a discourse, because any type of education and knowledge in the EU should correspond to the EU’s framework and discourse of lifelong learning. In this context, nonformal education has to adapt and conform, which could also have certain implications on youth empowerment.

Learning throughout life is not a new concept or philosophy, and has been noticeable also in nonformal education discussion. Despite it being one of the “key principles in the educational and development fields, there is no shared understanding of its usage at the global level. The
diversity of discourses on this concept has been shaped by historical and geographical factors” (Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako, & Mauch, 2001, p.1). Longworth’s (2003) exploration of lifelong learning begins with an analysis of the words themselves: “lifelong means ‘cradle to grave’ and learning means ‘giving ownership of learning to the learner him or herself and not to the teacher – a 180-degree shift of emphasis and power from provider to receiver” (Romi & Schmida 1, 2009, p.260).

There are also various definitions regarding lifelong learning, it could be defined as follows: “lifelong learning is the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstance and environment (Longworth and Davies 1996:22)” (Editorial, 2005, p.283). It has also been criticized whether “lifelong learning has to have aims and what happens to those aims that do not fall within the above mentioned definition” (p.283) and are mostly designed to meet political requirements, rather than the individual’s aspiration and needs.

In the Faure report, Learning to Be (1972), a more holistic interpretation of lifelong learning has been provided whereas it sought to “institutionalize the concept of lifelong education, advocate for the right and necessity of each individual to learn for his/her social, economic, political and cultural development”. The idea of lifelong education according to the report was:

   Every individual must be in a position to keep learning throughout his life. The idea of lifelong education is the keystone of the learning society. The lifelong concept covers all aspects of education, embracing everything in it, with the whole being more than the sum of its parts. There is no such thing as a separate “permanent” part of education which is not lifelong. In other words, lifelong education is not an educational system but the principle in which the over-all organization of a system is founded, and which
accordingly underlies the development of each of its component parts (as cited in Medel-Añonuevo et al., 2001, p.2).

Twenty-eight years following the Faure report, lifelong education has been replaced by lifelong learning. This replacement happened in 1996, when UNESCO’s Delors Report acknowledged the need to “rethink and update the concept of lifelong education so as to reconcile three forces: competition, which provides incentives; co-operation which gives strength; and solidarity, which unites” (Medel-Añonuevo et al., 2001, p.3), it further asserted:

There is a need to rethink and broaden the notion of lifelong education. Not only must it adapt to changes in the nature of work, but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole beings—their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and ability to act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role and work in the community (p. 21)” (Medel-Añonuevo et al., 2001, p.3).

Lifelong learning is another obscure and composite concept. Aspin & Chapman (2001) (as cited in Biesta 2006) have argued that “lifelong learning represents three different ‘agendas’ and hence can serve three different functions or purposes, which, are: (1) lifelong learning for economic progress and development; (2) lifelong learning for personal development and fulfillment; and (3) lifelong learning for social inclusiveness and democratic understanding and activity (Aspin & Chapman, 2001, pp.39-40).” In which this represents the triangle of lifelong learning (Biesta, 2006, p.173).

Biesta (2006) clarifies what is meant by each of these three aspects. Throughout one’s lifespan, and in a globalized world where an individual has to keep pace with constant changes, whether in regards of acquiring new skills following the formal education phase or certain knowledge related to an occupation, both for one’s own sake in terms of employability and
financial well-being and for the well-being of the economy as a whole. This belongs under the label of the economic function of lifelong learning. Another element is the one that deals with “personal development and fulfilment”, which focuses more on learning from experiences that an individual encounters throughout life, rather than only developing “potential and talents”. It aims at helping in finding the ‘meaning’ of one’s life that could possibly contribute to living in a better way. This forms the “personal dimension of lifelong learning”. The last dimension deals with “democracy and social justice, with the empowerment and emancipation of individuals so that they become able to live their lives with others in more democratic, just and inclusive ways”. This according to Biesta is the “democratic dimension of lifelong learning” (Biesta, 2006, p.173) as demonstrated in the figure below.

![Figure 1. The three functions of lifelong learning.](image)

The triangle of lifelong learning (as seen in figure 1) is supposed to “help us see how the relationship between the functions of lifelong learning differs in different configurations of lifelong learning, and also how the relationship has changed over time” (Biesta, 2006, p.174). Furthermore, it seems that the dominant discussion regarding lifelong learning is currently being related to the neoliberalism discourse. Biesta, among others, asserts the fact that over “the past two decades lifelong learning has increasingly come under the spell of an economic imperative, both at the level of policy and at the level of practice (p.171). He adds that the shift has gone from “learning to be” to “learning to be productive and employable” and the reason behind that is that in the past the field of lifelong learning was mainly supported by social justice agenda where there was a ‘social purpose’ concerning nonformal education or adult edu-
cation as an educational space for empowerment and emancipation (p. 172), but with the economic and political changes throughout the decades especially the need to maintain competitiveness and growth, has shifted the focus to “learning for earning” (Biesta, 2006, p.172). Currently, the lifelong learning discourse has been associated with work-life learning and as a potential to increase the economic competitiveness of the individual and the state as a whole (Editorial, 2005, p.283).

Kopecký (2011) in his article “Foucault, Governmentality, Neoliberalism and Adult Education – Perspective on the Normalization of Social Risks” relates lifelong learning to the theory of power by Foucault, as the current discourse of lifelong learning has a political concept and it uses individuals and society in managing people as human resources and human capital (p.247). Taking into consideration that learning is a process, it also “constantly poses new challenges to the learner” where “the learner needs to assimilate and accommodate the changes in his/her environment” (Medel-Añonuevo et al., 2001, p.14). This means that those individuals who do not conform to the changes and acquire the lifelong learning competences are at more risk of being left out of the next phase (Nicoll & Fejes, 2008).

Coombs & Ahmed (1974) in relation to informal, formal and nonformal education mention that “any nation that sets out to build a ‘lifelong learning system’ to provide its whole population with a wide array of useful learning options at all ages would certainly make heavy use of all three of educational modes, establishing strong links and a rational division of labour between them” (Coombs, P.H., & Ahmed, M., 1974). However, it is less likely nowadays to find scholars and policy-makers concerned with lifelong learning in relation to school education or higher education (Editorial, 2005, p.283). One can notice after what has been indicated in this section that the prevailing focus is towards promoting specific knowledge that generates economic value, which formulates the idea of knowledge as a product. Michael Peters (as cited in Hebert, Y. & Abdi, A., 2013) points out that “the transformation of knowledge production and its legitimation are central to an understanding of globalization and its effects on educational
policy”. Within this context and referring to globalization as a key driver of change, the “knowledge based economy is based on the idea that future economic prosperity lies in the generation of highly skilled and knowledge-rich production and trade” (p. 2). The concern is that the “shift to a knowledge-based economy is a global phenomenon taking place in virtually all OECD economies” (Brinkley, 2006, p.29). Accordingly, lifelong education could be more “compared to a device with so many accessories bolted on that its original purpose is forgotten” (Matheson & Matheson, 1996, p.231). Whether this is what youth in the society is interested in or looking forward to learn for their empowerment, or if it is another programme that merely reflects certain needs within political and economic agendas, will be examined through applying critical discourse analysis to the policy and critically understanding how social transformation has been shaped under the shadow of building a lifelong learning society.
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1. Critical Theory

The theoretical foundation of my research derives from the combination of the previously mentioned concepts; youth empowerment through promoting lifelong learning and knowledge-based economy throughout nonformal education.

This study will apply in its analysis the theoretical framework of Critical Theory in order to understand the concept of empowerment and how power is manifested in the policies to be analysed. Despite the fact that this theory is an umbrella for a variety of terms, I found it relevant because it “provides the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms” (Bohman, 2013). That is, it must explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation that meet the need of the individual. Habermas argues also that the state is ‘crisis ridden’ and unable to solve structural problems of unemployment, economic growth, and environmental destruction (Bohman, 2013), even in times where the state attempts to do so through specific political and educational agenda.

Critical theory is a “reflective theory which gives agents a kind of knowledge inherently productive of enlightenment and emancipation” (Geuss, 1981, p.2). It belongs to the Frankfurt School of thought that from its inception in 1923 was conceived in terms of reinterpretation of Freud and Marx. It criticizes modernity and capitalism, and reinterprets central notions of the Marxist philosophy such as its economic and political conceptions. Some of the prominent figures of the first generation of Critical Theorists are Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and since the 1970s the second generation has been led by Jurgen Habermas (Corradetti, n/a). The first generation of Critical Theory “relied upon an unreconstructed Marxist political economy” (Pleasants, 2002, p.154). Where Marxism seeks to only “expose
the true nature of the objective social and historical situation (Horkheimer, 1972)”, Critical Theory sees a critical attitude as part of the development of society (Pleasants, 2002, p.152), and I am aiming to represent such an approach within this study. Adorno and Horkheimer focused their critique on a theoretical picture of the nature and powers of the individual. At the same time, Habermas’s critical social theory was not that different as his theoretical focus was on the nature and powers of the individuals from a language-user perspective (Pleasants, 2002, p.160).

The Frankfurt school determines three features of the Critical Theory; it argues that Critical Theories guide human action through creating enlightenment such as enabling individuals to determine their own interests and also realize that they are “inherently emancipatory”, which means that critical theories raise their consciousness regarding a kind of coercion that they face. Moreover, critical theories are considered as forms of knowledge, as they have a cognitive content, and are perceived as “reflective” rather than “objectifying” (Geuss, 1981, p.2). In this sense, Critical Theory rejects that “knowledge is simply a mirror of reality” because this notion separates knowledge from action. It rather characterizes itself as a “method which does not ‘fetishize’ knowledge, considering it rather functional to ideology critique and social emancipation” (Corradetti, n/a).

Critical theory as a social science contributes to “awareness of what is, how it has come to be, and what it might become, on the basis of which people may be able to make and remake their lives” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p.4). Therefore, critical theory will help create critical enlightenment regarding empowerment and emancipation among individuals, especially in modern society, where we have emancipation alongside nonformal education (see chapter 2) that has been under the control of the economy and state. As the EU is focusing on building an information society, critical theory will help analyse power interests within groups. Increased awareness will lead to emancipation, which “includes the victory of knowledge over power” (Biesta, 2008, p.199), and Habermas believes that emancipation can be realized through lan-
language (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 84). Therefore, in this research the policy language and discourses will be analysed.

There has been a shift in normative content from Critical Theory to critical social theory and this has been exemplified by Giddens’ (1982) statement that “to regard social agents as ‘knowledgeable’ and ‘capable’ is not just a matter of the analysis of action; it is also an implicitly political stance”. The difference in such a model of social order is that Habermas, Giddens and Bhaskar portray “the skilful production of social life per se as a normative virtue itself”. While Marx and the early Frankfurt school located normativity in the struggle towards a new form of society, Habermas and other critical social theorists locate it in the mere production of social life and the social system. (Pleasants, 2002, p.154).

Critical theory in a re-conceptualized context and in the post-discourses, according to Bauman (1995), Collin (1995) and others, questions the assumption that “nations in the European Union [...] are unproblematically democratic and free” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p.90). Due to globalization and technological development, critical theorists argued that there is a need to re-examine democratic social equality and personal independence. In this context, a critical social theory is “concerned in particular with issues of power and justice, and the ways that the economy; matters of race, class, and gender; ideologies; discourses; education [...] and other social institutions; and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p.90). For that reason, I am using Critical Theory to help me analyze and at the same time raise critical consciousness regarding the political language used in the Europe 2020 Strategy. The EU is creating a comprehensive set of beliefs in its attempt to tackle unemployment and empower individuals through nonformal education and lifelong learning.

Furthermore, when we talk about power and the inequalities it creates, one should consider the notion of hegemony and ideology. For Gramsci, dominant power in the twentieth century was applied by social and psychological pressure in an attempt to gain people’s consent to domi-
nance through cultural and social organizations such as the media, the schools etc. Thus it shows how we are all hegemonized “as our field of knowledge and understanding is structured by limited exposure to competing definitions of the sociopolitical world. The hegemonic field, with its bounded socio-psychological horizon, garners consent to an inequitable power matrix – a set of social relations that are legitimated by their depiction as natural and inevitable. In this context, critical researchers note that hegemonic consent is never completely established for it is always contested by various groups with different agendas” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p.93). Critical theory uncovers the underlying social practices and helps reveal the discourses that distort social life. Since my research questions focus on analyzing the major discourses and their effect on empowerment through nonformal education programs, such a theory will help me investigate which discourses the policy is drawing from to maintain its power and figure out what types of hegemony is being created through knowledge.

However, a re-conceptualized critical research goes further than the political and educational propaganda in explaining domination, it refuses the assumption that people are passive and easily manipulated. Therefore, “researchers operating with an awareness of this hegemonic ideology understand that dominant ideological practices and discourses socially construct our vision of reality (Lemke 1995, 1998)” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p.94). Nevertheless, the individual often takes on board the dominant social constructions rather than challenging them. Because language is the mirror of society, critical theory of power sees that language is not neutral in describing the ‘real world’. From a critical perspective, language explanation is not merely about describing the world but should serve to construct it in a better way. Critical theory studies the way “language in the form of discourses serves as a form of regulation and domination” whereby using critical discourse analysis as the methodology will come in line with this view. In an educational perspective (both formally and nonformally), discourses of power guide and force educators systems and teaching methods, creating a particular hegemony (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p.94). Referring to the EUs agenda in utilizing nonformal education field towards upgrading youth skills to meet the information society, it is implanting a hegemony and a new identity that European youth should conform to.
Accordingly, critical theory retains that ideology governs an individual’s consciousness and is “what prevents the agents in the society from correctly perceiving their true situation and real interests” (Geuss, 1981, p.3) Consequently, Geuss summarizes ideology according to Bell in a comprehensive sense, as

(a) A program or plan of action  
(b) Based on an explicit, systematic model or theory of how the society works  
(c) Aimed at radical transformation or reconstruction of the society as a whole  

(Geuss, 1981, p.11)

Ideology is something “constructed, created or invented”, it does not mean that it is constructed to match the individuals’ situation (Geuss, 1981, p. 23) as might be the case for youth in the information society, where they are forced to be empowered within a certain ideology.

Critical theory in this research is not another form of Marxism, despite that it drew upon Marxism. Critical theory shares the view that represents the “individual as an active, autonomous knowing-subject – in opposition to the picture of individual as passive puppets, portrayed by deterministic forms of Marxism and positivist social science” (Pleasants, 2002, p.151). As a result, the Frankfurt School developed a supradisciplinary, materialist social theory as a response both to inadequacies within classical Marxism and within the dominant forms of bourgeois science and philosophy (Kellner, 1990, p.5). Thus, critical social theory’s core concepts are looking at “which interconnections exist in a definite social group, in a definite period of time and in a definite country, between the role of this group in the economic process, the transformation of the psychic structures of its individual members, and the totality of the system that affects and produces its thoughts and mechanism (Bronner and Kellner 1989, p.44)” in which these relations can be better understood in historical contexts (Kellner, 1990, p.4). The EU’s prime task is to maintain its power through developing an information society, it uses different discourses to justify that it is benefiting the European society as a whole.
Thus, such a focus generates a definite social group; one that can contribute to the economic process through their knowledge and skills, creating the ‘others’ who do not have the needed skills. Critical theory alongside the methodology in next chapters, will help to demonstrate the influences that have shaped individuals’ beliefs and how it affects the society.

Critical Theory has the ability to positively empower through critical democracy and awareness, especially through engaging the youth in rethinking the social and political situation (Kinchemcloe & Mc Laren, 2002). I believe Critical Theory in the scope of my research will help shed light and challenge ideologies accompanying nonformal education in an EU contemporary context. As mentioned earlier (in chapter 2), youth could fall under the category of adult education; in that case a critical theory of adult learning may “strive to be as comprehensive as possible in describing and explaining the development of social and political awareness” and is not to be expected to relate to all learning activities concerning adult or youth education (Brookfield, 2005, p.2).
3.2. Empowerment Theory

I find it essential to present in the theoretical framework a part about empowerment to avoid ambiguity, because it could be regarded as a theory, a process and a concept (Fitzsimons, Hope, Russell, & Cooper, 2011). I regard it as a theory because in contrast to emancipation which critically analyses and resists power, “empowerment involves people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power” (Inglis, 1997, p. 4). Thus both are essential for constructing the analysis of discourses in the Europe 2020 Strategy and its influence on empowerment through nonformal education. It also corresponds to my research as I am looking at how empowerment is presented through the policies, thus making it important to relate and base my analyses on a theoretical understanding of the term. Moreover, empowerment could be related to social/critical theories of power whereas it builds upon the elements mentioned in the above Critical Theory section. On the other hand, it is another term that has been used in various fields and as a result it lacks a precise and clear definition. Therefore, to prevent any misunderstanding, I intend to provide as far as possible a clear understanding for empowerment.

The understanding of the concept of empowerment is influenced by different ideologies and theories, and there is not one approach to define it, it is rather “only through the process of critical reflective working that reveals at which level the activities, interactions or outcomes are operating” (Fitzsimons et al., 2011, p.14). According to Zimmerman (2000) the empowerment theory provides principles and a framework for organizing our knowledge and the development of such a theory helps “advance the construct beyond a passing fad and political manipulation” (p.43). Hence, empowerment has an emancipatory meaning, it promotes individuals’ agency instead of dependence, which allows for personal aptitude to elevate, as a result they can find their own strength in bringing about change through actions that better serve their needs in particular, and collectively as a target group. It is a process that does not only concern the individual, in most cases empowerment involves a political practice that needs
some time to be able “to change the distribution of power, both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society” (Medel-Añonuevo et al., 2001, pp.13-14). It therefore is defined as a “group’s or individual’s capacity to make effective choices, that is, to make choices and then to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” but this capacity is governed by other factors that may impede or further facilitate the individual’s capacity and actions. Those two interconnected factors are “agency and opportunity structure”. This means that even when people have the ability to choose and make decisions, because of certain social or political restriction, they may not be able to use that agency effectively and fully according to their interests (Alsop Ruth, Bertelsen Mette, & Holland, 2005, p.10). There are certain constraints that characterize the individual’s capacity. In order to understand the concept more thoroughly we need to consider the notion of power that is one of these constraints. According to the social exchange theory, power is seen as a “function of the dependence and/or interdependence of actors” (Conger, J. & Kanungo, R., 1988, p.472). For Foucault, “power relations dissipate through all relational structures of the society” (Balan, 2010, June, p.38), which allows us to analyse power at the level of everyday practices and not only in relation to the state or the economy, as power is situated not only in the state but also in the individual (Fitzsimons et al., 2011, p.8).

In order to understand power, Foucault posed the following questions; “how is it exercised; by what means? And second, what are the effects of the exercise of power?” (Smart, 2002, p.70). Asking these questions rather than just defining power or asking “what is power and where does it come from?” (p.70), gives us a different outlook and understanding of this notion. Smart (2002) highlights that power is perceived as a strategy, while Foucault conceptualized power as multifaceted strategic conditions where power derives from “maneuvers, tactics, techniques, functionings” and power is rather invested and transmitted within people (p.70). In such an understanding power is a process which includes a sequence of procedures.
I am not trying to provide an assessment of empowerment indicators, as it is difficult to measure and does not fit within the scope of my research. Alternatively, I will look at how empowerment is represented in the policies through the discourses to be analysed and to what extent it is embedded within the discourse of power, and by doing so whether it corresponds to the measures pointed out in the book by Alsop Ruth et al., (2005) ‘Empowerment in Practice: From Analysis to Implementation’. It is suggested that for policy makers or those involved in project planning could assess the degree of empowerment through confirming:

1. Whether an opportunity to make a choice exists (*existence of choice*)
2. Whether a person or group actually uses the opportunity to choose (*use of choice*)
3. Whether the choice brings about the desired result (*achievement of choice*)

(Alsop Ruth et al., 2005, p.17)

Maintaining these three questions in mind throughout this research will help me answer the research questions through identifying the discourses in the policy, and whether opportunities and achievements are designed to meet the individual’s empowerment needs or is a form of power practiced among those people intended to achieve a desired outcome. In addition, the achievement of choice depends on various socio-economic and political factors that determine people’s pathways, and how far a person is able to achieve a desired outcome (Alsop Ruth et al., 2005, p.18).

Moreover, Empowerment theory suggests “a distinct approach for developing interventions and creating social change” and it also emphasizes that social problems exist due to unequal distribution of, and access to resources (Zimmerman, 2000, p.44). The process of empowerment is considered to be empowering if individuals were able to enhance their ability in becoming independent and most importantly improved their skills in identifying and solving problems (p. 46). As a result, a “social change and policy developed from an empowerment
perspective requires a redefinition of terms and methods. Empowerment theory connects individual well-being with the larger social and political environment” (Zimmerman, 2000, p.58). In this sense, even when policy changes were not in favour of empowerment as it is supposed to be, individuals should still develop a sense of empowerment through building a better understanding of the decision-making process and the ability to confidently adapt to changes that might require specific skills and proactive behaviours.

Since “empowerment is context and population specific. It takes on different forms for different people in different contexts” (Zimmerman, 2000, p.45). Zimmerman also indicated that we should critically understand one’s social environment and which could be looked at from different levels and point of views; individual, organizational, community etc. where he provides a distinctive analysis.

As seen earlier, my research will use the critical theory in order to grasp the bigger picture of the analysis. Moreover, it will also allow me to build upon the empowerment theory and concept in order to understand the notion of empowerment as demonstrated in the policies and the language behind it.
Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

This study uses critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) as a methodology to investigate the discourses in Europe 2020 strategy that were identified in relation to the Critical Theory and empowerment theory. Both theories concentrate on issues pertaining to the late modernity ‘new times’ and the role of language in social change. ‘New times’ refers to the period of “profound economic and social transformation on a global scale” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p.3) and has facilitated the emergence of the knowledge-based economy. I found CDA suitable for my analysis because it “is not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se but in studying social phenomena which are necessarily complex and thus require a multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach” (Wodak, R. & Meyer, M., 2009, p.2). Fairclough (2010) mentions that we cannot understand or explain discourse without understanding the social relations with other ‘objects’ which can include “power relations and institutions”, hence, CDA focuses on social relations and not only individuals and things (p.3). This means that by applying CDA in this research, I will examine the relations between the language used in the policies and how it contributed towards constructing these terms into a social phenomenon, especially concerning empowerment and social transformation. Moreover, it gives rise to certain issues of power that correspond to the Critical Theory in a sense that discourse is shaped by “discursive events and the situation(s), institutions(s) and social structure(s)” and also helps in shaping them (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258)” (Wodak, R. & Meyer, M., 2009, p.6). Another reason that made this methodology suitable for my research is because one of the major research agendas that CDA investigates is the Knowledge-based Economy. For instance, Fairclough (2001 and 2005) demonstrates the role of discourse in social change and transition, focusing on ‘knowledge-based economy’ and ‘information society’ in defining social processes. Therefore, CDA in that field focuses on “analyzing, understanding and explaining the impact of the Knowledge-based Economy on various domains of our societies” (Wodak, R. & Meyer, M., 2009, p.11). This methodology will shed light on whether nonformal education and em-
powerment are influenced by the transformation and discourses of the ‘new times’. As it is posited that CDA in the context of the new times, has a significant “value in documenting multiple and competing discourse in policy texts, in highlighting marginalized and hybrid discourse and in documenting discursive shifts in policy implementation processes” (Taylor, 2004, p.433).

To start talking about critical discourse analysis without clarifying what is meant by discourse could cause some confusion. Also, each author has his own definition of discourse related to their research approach. Consequently, I follow Fairclough’s definition and CDA approach throughout my analysis. Generally speaking, discourse means “anything from… a policy, a political strategy, narratives in a restricted or broad sense of the term, text, talk, a speech … to language per se” (Wodak, R. & Meyer, M., 2009, p.3). Thus Fairclough uses the term discourse to claim “language use to be imbricated in social relations and processes which systematically determine variations in its properties, including the linguistic forms which appear in texts. One aspect of this imbrications in the social which is inherent to the notion of discourse is that language is a material form of ideology, and language is invested by ideology” (Fairclough, 2010, p.3). Accordingly, Fairclough (2010) sees discourse as a “complex of three elements: social practice, discoursal practice (text production, distribution and consumption), and text”. He also highlights that the analysis of any discourse requires that each of these three dimensions are analyzed (p. 59). Fairclough (2010 & 2013), semiotically speaking, believes also that discourses are ways of representing realities, referring to semiosis as an element of the social process.

To further illustrate the analysis method, and because “analysis is not always as tidily linear” (Janks, 1997, p.329), I will follow the three dimensional model of discourse set by Fairclough; the figure below combines the three above mentioned aspects.
Figure 2: The three-dimensional conception of discourse

Fairclough (2010) in relation to the figure above mentions that “any discursive ‘event’ is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice”, where the “text” dimension focuses on “language analysis of texts” (p.4). Accordingly he suggests that texts, whether they are written or spoken are in “three main ways as part of events: in acting, representing and identifying. They are part of the action…they simultaneously represent aspects of the world, and they simultaneously identify social actors, contribute to the constitution of social and personal identity” (p.75). Therefore, by analyzing the text, we are applying a “descriptive” procedure which does not only indicate that texts should be analyzed according to language/linguistic forms (Fairclough, 1992, p.73-74), as it also has a social representation that should be examined. The second dimension “discursive practice” has more a social-theoretical sense where it “specifies the nature of the processes of text production and interpretation” (p.4). This dimension helps in drawing upon the discourses in the text, and understand the process and how they are produced through certain institutions and combined among the wider social representation. As for the “social practice” dimension it is concerned with analysing social institutions and how these have shaped the nature of the
discursive event (p.4). Therefore, the analysis of discourse practice and the analysis of the social practice of which the discourse is part can be called “interpretation” (Fairclough, 1992, p.73). In this dimension, the representation concerns discourses such as power and ideology. The three elements are essential for the analysis, they are separate but shape each other and should be constantly related together in the analysis.

In view of that, CDA could be defined as “a theory of and a methodology for the analysis of discourse understood as an element or moment of the political, political-economic and more generally social which is dialectically related to other elements/moments” (Fairclough, 2013, p.2). Through this approach, CDA can focus on and highlight the “wrongs” within a society whether the focus is on an institution, organization etc., since it analyses dialectical relations between discourse and other objects that are part of the “social practice” dimension, it then shows how “wrongs” could be mitigated, from a particular normative point of view (Fairclough, 2010). Individuals are usually shaped by “social structures, relations of power, and the nature of the social practice they are engaged in” (Fairclough, 1992). Moreover, Fairclough (2010) claims that “institutions construct subjects ideologically and discoursally” (p.43) and thus CDA contributes to analyse certain hegemony represented by discourses. Such an approach will facilitate my analysis and help me understand the relations embedded within the text (policies in this case), discursive practice and social practice.

Critical discourse analysis will help to understand ideologies and hegemonies created through discourses that shape people’s lives and position them as what Althusser calls “social subjects” (Fairclough, 2001). Ideologies are “a significant element of processes through which relations of power are established, maintained, enacted and transformed” (Fairclough, 2010, p.26). It is a representation of social activities from a specific perspective and interest. Through ideology and power differences, knowledge is distorted as it is a representation of social actors who have certain interest which could be positioned differently. Ideologies are created to keep in place particular levels of power (Fairclough 2001& 2010). Hegemony in-
corporates economy, politics and ideology through politics and power. It is “leadership as well as domination across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society” (Fairclough, 1995, p.76). Hegemony is about building “consent” rather than “coercion” through ideological means and the power of language. It becomes the representation of a dominant social class and maintaining this power through gaining consent. What happens is that hegemonies become “sustained ideologically, in the ‘common sense’ assumptions of everyday life (Forgacs, 1988)” (Fairclough, 2001, p.232), where certain forms of knowledge are produced and become normalized in the society or how people think. Ideology in this research is directed towards the knowledge-based economy discourse and how it is gaining hegemony and representation over social relations.

Fairclough did not define one approach to implement the CDA analysis. In Fairclough (2003) he suggests that we should first define the major narratives in the text (p.99). On the other hand, Janks (1997) refers to Fairclough’s CDA approach as a useful method because it “provides multiple points of analytic entry” and “does not matter which kind of analysis one begins with, as long as in the end they are all included” (p.329). I have started my research with defining the major concepts such as nonformal education (chapter 2.2) and lifelong long learning (chapter 2.5.), which later on will form some part of the textual narrative. Therefore, I find it important to start my analysis from the smaller box the “text” as seen in figure (2) that will lead me to better analyse the “discursive practice” and “social practice” in relation to the concepts identified earlier and to the analysis results. I base this decision on Fairclough (1992) where he posits that “one never really talks about features of text without some reference to text production and/or interpretation” (p.73).
4.2. CDA and Policy Analysis

Since analysing the policy in this research will be implemented through critical discourse analysis, it means that the policy is considered as a text and at the same time is framed by broader discourses (Ball 2006 as cited in Rizvi & Lingards 2009, p.8). In this context, analysis has to combine the three dimensions ‘text, discursive practice, and social practice’ mentioned earlier in figure (2). In contrast with other political discourse analysis approaches, CDA understands discourses in relation to their context (Wodak, R. & Meyer, M., 2009).

Policy could refer to both text and processes. Ball (1994) as cited in Rizvi & Lingard (2009) mentions “policy is both text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended” which means it represents a process and product, referring to the policy as the product (p.5). In this sense, critical discourse analysis identifies the “discursive (or semiotic, or linguistic) character of policy, policy-making and policy-analysis”, thus CDA compared to critical policy studies focuses more on language analysis “analysis of ‘texts’ in a comprehensive sense” as mentioned earlier (Fairclough, 2013, p.1). Since in most cases “policy is about change” (Weimer and Vining 2004 as cited in Rizvi & Lingards 2009) or aim at implementing reforms then it could be that policy-making has a ‘problem-solution’ character which can be addressed by CDA (Fairclough, 2013, p.11) through applying the three dimensional conception in figure (2) that will help us investigate the relation between discourse, ideology and power in the policies. As Fairclough (2010) posits that discourse is shaped by structures and these structures have a “discoursal/ideological nature” (p. 59) and “ideologies reside in texts” (p.57). At the same time, Codd (1988) elaborates “… policy documents can be said to constitute the official discourse of the state (Codd, 1985)” (Taylor, 1997, p.5).
Accordingly, the analysis that I will undertake focuses on reading these ideologies as they “involve the representation of the world from the perspective of a particular interest” (Fairclough, 2010, p.46); for instance in this research it will highlight the knowledge transmitted through Europe 2020 Strategy, and how it could get distorted throughout this perspective. This means that ideologies could have, for instance, political, economic and language structures and it is important that they are analysed. Furthermore, an approach to policy analysis which incorporates critical analysis of policy discourse should focus upon generic features of policy discourse which appertain to the relationship between problems and solutions (Fairclough, 2013, p.11). Fairclough (2013 & 2010) refers to genres as “semiotic ways of acting and interacting” in which certain activities represent their own discourses and aspects of the world. We need to understand discourses that are shaping the policy texts, and how “truth” and “knowledge” are produced and articulated as discourses in the texts (Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B., 2009). Mainly because policies or politicians could be hiding a certain ‘negative’ within a ‘particular formulation’ so that the people could not see the truth or the negativity any longer (Wilson, 2001, p.400).

One of the core goals pertaining to political discourse analysis is “to seek out the ways in which language choice is manipulated for a specific political effect” (Wilson, 2001, p.410). Within this context, the Europe 2020 strategy’s language, with particular focus on empowerment, will be analysed in order to understand the current agenda that it is seeking to build a skilled society under certain discourses, and as a result is creating these ideologies under the aim of creating a lifelong-learning individual in a knowledge-based economy.
4.3. Methodological Reliability/Validity and Criticism

Critical discourse analysis as a qualitative research methodology highly depends on the field that is studied and analysed in order to determine and ensure reliability and validity. Discourse analysts claim that “validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques. [...] Rather, validity is like integrity, character and quality, to be assessed relative to purposes and circumstances (Brinberg and McGrath, 1985:13)” (Gill, 2000, p.187-188).

When analysing texts, it is common that one might be trapped by his own point of view and understanding. To not fall in such an entrapment, the researcher has to have an “engaged” and “estranged” position regarding the text and the analysis process. Because “engagement without estrangement is a form of submission to the power of the text regardless of the reader’s own positions”, at the same time “estrangement without engagement is a refusal to leave the confines of one’s own subjectivity, a refusal to allow otherness to enter” (Janks, 1997, p.330). Therefore, a first step in the analysis process is the “suspension of belief in the taken for granted” (Gill, 2000, p.178) which I will follow within my research and open my mind critically through applying CDA and thinking analytically. CDA also argues the need for “reading against the text to counterbalance reading with the text” (Janks, 1997, p.331). I believe throughout the Master’s programme that this research is part of, I have enhanced my critical thinking, and therefore hope to put it in practice and make it visible in this research.

In particular concerning the analysis of the policy text, policies usually leave a “great deal of room for interpretation” (Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B., 2009, p.5), and Fairclough (1989) also asserts that by saying “texts are usually highly ambivalent” (p.75). Bucholtz (2001) (as cited in Rogers et al, 2005) called for a reflexivity where the researcher/analyst has to make sure his choices and justifications are noticeable (p. 381). Likewise, Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) mention that reflexivity is a significant element and agenda for studies that apply CDA, adding that the ‘knowledge’ and ‘reality’ of the researcher affects the ‘reflexive stance’, and as a re-
sult “the extent to which the researchers turn these frameworks on themselves, either methodologically or theoretically” (R. Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005, p.381). Therefore, the validity of my analysis depends highly on the coherence between representing my own reflection and analysis in relation to CDA and critical theory approaches, adding to that the strategies mentioned in empowerment theory.

I do not claim that this is the only way of reading the text, because it will always reflect my ‘partial understanding’. I also do not declare my research to be a ‘pure knowledge’ or ‘truth’ as by doing so, I would deny the diversity of viewpoints and experiences of other people who are involved (Said, 1978)” (Taylor, 2001, p.12). On top of that, I make sure that my assumptions are supported by other related materials to the context I am analyzing. Furthermore, reliability is related to the quality of the research conducted, and in a qualitative study the concept of quality has “the purpose of generating understanding (Stenbacka, 2001, p.551)” (Golafshani, 2003, p.601). Taking into account the aforementioned considerations, and performing a consistent research, will help in producing a reliable and valid research, in addition to generating understanding and critical awareness regarding the concept of empowerment and its presentation in the policies.

4.4. CDA and its connection to Critical Theory

Research using critical theory aims at promoting critical consciousness through criticizing ideologies created and/or practiced through the institutional structures which reproduce social inequalities that are sustained and produced by these social structures. According to Fairclough (2010) “critique is committed to producing and deepening certain forms of knowledge and understanding to producing theories and analyses with the explanatory power to cogently interpret and explain” (Fairclough, 2010, p.20). Therefore, CDA shares the concerns of critical social science as elaborated earlier, and strives towards showing “how socio-economic sys-
tems are build upon the domination, exploitation and dehumanization of people by people, and to show how contradictions within these systems constitute a potential for transforming them in progressive and emancipatory directions” (Fairclough, 2010, p.304).

Critical theory articulates activity striving to transform society (Kellner, 1990, p.10). Horkheimer clarifies how social philosophy reveals the “fate of human beings, insofar as they are parts of a community, and not mere individuals” (p. 2). In the context of the research where youth is the focus, it could be perceived as a community targeted with different political labels and agenda produced for specific and broader aims. Moreover, he adds that social philosophy or critical social theory concerns itself with the social situation and life of individuals and the effects of “state, law, economy…” (Bronner and Kellner 1989, p.44) and its relation to the overall situation as humans (Kellner, 1990, p.2). At the same time, one of the views of CDA is that it sees the use of language as a social practice that drives social change (Janks, 1997). It is also interested in contemporary analysis concerning “the processes of socio-economic change and the ways in which language figures within them” (Fairclough 1992, 2000, Graham, 2000 as cited in Fairclough, 2010, p.304).

The focus of study in critical social science “is the relationship between spheres of social life and activity, the economic, the political and the cultural”(Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p.20). Applying a theory and a methodology that both share similar aspects allows my research to be more focused and coherent. It facilitates my analysis, as it enables me to understand the issue I am analysing from the critical theory point of view and at the same time apply my analysis through CDA. Most of the focus on critical theory is attributed to economy. Thus I made it clear earlier that I will not focus on the Marxist point of view as much as I will try to “identify ways in which other dimensions of the society are rooted in and emergent from the economy” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p.20). For example the idea of building the knowledge-based economy, which could mean that the society is to a certain extent determined by economic mechanisms, will be analysed in the coming parts, in addition to finding
out in what sense these dimensions are determined by economy “without reducing them to economy” (p.20).
Chapter 5: Policy Analysis and Findings

This research’s main focus is to analyse the relevant aspects in the Europe 2020 strategy that will help me understand the language of the policy in relation to empowering youth through nonformal education. I decided that this strategy document will form my primary text, because it is a recent policy and focuses on the current issues related to youth, lifelong-learning and knowledge-based economy, thus shaping nonformal education programmes. Moreover, other related policies such as the “Memorandum on Lifelong Learning” that has been created in year 2000 and also the White Paper (2001) “a new impetus for European Youth” are also significant, as their legal framework is based on the Europe 2020 Strategy. Those three documents are usually related to each other as, since the approval of the White Paper A new impetus for European Youth 2001, nonformal learning/education and its recognition has become a priority within the Europe 2020 Strategy and other flagship initiatives related (European Commission, 2011) that I might occasionally refer to. Accordingly, the aforementioned policies are interrelated and it is essential to link the relevant aspects together in order to facilitate my analysis and discussions as the documents together form the policy.

There have been quite few researches published on policy analysis in education that use CDA in particular (Taylor, 2004). Having said that, I have not encountered any published research that critically analyses the discourse related to nonformal education. Currently, European NGO’s and scholars are focusing on the validation of nonformal education competences to increase employment prospects. For instance, the paper Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of nonformal learning/education and of youth work in Europe, focuses on identifying ten factors that will better acknowledge and validate nonformal education in the youth field (European Commission, 2011). Thus, I find that a more critical approach is needed to analyse the nonformal education background, context and changes through utilizing CDA, especially that the efforts put into validating nonformal education are taking place within the same political language and agenda. Since, CDA is an analytical strategy and practice that has the strength to
‘make a difference’ (Luke 1997 as cited in Taylor 2004) it explores how texts through language represents the society and in this case how nonformal education is affected and represented. As a result, it can critically contribute to a better assessment for the validation and recognition of NFE and develop a better learning pathway for youth.

5.1. Contextualizing the Policy

I shall commence my analysis according to the CDA three-dimensional approach (see figure 2 – chapter 4.1), by describing the text in order to understand its background and the context of the policy, since this is essential. Europe has been shaped by economic changes and is still attempting to modify itself in this new environment due to globalization, technological change and an ageing population (Rodrigues, 2002). As a result, its political agenda has been developing towards building a knowledge-based economy, as it believes it is the solution to sustaining its power and competitiveness globally. Hence, in March 2010, the European Commission launched its Europe 2020 Strategy which was designed “as a European exit strategy from the global economic and financial crisis that started in 2008” (Bongardt & Torres, 2010, p.136) that has also become a successor to the Lisbon strategy (2000-2010). The 2020 strategy builds upon the same focus as the latter of “promotion of productivity, growth and sustainability” (p.136) to deliver “high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion” (European Trade Union Institute., 2011, p.4) and strengthen the EU’s role in global governance. The Lisbon strategy was a response to acknowledge the needs for “far-reaching reforms in the EU to meet the challenges of globalization, ageing and the ICT revolution” (Dion, 2005, p.298).

Since the Europe 2020 strategy is not yet finished, usually one could compare it to the Lisbon Strategy in terms of its objectives and social model. The Lisbon strategy was mainly designed to address whether it is “possible to update Europe’s development strategy so that we can rise to the new challenges resulting from globalization, technological change and population age-
ing, while preserving European values”. The main purpose was “to define a European path towards the new innovation and knowledge-based economy” at the same time maintaining the European social model; which represents “social cohesion and cultural diversity” (Rodrigues, 2009, p.1). To fulfil that aim, reforms had to be made, which included “innovation of norms regulating international trade and competition, of social models, and of education systems”. During that time, the EU wanted to be superior in the economic competition against the USA (pp. 1-2). Focusing on filling the growth gap concerning technology or the economy in general between the EU and USA, has driven the focus of the EU towards evolving a specific type of ‘information society’ and ‘knowledge-based economy’. The analysis will clarify the implication that this has on society and the way youth are empowered through nonformal education.

At the time that the Lisbon strategy was launched, the EU leaders set a “strategic goal” that the EU would by 2010 become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion (European Council, 2000)” (Marlier & Natali, 2010, p.16). But after a decade, the indicators set as a target were not fully achieved and there were still many unresolved critical issues (European Trade Union Institute., 2011, p.4). Thus, the 2020 strategy was designed in quite a different situation, where it happened in “a difficult social, employment and budgetary context marked by slow recovery from the global economic and financial crisis” (Marlier & Natali, 2010, p.16). The EU, during the time of setting the Europe 2020 strategy, had to be more cautious, and compare to the evaluation results of the Lisbon Strategy to fill these open ends and gaps. At the same time, it had to focus on the post-crisis world, which has caused the marginalization of the social side due to the crisis.

Yet another interest behind setting the Lisbon strategy in 2000 was to constitute a turning point in the EU governance by focusing on “how to govern Europe” within the process of globalization, and “the huge governance deficit a decade after the Maastricht Treaty” (Ágh, Attila, & András, Vértes, 2010, p.2). Through such a perspective and in a period when the EU
was looking for a new identity, European states came under a sovereignty of a supranational entity – the European Union, with a “single economy, and with a set of powerful decision making institutions” (Moutsios, 2007, p.1), to be able to improve its position in the global competition through the Lisbon strategy under the slogan “Think Global – Act European” (Ágh, Attila, & András, Vértes, 2010).

The EU, since the Lisbon summit in 2000, has planned and stimulated a set of mechanisms to steer its state-members’ system in a manner whereby there is a great focus on shifting education towards the achievement of a common project which is called “Europe of knowledge” (Moutsios, 2007, p.2). Now comes the Europe 2020 to maintain this path and focus on setting a social market economy for Europe in the 21st century. The EU is fostering a European model that needs to adapt to the ‘new economic realities’, particularly the information and knowledge society, in order to manage the enhancement of inclusive and sustainable growth that will lead to modernizing social and environmental practices. As a result, through such a model the EU will be able to address the challenges it faces due to globalization, ageing population and other changes (Bongardt & Torres, 2010, p.139).

At the same time, the EU has to still face the increased differences between the Member States in terms of competitiveness, employment and innovation levels according to the terms set in the Lisbon Strategy. The revised version of the Lisbon strategy that was implemented in 2005, which was supposed to address these differences, especially that it had a particular focus on jobs, growth and competitiveness and it also corresponds with the Europe 2020. Through the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EC sets progress reports on member states through providing them with particular recommendations regarding their non-compliance, to further enhance their competitiveness and develop their growth potential. In essence, “the Europe 2020 strategy does not entail substantive innovation in terms of instrument. It limits itself to trying to strengthen supervision within the pre-existing framework” (Bongardt & Torres, 2010, p.140). As such, the Europe 2020 does not have a different framework from the Lisbon Strategy.
What it does is that it increases pressure on badly performing member states, while under external pressure they have to implement reforms that will possibly tackle the reasons behind the low growth. Moreover, the EU secures its budget for a member state based on its extent in prioritizing the spending according to the indicators prioritized in the Europe 2020 Strategy (Bongardt & Torres, 2010, p.140).

For decades, Europe has been focusing around competitiveness and economic growth. It is since the European Single Market Programme (1986-92), the Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) and recent Europe 2020 Strategy that such a focus has been patent (Bongardt & Torres, 2010). The Europe 2020 is supposed to represent a solution for the damages that the economic crisis has caused. The crisis hindered the progress of the EU’s economic and social growth. Therefore, the presidency conclusion has proudly announced the adoption of Europe 2020 Strategy in June 2010 declaring that Europe 2020 is “our new strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It constitutes a coherent framework for the Union to mobilize all of its instruments and policies and for the Member States to take enhanced coordinated actions” (European Council, 2010). Any initiatives or white papers related to youth, are based on the broad Europe 2020 Strategy and have to reflect its language and political aims. For that reason, I chose to focus my CDA analysis on the Europe 2020 strategy rather than other specific youth initiatives.

5.2. Structure of the policy document - The Europe 2020 Strategy

The Europe 2020 Strategy is sectioned into six parts and as an overall forms 7 flagship initiatives. The introduction familiarizes the reader with the effects of the crisis on the EU’s progress and the global challenges it faces. The second part includes two strands which are the core of the strategy; the first strand classifies the growth priorities into three characters: smart growth through building a knowledge-based economy and innovation; sustainable growth, towards a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy; and inclusive growth, which promotes an economy with high employment levels and ensures social and ter-
territorial cohesion. The second strand includes the EU’s benchmarks for 2020 regarding employment, education, social inclusion, research and development, and climate and energy. The third part mentions the missing links and bottlenecks, while the fourth part elaborates on how to exit from the crisis. The fifth part is designed towards delivering results through stronger governance. As for the final part it concerns the decisions for the European Council (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010).

For this research, I will focus on the second part of the Europe 2020 strategy. The other parts of the strategy are not to be ignored, and where relevant I will be referring to them, as they all form a coherent body towards a unified aim. This will help in achieving the research objectives which focus on deciphering and revealing the major discourses in the strategy and how they nurture the concept of empowerment through nonformal education. Moreover, the focus will be on youth empowerment and training in the field of nonformal education and I will occasionally refer to other related policies. As President Barroso stated, “education and youth figure prominently in Europe 2020” and in order to revive from the crisis and achieve the 2020 objectives, education and training policies “are key if Europe is to meet its ambitions” ("Europe 2020", 2010).

The EU has realized the importance of investing in youth. For instance, throughout the White Paper “A new impetus for European Youth” it takes into consideration European young people, and during its preparation phase, youth representatives and young people were involved in the consultation process. It has also set initiatives such as ‘Youth on the Move’, which is included in the second part of the Europe 2020, and aims to “improve the performance and international attractiveness of Europe’s higher education institutions and raise the quality of all levels of education and training in the EU, combining both excellence and equity” ("Europe 2020", 2010). But the European Youth Forum indicated that the White Paper is not specific enough in terms of its implementation and execution, and at the same time the Forum raised concerns that the “aims of youth policy should not be adapted nor fully aligned to the targets
of Europe 2020 Strategy (European Youth Forum, 2014). Therefore, I focus on the Europe 2020 strategy and on those measures whereby it is trying to promote youth empowerment, with some reference to the White Paper.

5.3. Analysis of Discourses and Results

Fairclough (1992) sees that discourses are a “mode of action” which means that they shape and represent the way people act in their lives (p. 63). Discourses have three effects on individuals and the society. They can contribute to construct “social identities, social relationships and systems of knowledge and beliefs” (p. 64). Therefore, this chapter will identify the major narratives within the policy that will help to illustrate how the EU has had an influence on shaping and empowering the youth’s knowledge and interest. It will analyse how texts have the power to bring about change in our lives and the society (Fairclough, 2003). The power that is manifested within the policies has causal effects on the society, which makes it important in reference to the Critical Theory’s claim in chapter 3, that building a critical attitude is important to develop a society that is aware of ideologies created by supranational power and its representation in their lives.

As mentioned earlier, the analysis will be executed according to the CDA three-dimensional model through the lenses of both critical theory and empowerment theory. Accordingly, I was able to distinguish two major narratives that bisect into two sub narratives, in relation to my research objectives. The first is Transformation that could be related to “smart growth – an economy based on knowledge and innovation”, under this part two sub-narratives could be identified; ‘Information Society’ and knowledge transformation ‘Knowledge-Based Economy’. The second is Adapting Skills which was identified under the policy part of “inclusive growth – a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion” (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010).
5.3.1. Classification of Genres and analysis

In this part, I will briefly present the genres that could be identified within the Europe 2020 Strategy as they represent the ways of acting and have a semiosis effect on the social practices. Fairclough (2001) mentions how different genres frame and shape each other, and as a result produce specific discourses related to these genres. He refers to them as “generic chains” and genres could vary from speech, media reports etc.

Policy making in the European Union context is characterized by diverse interrelated texts and genres. Texts belong to genres, and in this research the main genre is the policy genre which could include regulations, resolutions, communications, action plans, green papers and white papers, progress reports, press releases, media etc. in which each has a different function yet they frame each other in order to achieve one goal that represents the EU agenda. Since my focus is on nonformal education and youth, the policy could also be seen as it fits in the education genre. Despite the fact that the policy focuses on economic terms, as will be clear in the analysis, it shows through the ‘Youth on the Move’ initiative and ‘Digital Initiative’ that education for youth is implemented to achieve a certain agenda. Here we can say that education is linked to economic and political interests. As education is considered a powerful tool to create knowledge and awareness, the EU tries through the Europe 2020 to spread and convey such messages, under the theme of empowerment, better employment opportunities, and growth. By determining the dimension of social practices, a precise social order of education is constituted. This created what is called an “order of discourse” where “diverse genres and discourses are networked together” and reflects different meaning through discourses (Fairclough, 2001, p.235).

We can realize that the policy genre is “hybrid” and note that despite such a mixture, the policy does not promote dialogue. It represents a “promotional genre” (Fairclough, 2001, p.256) that promotes a specific interest and does not allow for negotiation or presenting other alterna-
tives. It represents solutions for problems in a declarative and prescriptive sense. One part of the promotional nature of the policy, is that it is written “as if the argument is over” and what will help in achieving growth is that the public and governments respond and commit to the policy, as seen below:

our exit from the crisis must be the point of entry into a new economy…what is needed is a strategy to turn the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. This is the Europe 2020 strategy (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010, p.10)

An agenda for new skills and jobs to modernize labour markets and empower people by developing their skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to increase labour participation and better match labour supply and demand, including through labour mobility (p. 6).

Accordingly, the solution to exit the crisis and ensure Europe as a competitive global player is determined as a set of assertions, through the priorities mentioned in the strategy (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010, p.10). The text also includes what is expected to be found in policy documents: a description of intended policies through specific initiatives, and the way information is presented through bullet points makes it easier to read. It is also descriptive in the sense that it determines measures for growth in numbers and goals (Fairclough, 2001).

5.3.2. Analysis of Major Narratives

This part will focus on analysing the major narratives identified through applying critical discourse analysis and how reality is depicted through the policy. By doing so, I will be able to build an understanding of the influence that these discourses have in empowering youth through nonformal education. Thus chapter 6 will further discuss the extent to which the discourses manifested through Europe 2020 strategy empowered youth in a way that corresponds
to the empowerment and nonformal education tenets or to the reality created by certain political agenda.

5.3.2.1. Transformation

I have identified transformation as the first narrative in the text, because of the recurrent rhetoric spotted in the policy concerning the need to change society. This change is to ensure that individuals are capable of responding to the global challenges and guarantee a successful exit from the crisis. The EU’s preliminary focus in transforming society and creating social change is based on smart growth. It can be noticed through the language of the policy that verbs such as “we need” are used several times such as in the phrase “we need to take action now”, or “Europe must act”, in addition to focusing on terms such as “growth”. These terms are formed in the present tense, and represent an authoritative sense (Fairclough, 1992, p. 76). The policy presents an asserted argument through presenting what ‘is’ happening to what ‘must’ be done, through setting the agenda in order to interfere and apply the needed changes that the EU sees as the best solution.

This is what Fairclough (1992) calls the “force of utterances” that influence the discursive practice. It could include promises, threats etc. and as a result has an influence on transforming societies. The promises in the text are asserted in terms of growth indicators and percentages to be achieved within a certain period of time and within a specific field, if member states commit to the initiatives mentioned in the policy. Accordingly, the transformation in the text is taking a specific focus towards economic growth and thus changes have to be adapted accordingly, which is clear through the following:

Three priorities should be the heart of Europe 2020:

- Smart growth – developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
-Sustainable growth – promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy”


Since texts produce meanings and social changes, this means that they are governed by semiotic structures that create the ideological representation. These elements include; genres, discourses and styles. Genres are ways of acting and interacting. Through the above mentioned priorities and language, the EU represents those aspects that help in regulating the interaction that it desires to achieve. It does that through the political discourses and the power it possesses, such as the information society discourse, which is a means that will represent and govern the social practices as planned by the Europe 2020 Strategy. As for the styles, they are ways of shaping the identity of individuals, such as the knowledge-based economy style to be adopted into education and other social aspects, and will identify the individual and determine a specific pathway. This, at the same time, forms as a discourse and also a style to be adopted in constituting the social identity of a society as a whole (Fairclough, 2010). This means that member states and individuals should focus on transforming their agenda and interests accordingly, which leads to what Fairclough (2010) calls their “new ways of interacting”. In this case, transformation is introduced in economic terms and a specific type of knowledge that the EU perceives as the solution for getting out of the crisis and will maintain its competitiveness.

The elements mentioned above (genres, discourses and styles) form the “order of discourse”. More specifically, Fairclough & Cholirariki (1999) define orders of discourse as the “socially ordered set of genres and discourses associated with a particular social field” (p.58). Within the EU context, it shows that discourses are interactive, and through the policies, the EU as an institution manages to set the structure and norms that represent the discursive events.
To further illustrate, the EU is transforming the society towards an information society and a knowledge-based economy, and is contributing to constructing a different society that aims towards a specific knowledge. Below, I provide the analysis of the sub-categories related to the narrative of transformation.

### 5.3.2.1.1. Information society

Transforming a society means that it has to undergo a certain transition. Information is considered as a transformative resource, especially since those transformations have been driven by the new ICTs. Due to globalization, nations experienced a certain transition in one way or another. It does not imply that it is negative, thus the problem is that the information society has become a symbol for growth in terms of social and economic development, disregarding other elements that could have growth potential (Goodwin & Spittle, 2002, p.226). For the EU to maintain its power, it needs to be part of the information revolution that could be seen as similar to the industrial revolution, and which is setting a new way of living and systemizing the society (Webster, 2006). The policy seems to confirm that thought;

Smart growth means strengthening knowledge and innovation as drivers of our future growth. This requires improving the quality of our education, strengthening our research performance, promoting innovation and knowledge transfer throughout the Union, making full use of information and communication technologies and ensuring that innovative ideas can be turned into new products and services that create growth, quality jobs and help address European and global societal challenges. But, to succeed, this must be combined with entrepreneurship, finance, and a focus on user needs and market opportunities (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010, p.11).

Specific discourses are strongly highlighted in this part, market opportunities are determined by focusing on ICT and thus creates technological terms. At the same time this disregards other discourses such as social exclusion and inequality. In such a case, Fairclough mentions that as dis-
courses they have “selective representations” of “economic, political, social and cultural realities, which include certain aspects of these realities and exclude others” (Fairclough, 2005, p.14). In this situation, there are voices unheard or groups left out, as the discourse privileges economic parameters to achieve results in respect to the realities it ‘selectively represents’.

Accordingly, a relation of “equivalence” (Fairclough 2003, p. 88) could be spotted between ‘strengthening education’, ‘economic growth’ and ‘quality jobs’. The equivalence here is the assumption that better education in the field of ICT will render an increase in job opportunities and growth. Fairclough (2003) refers to Laclau and Mouffe (1985) as they would identify it as a ‘logic of difference’. In this case, the EU is trying to differentiate between a certain group of people (those specifically interested in ICT) or entities in that field, as they are classified to have more economic return for society. Note here, that classifications are represented through economic and social phenomena such as “globalization” that caused the information revolution, or such as “growth” that represents another discourse within the EU. These represent certain solution for social change. As a result, this classification “shapes how people think and act as social agents” (Fairclough, 2003).

Thus the problems with ICT is the problem of measurement, “how much ICT is required in order to identify an information society?” (Webster, 2006, p.11). Setting a strategic goal within the Europe 2020 Strategy to transfer to an information society, presents a universal reality rather than addressing specific problems. The EU has had the information society vision since the 1993, and its current vision and belief has not changed. It believes that creating and maintaining an “information society” can help in developing the economy (Michalis, 2002). Creating such a society probably is not the solution for exiting the crisis, as the effect of such a transformation could not be equal. It disregards specific member-states that differ in needs and context from other member-states, and gives privilege to other economies to advance.
The role of the EC is to set regulations and overall strategies, but does not have the capability and enough resources to translate the policy’s objective into reality. It provides overall coordination, guidance and monitors progress but the tangible implementation relies on national level efforts. Currently, the responsibility for recognizing “information society” potentials and initiatives is the duty of the private sector (OECD 2002 as cited in Michalis, 2002, p.17). It does not mean that the government does not have an important role, as it defines the regulations and facilitates the operations for private investment. As a result, giving significance to a particular industry, and creating what is called “information workers” to fit and boost that field.

Youth in Europe are part of this “information society”, and the European Youth Forum finds that there are gaps to be filled and needs to be identified, especially concerning the “digital divide”, discussing the efficiency of e-participation tools, and promoting democracy and freedom of speech through new information and communication technologies, as this affects the effective role of youth in society (European Youth Forum., 2009). The digital divide refers to the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas’ access to new information and communication technologies and the internet (OECD., 2006). Looking at the Europe 2020 Strategy, it does not mention how it could eliminate the digital divide and ensure e-accessibility to all. The youth forum indicates that such an issue has to be taken into account as it leads to unequal opportunities for the young people in Europe, since not all youth have equal access to ICT. As a result, their participation in e-society is affected, it decreases their possibilities in finding job opportunities, political participation, educational programs etc. The forum also raises another issue of digital literacy and awareness. As people and governments might assume that youths are often knowledgeable when it comes to e-related matters, they tend to disregard that not all have an equal level of digital literacy. The European youth forum suggests that governments should promote and develop critical thinking and source criticism as to “learn to evaluate and judge web content, especially considering the amount of available online objectionable and questionable sites” (European Youth Forum., 2009, p.4).
An information society which could be characterized by technology is not constructed by society. It is part of the society but comes from “outside society as an invasive element, without contact with the social in its development, yet it has enormous social consequences when it impacts on society” (Webster, 2006, p.12). Note here, that technology is the major social force that leads social change, and penetrates the social, economic and political aspects in a society. As an external force, the EU cannot control it and could not reject such change. According to Fairclough (2003), technology in this case is “nominalized”. Nominalization is when we do not know who possesses the agency and the responsibility of social divisions or inequalities (Fairclough, 2003, p.144), and thus technology acts here as though it possesses social agency. Yet, on the other hand, it is also the EU that has such agency. Therefore, governments are restricted in their reaction against such “realities” created by new technology that the governments had no hand in creating (Goodwin & Spittle, 2002, p.12). It is similar to the process of globalization, “they are represented as things that have come about, rather than things that are the effects of causal agents” (Fairclough, 2003). What happens is that such a social agency has the power to dominate, and the governments’ efforts and agenda have to match the framework required by ‘technology’.

Moreover, the EU cannot have an influence on the global policy, as it must;

add value on the global scene. The EU will influence global policy decisions only if it acts jointly. Stronger external representation will need to go hand in hand with stronger internal co-ordination (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010, p.8)

Thus if it resists the technology power demanded by the global policy, it will lose its global position alongside USA and Japan. On the other hand, it cannot resist, because as stated in the Europe 2020 strategy;
Europe is left with clear yet challenging choices. Either we face up collectively to the immediate challenge of the recovery and to long-term challenges – globalisation, pressure on resources, ageing, – so as to make up for the recent losses, regain competitiveness, boost productivity and put the EU on an upward path of prosperity ("sustainable recovery") (p.8).

This shows that externally generated agencies are dominating and setting limitations in the face of governments. The EU refers the fact that if they do not adapt to the technological or globalization changes they will be behind in the competition and could not recover from the crisis. Which also shows that there is another big external force governing the changes in the world that is the discourse of ‘globalization’. As the world economy is progressing, governments are becoming less relevant and state influence in markets is diminishing. For example, “ICTs facilitate the creation of a power global marketplace”. Therefore, the power is given to policies that reflect and build upon these discourses. The EU is focusing on building an information society because of the fact that “technology has facilitated the evolution of the market” (Goodwin & Spittle, 2002, p.239).

To summarize, the information society narrative in Europe 2020 Strategy is seeking to create specific realities that excludes others; whether it is intentionally or unintentionally is an issue not within the scope of this study. Throughout this narrative, education is related to a specific field, ICT and Technology; the policy language is transmitting a promise to those who pursue such an education, that they will not only have better job opportunities but will also render economic growth. Education here is manipulated as an economic and political tool to achieve change and transformation, which is associated with the idea of lifelong learning. As a result, two groups are formed; the productive individual/worker who can render economic growth and the ‘other’ (see chapter 6). The individual is under global and national pressure to follow up with the rapid changes taking place.
5.3.2. 1.2. Knowledge Transformation - ‘Knowledge-Based Economy’

Another narrative related to transformation that has been significant in the Europe 2020 Strategy is the knowledge transformation towards a “knowledge-based economy”. Knowledge economy is considered the economic counterpart of the ‘information society’. As noted above, information in ‘information society’ is used as an economic resource to create and distribute information so as to gain competitive advantage internationally. On the other hand, the knowledge economy gives recognition to the “place of knowledge and technology in modern OECD economies”. Knowledge in this case is exploited towards a certain focus that ensures productivity and economic growth (OECD., 1996). Since the Europe 2020 Strategy came as a continuation policy for the Lisbon strategy, a central statement represents the latter which focuses on building “a competitive and knowledge-based economy […] with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion (EC, 2004; Leney et al. 2004)” (Green, 2007, p.27) and it could be noticed that the Strategy as a whole corresponds to that through establishing an economy based on a certain knowledge that will render growth. For example, it focuses on ensuring

a sufficient supply of science, maths and engineering graduates and to focus school curricula on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

And Under the flagship “Youth on the Move”,

to explore ways of promoting entrepreneurship through mobility programmes for young professionals (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010, p.13).

Nothing is wrong with promoting such knowledge among youth and society as a whole. However, the concern is that throughout such a transformation, knowledge and language are becoming commodities. This has affected and transformed the “order of discourse” referred to
earlier. One aspect of this ordering is dominance and we can notice that the dominant way for achieving economic growth conveyed through the Europe 2020 Strategy, is through creating a knowledge-based economy. It also creates a different qualitative meaning for knowledge that individuals or workers have to possess, which must correspond to the criteria mentioned in the above examples. Although knowledge is power, the approach that the EU and the world as whole is taking towards categorizing this knowledge is the problem. This approach attributes individual’s knowledge to their level of productivity in society. The language in the policy represents this dominant order of discourse which gives authority and hegemony to a certain industry to bloom, or advantage to those who manage to excel in entrepreneurship, math, science etc. In that sense, Fairclough (2001) sees that the emergence of a “knowledge-based economy means an economy is also ‘discourse-based’ in the sense that new knowledges are produced” (p. 231), at the same time other fields of knowledge are being disregarded.

Furthermore, the Europe 2020 Strategy intends,

To reform the research and innovation funds and increase support in the field of ICTs so as to reinforce Europe’s technology strength in key strategic fields and create the conditions for high growth SMEs to lead emerging markets and to stimulate ICT innovation across all business sectors.

Sustainable growth means building a resource efficient, sustainable and competitive economy, exploiting Europe's leadership in the race to develop new processes and technologies, including green technologies, accelerating the roll out of smart grids using ICTs, exploiting EU-scale networks, and reinforcing the competitive advantages of our businesses, particularly in manufacturing and within our SMEs, as well through assisting consumers to value resource efficiency.

(Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010, p.14)
The language conveyed throughout these examples also demonstrates how knowledge is used as a commodity and directed towards maintaining competitiveness in the global market. They show how ‘new knowledges’ are produced as they correspond with the needs of globalization; for instance, the focal point is towards innovation in the field of ICT. These examples, as well as the policy discourse as a whole, are selected and categorized within certain regulations in order to demonstrate control within a favoured field. Throughout conveying such a language, individuals’ life, education, job opportunities etc. are governed and defined by these regulations. The Strategy classifies ‘growth’ within specific domains that will also achieve a preferred social change.

Moreover, the EU, having the power, has transferred the knowledge production from the member states control and it is now managed on an EU level (Moutsios, 2007, p.16). By doing so, it creates inequality and privileges leading to hierarchies and power differences with social groups. Accordingly, Fairclough (2005) elaborates on one aspect of transformation which is ‘re-scaling’. He refers to Jessop (2002) who shows that by creating a knowledge society and moving control away from the member states, there is a form of re-organization of relations in which new scales emerge (p.17). Globalization in relation to Europe 2020 Strategy plays a pivotal role in transformation, where it re-scales the relations between local and global, as a result, different forms of capitalism are created. What Fairclough means here (Jessop 2002 and others), is that “the market is only one regulatory mechanism within contemporary forms of capitalism, which combines in various ways with other, hierarchies (states) and networks” (Fairclough, 2005). In the context of Europe 2020 Strategy, we could find that the EU is disseminating specific discourses that represent its power. Having control has created hierarchies and class differences within the member states and certain groups, each according to their own economic growth and the knowledge of each individual, as there are “unequal power relations with regard to their contribution to the function and main purposes of the network” (Moutsios, 2007, p.17).
The policy also plays an important role in promoting specific elements for social change. As a text, it does so by drawing from different genres. Focusing on building an information society through a knowledge-based economy emphasizes specific genres that govern ways of acting. The EU, through policy, manages people’s perception, which Fairclough (2001) explains is shaping the way people see these discourses, as combining different genres and discourses have an impact on the messages the EU conveys. The message conveyed shows some level of “conditional formulation of the possibilities opened up” (Fairclough, 2005), where the policy is trying to set conditions for growth through ICTs and a knowledge-based economy. It asserts that “a greater capacity for research and development as well as innovation across all sectors of the economy…will improve competitiveness and foster job creation” (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010, p.11). It sets a condition that in order to succeed, and enhance the socio-economic situation, ‘you’ as member states need to commit to the policy and act now accordingly. It is not only visible through this sentence, the conditional formulation could be seen and sensed through the language of the policy. For example, in many sections, the strategy states “if we act together, we are significantly more effective” (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010, pp. 8-9). The acting part has to focus on achieving the objective of the policy.

The narrative of a knowledge-based economy in the Europe 2020 Strategy as whole is promoted under the claim that it is part of the lifelong learning process, in which it is considered to be a key to success with regard to economic competitiveness (see also European Commission, 2009). It could be realized that the form of lifelong learning in the EU context is taking a specific form which corresponds to the above discussed narratives. Thus the “knowledge-based economy appears to be emerging as a strategy for change, which can effectively be operationalized in real change” (Fairclough, 2005, p.14). Fairclough links his discussion regarding ‘knowledge-based economy’ and ‘information society’ to Jessop (2004) who views these discourses as having a “political-economic perspective rather than just economic” (p.13) where the economic situation in a society is regulated according to a “political order”. Keeping in mind that discourses are a representation, they have transformed society and throughout that process they have been “operationalized”. To operationalize is to put these discourses into
practice. These discourses are recontextualized within different social structures, for example education. By doing so, these discourses set a new way of interacting and establishing new identities (Fairclough, 2005 & 2013) and creating a different semiotic form for lifelong learning. At this point “information society” and “knowledge-based economy” are not only representations, as they have the “transformative effects on social reality” (Fairclough, 2005, p.15). That said, education through lifelong learning has become the solution for the increased demand for a knowledge-based economy which requires a specific set of knowledge and skills. Europe 2020 promotes that through ‘education, training and lifelong learning’ and other initiatives (see page 12 in the Strategy) where it believes that action under the ‘smart growth’ priority will;

Unleash Europe’s innovative capabilities, improving educational outcomes and the quality and outputs of education institutions, and exploiting the economic and societal benefits of a digital society.

(Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010, p.12)

Hence, lifelong learning is being ‘re-organized’ to cover the dominant discursive influence of the knowledge-based economy. Since, as referred to earlier, Europe 2020 is the wider strategy that provides the package for transformation of society, I also refer here to the memorandum on lifelong learning as it asserts that ICT skills are crucial to qualify the individual for the labour market. It indicates that;

Those who have not been able, for whatever reason, to acquire the relevant basic skills threshold must be offered continuing opportunities to do so, however often they may have failed to succeed or to take up what has been offered so far (European Commission, 2000, p.11).
This political discourse has re-scaled social relations and is creating hierarchies, as the learner identified in the memorandum as well as the Europe 2020 is considered to be distinct and secluded from the learner who has the knowledge needed for the information society. Nowadays, this knowledge-based economy is what is guiding Europe. Political decisions are considered “relevant as long as they are occupied with the increase of productivity, competitiveness and economic performance” (Moutsios, 2007, p.20). This consensus within Europe is critical in a sense that it does not allow for other alternatives to achieve economic growth, and has allowed no ground for “critique” (Moutsios, 2007), which hinders the idea of youth empowerment.

To summarize, knowledge transformation through creating what is called a lifelong learner is a great asset for the EU. This narrative disregards a critical approach that should allow for emancipation and empowerment according to individual needs rather than global concerns. The EU focuses on integrating member states into a unified educational programme to ensure dominance and control through creating a European identity and specific type of knowledge and learner. Therefore, social change is influenced by a neo-liberal discourse that creates and transmits knowledge rather than reproducing and valuing other neglected forms of knowledge and domains.

5.3.2.2. Adapting skills

The second major narrative that I could identify was the focus towards adapting skills. It complements the above mentioned narratives; adapting skills to contribute to the ‘information society’ and as part of the lifelong learning discourse. Therefore, we can assume that the adaptation here is focusing on a specific category of skills that will ensure the economic growth in the EU. It should contribute, in particular, to the third priority “inclusive growth – a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion”, and also to the overall objective (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010, p.17). It promotes the need for workers and individuals to not only have specific skills but to “continuously adapt these skills” as this is
what constitutes the “learning economy”. The implications that it has on employment opportunities is that it increases demand for highly-skilled workers (OECD, 1996, p.3&7).

In this part of the policy, we can notice another “relation of equivalence” (Fairclough, 2003) especially between “empowering people” and “higher levels of employment”. The “force of utterances” (Fairclough, 1992) could be noticed as promises that the EU will empower people through;

high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty and modernizing labour market, training and social protection systems so as to help people anticipate and manage change, and build a cohesive society (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010, p.17).

Stating that “Europe must act” within the benchmarks set (Europe 2020 Strategy, p.17) shows an authoritative sense, and it is important for people to adapt their skills as a ‘condition’ for achieving better employment and a cohesive society. It could be noticed that the EU’s aim is made clearer by “modernizing employment education and training policies…” and “enable people to acquire new skills to adapt to new conditions” (p.18). To adapt skills creates a dominant class of skills and knowledge classified within the “knowledge-based economy” style that is dominating in the lifelong learning and education discourse. Adding to that, the individual has to put in personal efforts in order to adapt to new skills that might not be within their interest. This requires a certain cognitive ability to reform yourself so “that the economy draws the appropriate human capital and he/she manages to survive or progress under the conditions of economic and technological restructuring” in order to become “employable” (Moutsios, 2007, p.21).

The EU through its discourse and focus on employability believes that economic restructuring requires “involuntary re-training and re-skilling” and as a result contributes to ones lifelong learning process (Moutsios, 2007, p.21). Such re-skilling is usually delivered through the non-
formal education programmes. Therefore, the EU as a supranational institution has a different direction and preferences than the individual. Using economic lexis, it shows that the focus is towards competitiveness and profitability, and it is expected that individuals should adjust to the orientation of the EU. As an institution it constructs the desired subject that it wants, and also “constructs the subject’s stance towards ‘outsiders’ ” (Fairclough, 1995, p.52). As a result, certain norms are projected within the policy discourse and the subjects are more likely to conform and adapt. The strategy here is not allowing space for youth to be critically engaged, while on the other hand it is promoting and representing the economic and neoliberal discourse. Following this approach, the EU ensures that the norms and ideologies that fit its vision are dominant and maintained. This entails to the creation of “common sense” in a society. According to Fairclough (2010) ‘common sense’ occurs when norms are perceived as “merely skills or techniques which must be mastered in order for the status of competent institutional subjects to be achieved. These are the origins of naturalization and opacity” (p.44). In this case ideologies are normalized and discourses (such as the ‘information society’ or ‘knowledge-based economy’ become normalized and might endanger education, both formal and nonformal, to being manipulated for the benefit of economic growth and achieving indicators as set in the strategy.

Unfortunately, these discourses occupy the subject in a way that the individual is not aware anymore of any contradictions with his/her own social or political beliefs (Fairclough 2010, p.44). The individual has to adapt to the changes taking place in the labour market, even if it is different from his interests and preliminary choices. We can notice that the EU here is promoting human capital development. Education has been placed at the core of the EU’s development plan, and within this agenda the focus is to “make the best use of human resources and achieve maximum investment efficiency…”, otherwise, the gap between its competitors will increase (European Commission, 2003, p.4). The term human capital refers “to knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are developed and valued primarily for their economically productive potential. It refers to the productive capacities of human beings as income-producing agents in an economy and the present value of past investment in the skills of people” (Baptiste, 2001,
In reference to the OECD, Baptiste (2001) indicates that “the development of contemporary economies depends crucially on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of their workers – in short on human capital” (p.188). Hence, the EU focuses on areas required by the ‘new economy’ which includes “…science, technology, ICT and entrepreneurial skills” as an investment and economic growth (Moutsios, 2007, p.20).

Thus, “skill [is] like knowledge…it is both socially constructed and a political term” (Tight, 2002, p.123), and we can notice in the Europe 2020 Strategy favouritism is shown towards certain skills and competencies. Thus, the problem with competence is that it is “concerned with what people can do rather than with what they know (UDACE, 1989, p.6)” (Tight, 2002p.129). E.g. in the Europe 2020 Strategy under the ‘Youth on the Move’ initiative and under ‘an agenda for new skills and jobs’ (pp.13 & 18), the EU links the lifelong learning to competence development as it believes it is central to enhancing the knowledge-based economy (Moutsios, 2007). Yet linking lifelong learning to words such as “useful” and “exchangeable knowledge”, gives a power to knowledge-based economy as a “useful” knowledge and disregarding and de-valuing other knowledge (p. 21). In that sense, lifelong learning that was once an element of “personal cultural growth”, is now like the other discourses under the grip of economic focus, where self-development is determined by being able to better fit into the labour market (Hebert, Y. & Abdi, A., 2013).

To summarize, this narrative disregards the limitations that youth might face in the process of adapting their skills. Creating an un-equal learning society that focuses on what people can provide and contribute to maintain the EU’s competitiveness, rather than the quality of knowledge that they possess. It therefore creates those who have the ‘useful’ skills vs. those who according to the political aims and complex global changes are perceived as having ‘non-useful’ skills. It denies the fact that knowledge and skills regardless of the domain are always an asset and each is essential in a specific context. Also, throughout this narrative the EU fosters ideological work through situating the responsibility of learning on the learner. Despite
that, it follows democratic processes and tries to involve youth in decision making process, but the problem is the effect of global and economic power that have shaped the democracy process in the EU.
Chapter 6: Discussion

One of the tenets for critical theory is understanding how knowledge and the organization of power in society generally, and in institutions can lead to subjugation or oppression of particular individuals. In the “information society” indigenous knowledge has been marginalized and institutions, especially education systems have to reflect governments interests, which produces inequality and could be called as “academic capitalism” (Muzzin, 2005). As referred in chapter three, Giddens (1982) regards social agents as “knowledgeable” and “capable”, thus at the same time are politically driven. We can therefore, draw from the analysis that the EU is building the knowledges it favours; and who is considered to be the most “knowledgeable” within the EU and the discourses it promotes? Another aspect of critical theory is that it questions democracy and whether in such a power dominance and hegemony, it is still a mere democracy or what Fairclough calls as “contemporary capitalism”. It could be seen that the EU's policy conveys what Beck (2005) calls “authoritarianism of efficiency” (Moutsios, 2007, p.19). In that sense, critical theory requires a re-assessment for democratic nations. Thus the scope of my research is not within this dimension, but it shows the potential for further investigation. On the other hand, the analysis was in line with Giddens view on emancipation and Foucault’s point of view regarding power (See chapter 3.2.), which proves a common concern among critical theorists around power and its role in affecting society either through class differences (which was clear through the knowledge difference) or hegemony. Thus, Foucault believes that power does not only reside within governments, but also within the individual. Especially in democratic societies, power is in everyone (which will be clearer in the next part 6.1.). This means that everyone has agency and the ability to resist (Foucault, 1980), whereas “domination limits self-direction and democratic community-building…emancipation enables it” (Kincheloe & Mc Laren, 2002, p.103). Therefore, a critical understanding and awareness increases the power and agency among youth and others in general to reject the domination of such discourses that are limiting people’s knowledge. As it looks into relations of domination, critical theory seeks to foresee “new possibilities” whereas it is connected with the normative
theory “about values and what ought to be”. However, as critical imagination is needed, it also means that “we must be conscious of the alternative futures that are potentially open to us (Giddens 1982, p.26)” (Morrow, 1994, p.11).

The previous chapter focused on analysing the major narratives in Europe 2020 Strategy, in order to understand how texts transmit specific meanings and representation that contribute to social change and affects the individual’s socio-economic life. It was therefore essential to examine the discourses that are governing the EU and are conveyed through the Strategy to be able to build the discussion below. This chapter will further illustrate the future challenges that are being established by the information society and knowledge-based economy. It will illustrate to what extent the analysed discourses have nurtured the concept of empowerment through nonformal education programmes and what representation do these discourses have, thus helping answer the research questions.

6.1. Categorization of knowledge and its implication on Youth empowerment

In this part, I build upon the findings from the analysis in chapter five and elaborate on the type of learners that are being created throughout the prominent discourses in Europe 2020 Strategy. I will further discuss how youth are empowered in the ‘information society’ in line with the empowerment theory, taking into consideration that the focus here is on empowerment through nonformal education.

Referring back to the analysed narratives and in particular Adapting Skills narrative (chapter 5.3.2.2) shows the influence of technologies in determining individuals skills, knowledge and well-being. Green (2007) argues that education output, as well as skills formation depend highly on the features of skills required by the national economies and their different sectors. The system is what determines the formation of skills and classifications. He presented three
models of knowledge-based economy; the “Anglo-Saxon” or “neo-liberal” model which represent the USA and other English speaking countries. He refers to Albert (1993), who contrasts this model with the “stake holder model” often referred to as “Rhine model capitalism” of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, where “companies are considered ‘communities’ and where social partnership mediates shareholder power” (p.27). Accordingly, the second model is the “core-European (social market” model, and third is the “Nordic (social democratic)” model. He further elaborates on each model and shows how each system differs in the type of knowledge-economy and information society it produces. As a result, three aspects and outcomes related to lifelong learning could be identified, keeping in mind that skills are expected to be transferred into productive outcomes. First, the systems that are capable of introducing a high calibre of skills into the labour market are more likely to “contribute to high overall labour productivity...with the assistance of capital investment and other production factors”. Secondly, within the different models, different levels of inequality are produced. Lifelong learning systems are affected by the unfair distribution of skills to the labour market. As a result, different “levels of income and status inequality amongst employees” will have an impact on the society as a whole, which is generated by the redistributive effects of the welfare systems on overall household incomes. Thirdly, the employment rates are impacted by these lifelong learning systems, which “affect both overall productivity and social cohesion”. He adds that lifelong learning systems that ensure adult participation, will advance the employment levels (Green, 2007, p.40).

After recognizing the power of language and discourses the EU as a whole conveys, and referring to the different models in Europe in addition to the findings earlier, it could be noticed that the EU is categorizing learners into diverse levels of lifelong learners. In particular under the adapting skills narrative (see 5.3.2.2.) the strategy classifies them as those who have the knowledge and skills to contribute to the labour market and those who do not, as I also referred to them earlier as the useful vs. non-useful skills. Therefore, unemployment is related to those who have ‘low-knowledge skills’ as classified by Brine (2006). And if they want to increase their employability chances, they must improve their knowledge-skills as defined by
the Strategy (math, science, entrepreneurship, ICT). On the other hand, as I mentioned in the analysis that the policy is trying to give promises throughout an authoritative sense, yet the Strategy lacks concrete evidence that would guarantee that by enhancing and adapting your skills to match the criteria of the knowledge-economy, you ‘as an individual’ will be able to find better job opportunities. In this situation, we can notice a crude binary between the two categories of learners. Throughout the ‘information society’ knowledge determines the individual’s value and worth. It gives value to those who have high knowledge skills that are able to continuously update themselves with the constant changes that are associated with technology, and discounts the value of other knowledge that are worth being considered within the overall objective of the EU policy.

I argue here that there is nothing wrong with keeping up to date with the new developments and information, as this develops the individual. The problem is that knowledge is currently associated with political and economic aims designed by the EU, whereby “knowledge is becoming the main source of wealth of nations, businesses and [specific] people, but it can also become the main source of inequalities among them” (Rodrigues, 2002, p.3). Rodrigues also argues that the challenges related to competitiveness will not make it possible to fully achieve the European social model and ensure social cohesion. The conditions created by globalization and technological change is the main reason (Rodrigues, 2002).

Globalization and the economic crisis that hit Europe have affected young people in terms of unemployment and the risk of social exclusion and poverty. Young people are usually ambitious and tend to enter the labour market to gain experience and start their practical life. Thus the lack of opportunities and the competitiveness in the market is creating indifferences among youth and dissatisfaction. As young people, they are capable of adapting to changes faster than others. The EU seeks to facilitate the process of change through its efforts towards improving education and training for youth. For example, through the ‘ET2020’ framework, where the renewed framework focuses “primarily on non-formal and informal learning as a complemen-
tary tool, in order to acquire the cross-cutting skills” (European Commission, 2012, p.13). In the next part I will argue in relation to the analysis and findings, whether nonformal education is considered an efficient empowering choice for youth, especially in the context of ‘knowledge-based economy’.

As discussed earlier (chapter 3.2.), the degree of empowerment is related to three points as mentioned by Alsop Ruth et al. (2005). After implementing the analysis, I would argue that the concept of empowerment in the Europe 2020 strategy is not allowing for better inclusion of youth and the unemployed. The first point was ‘existence of choice’. Youth might seem to have the opportunity to choose, but at the same time they have no other choice. What I am referring to is that they are limited to the choices provided through the political and economic changes. If they choose to adapt and be part of the ‘new economy’ requirements, they are more likely to find jobs as they are entitled to be the highly-skilled or can contribute to the knowledge-based economy. At the same time, since people are different, not all youth will end up making the same choice. This is one of the causes of inequalities and differences. In this sense, are they using the opportunity to choose? Which is the second point in assessing the degree of empowerment. Their use of choice takes place and depends on socio-economic and political landscapes, which produce “very different horizons for action” (Ball, Maguire, & Macrae, 2000, p.8), as this depends on the systems they belong to as described earlier in this chapter. It also varies according to their cognitive ability and the chances they have of putting into practice the choices they have made. We can conclude that nothing is certain, and whether they achieve the desired results for the choices they have made is relative. It also depends on what was their choice in the first place.

Consequently, social changes require more individuality and choice, which lays the responsibility on the individual. The conceptual shift from lifelong education to lifelong learning indicates that it is the person’s own responsibility to ensure that he/she adapts their skills according to the changes (Moutsios, 2007). Unsuccessful choices are a matter of individual responsi-
bility, rather than the system’s or governments’. Giddens (1991) argues that individuals are held accountable for their ability to survive in a time “where change is the only certainty”. Individuals have to constantly be reflexive to new risks and opportunities (as cited in Ball et al., 2000, p.2).

Empowerment and ‘skills adaptation’ through the rhetoric embedded in the EU’s policies are forming European youth identities into a certain dimension; “you are your skills” (Ball et al., 2000, p.7), your qualifications and competence is what defines you in the ‘information society’. On the other hand, not to work in many cases is to become excluded, a ‘non-person’ which creates a different class among society (p.8) (Ball et al., 2000, p.7-8). Therefore, raising critical awareness of the political language used helps the youth not to feel sorry for themselves or conceive their lack of employment as a sign of failure. Thus, empowerment that is supposed to be towards emancipation and the ability to make effective choices, is now focused towards maintaining the EU competitiveness level, and choices are to be effective if they match the political interests. One could say that “the empowerment of a person with knowledge and skills does not necessarily make for an educated person”. It lies more in the value that their knowledge and skills have on themselves and the society (Higgs, 1997, p.5).

The absence of a critical voice and approach allows the policy text to use empowerment through Europe 2020 Strategy in a politicized manner. Throughout the analysed discourses, the concept of nonformal education that was to challenge the status quo and formal systems, is now being shaped by political agenda and power. We can notice that empowerment in this politicized framework does not challenge hierarchies and inequalities, it rather becomes a tool for individuals who are capable of empowering themselves within this context created by the EU and as a result they might have more chances to compete with others in the knowledge-based economy. Therefore, the result of the analysis in chapter 5 that education is an economic tool, a commodity, and economic parameters are not only attributed to growth but also to knowledge and skills, is a political plot that allows the EU and society as whole to view the
problem of unemployment as an individual problem, since it is not only providing formal education but is also providing youth with a variety of nonformal education programmes that are supposed to make them lifelong learner and better survive within the complexity of the information society and knowledge-based economy. Accordingly, a critical approach would challenge the ideologies that as, Fairclough mentioned would become ‘nominalized’ through sustaining relations of power (Fairclough, 2010). In view of that, empowerment becomes a procedure that individuals have to redefine themselves and their skills to facilitate the EUs pursuit in achieving its objective. Here, individuals’ motivation, goals, skills etc. have to be directed towards achieving shared objectives set by a higher institution (Inglis, 1997).

6.2. The Future of NFE in the Knowledge Society

As mentioned earlier that the text represents the policy genre and also education genre, therefore nonformal education in Europe 2020 Strategy is an extension to the educational bureaucracies practiced by the formal system. Education in general is usually directed towards self-empowerment. In the ‘new times’, education is confronted by the demands for promoting economies and developing science and technology. Education in that sense disregards the individual’s pursuit towards self-empowerment (Higgs, 1997). Consequently, nonformal education that was established to ensure that disadvantaged people (in this case unemployed youth) would have the space to empower themselves through nonformal learning and away from the bureaucratic power; is now falling prey to political agendas. Looking back to the analysis where I identified that education is becoming a commodity and throughout that tool the EU would be able to achieve its objective towards building an information society and knowledge-based economy. This asserts that any educational programme should correspond to achieving this objective.
We can realize that the NFE is influenced by the whole discourse of building an information society, especially that within an EU context being a lifelong learner is connected to the knowledge-based economy. Rogers (2004) posits that the concept of NFE is currently mixed up with the discourse of lifelong learning. The EU has become interested in nonformal education “in order to co-opt and direct it to the state’s agenda” (Rogers, 2004), it has even turned out to be that “some nations restrict local groups in their sponsorship of nonformal education programs unless the programs serve to maintain or enhance the state’s goals (LaBelle & Ward 1994)” (A. Rogers, 2004, p.237). In reference to the Europe 2020 Strategy, the flagship initiative ‘Youth on the Move’ claims that the Commission will work “to promote the recognition of nonformal and informal learning” and also to “launch a Youth employment framework aimed at reducing youth unemployment rates…” (p. 13), it will do so to better attract youth into the knowledge-based economy, as learning outcomes should be geared towards labour market needs. Despite the fact that the EU has approved a new cooperation for the youth field (2010-2018), based on the communication ‘EU Youth Strategy: Investing and Empowering’ (European Commission, 2012). The focus is still the same as identified in chapter 5; being concerned on what youth could do rather than the quality and type of knowledge that they might have.

One of the new languages that is being associated to learning is that the learner is the consumer who is in need to learn new ‘skills’; in turn the educator or education institutions is the provider, and as a result the education itself becomes a commodity. Such a claim asserts what was found in the analysis as education is related to economic parameter. One could claim that this process comes in line with the idea that NFE should be flexible and responsive to the learners needs (Biesta, 2005, p.58) which in this situation are needs created according to EU interests. The narratives discussed in this research have promoted both the human capital theory and the knowledge-based economy in transforming societies. Conceiving learners as consumers, is seen a ‘market opportunity’ and NFE adopting such an approach is not founded on achieving “equality, mutuality and empowerment” (Ord, 2007, p.47).
Furthermore, there is a shift in nonformal education towards what could be called as “com-modification”. Fairclough (1992) sees ‘commodification’ as “social domains and institutions, whose concern is not producing commodities in the narrower economic sense of goods for sale, come nevertheless to be organized and conceptualized in terms of commodity production, distribution and consumption” (p.207), where practices of education are built on a market model. An education discourse that is ‘commodified’ is dominated by the vocabulary of ‘skills’ and ‘competence’, creating more opportunities to manipulate people through education. It is “colonized by the economy” (p. 209). More control is being exerted upon youth in particular and on the domains of skills and knowledge to be acquired. Habermas (1984) explains this power in terms of “colonization of the lifeworld by the systems of the state and the economy”. This means the lifeworld domain is colonized by systems. Fairclough in that case refers to the “technologization of discourse” as discourse in modern societies that “have taken on, and are taking on, the character of transcontextual techniques, which are seen as resources or toolkits that can be used to pursue a wide variety of strategies in many diverse contexts” (Fairclough, 1992, p.215). Accordingly, throughout education and empowerment, new ways of dominance are being generated and transmitted, since nonformal education could not be separated from political and economic terms. In line with Fairclough, comes Ball’s argument that education sustaining a human capital theory model disregards social processes that constitute an important element in learning. He believes that learning should be for ‘self-realization…and imagination’ (Ball et al., 2000, p.9) that should recognize other possibilities for education. In that sense a critical awareness and approach is needed to be able to challenge the limitations imposed on nonformal education. As Freire mentions, a critical attitude is needed to deal with the world as it leads to “questioning through which increasingly one begins to see reasons behind facts” (Freire, 1985, p.2).

Throughout this research and through analyzing the policy one could realize that the context referred to in chapter 2.1. has had a great influence in shaping nonformal education in the ‘new times’. We can attribute that to the political context of Europe towards building an information society and knowledge-based economy which has led to the ‘europeanization’ of
education (Rinne, Kallo, & Hokka, 2004). In this new context, NFE’s inherent flexibility is adapting to the global political changes, most significantly to the narratives identified earlier: the Transformation narrative and Adapting skills narrative. The result is as Edwards (2009) points out “naturalizing of certain practices as an emergent part of learning-in-context” (p.7). Naturalizing is the outcome of certain practices throughout power and hierarchies, and it allows certain contexts to emerge. This means that educational institutions, schools etc. view education programs as ‘trajectories’ rather than bodies of ‘knowledge’ in which learners are supposed to be situated with this order created by the new context (Edwards, 2009). Consequently, new identities emerge which create different knowledge, and both nonformal education and the learner need to confine themselves to such new identities, especially the European identity that the EU is trying to establish to maintain its control. Moreover, the learner in the ‘new times’ and in such a context needs to retain a level of motivation to continuously upgrade his skills, even if it does not match his interests. The ‘subject’ or the self could be seen as being “placed or positioned by different discourses and practices” (Morely & Chen, 1996, p.225), which shows the power of the discourses analysed in this research and the influences they have on the individual and society as a whole.

The Europe 2020 Strategy uses education to empower individuals in a certain way that will empower the economy. The language used in the policy that does not allow for arguments and alternatives or encourages a critical approach (see chapter 5.3.1), has had a big influence on nonformal education and empowerment. Combining economic growth with more job opportunities is usually the case, but to associate these with social issues such as social cohesion is a problem that causes more marginalization as it does not focus on equality or equity as much as it is focusing on what people can do to accomplish the objectives set by the Strategy. In this case, lifelong learning and education provided through nonformal education has been redefined in order to meet the needs of the economy, whereas “knowledge has been replaced by skills and learning” (Marshall 1996 as cited in Olssen (2008), p.40). As a result of the analysis in chapter 5, learning in the Strategy promotes for a new language of learning that is driven by the neoliberal discourse, where a market is created for people to collect knowledge and learn-
Lifelong learning becomes as Foucault described that comprises a new form of power and another method to maintain control through a collective education and learning process (Olssen, 2008), that comes in line with what was mentioned earlier regarding the dominance that EU is trying to maintain through a knowledge-based economy as conveyed through the Europe 2020 Strategy (see 5.3.2.1.2.)

Such an approach allows the EU throughout the authoritative sense of the strategy to persuade individuals to conform to the ‘order of discourse’ that it has established (see 5.3.2.1.). It has defined the type of knowledge and individuals that it perceives as important to achieve social change and as a getaway from the crisis. In this context I would like to mention that empowerment through nonformal education programmes is taking the form of empowering individuals to have the capability and capacity to act within such a system. On one hand, this could be beneficial if nonformal education focuses on improving the individuals self-confidence which will help them to confidently adapt to the complex changes brought up by the knowledge-based economy and the information society. Thus what is missing through nonformal education is enabling youth to be critical thinkers and to challenge the system through the power of knowledge. That is why I have critically analyzed the discourses in the policy to further understand what is embedded in such language. However, emancipation as mentioned earlier is supposed to resist power through the knowledge that an individual owns, in order to allow for better inclusion for all types of knowledge.
**Chapter 7: Conclusions**

In this study, critical discourse analysis was utilized to analyze the major discourses in Europe 2020 strategy and find out how it impacted nonformal education and empowerment. In the time where the EU is seeking to maintain its role as a global competitor, has influenced the development of the Europe 2020 strategy, and discourses such as the “information society” and “knowledge-based economy”. This focus has also cultivated the policy language and its discursive structure. This strategy was chosen for analysis because its language has informed the development of different policies, and the aim was to critically raise the attention of the language used as a mode of social transformation. The analysis has shown how these discourses have developed a specific type of ‘knowledge society’ and the implications on empowering youth through nonformal education. Instead of challenging them, nonformal education had to adapt to the political language created, leaving no or limited space for emancipation and individual empowerment.

Since the Lisbon strategy, the EU has been creating an imagined future and economy for Europe, while the EU’s earlier promise has not changed in the Europe 2020 Strategy: to become “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge economy in the world, capable of sustained economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (European Council, 2000). The imagined economy is one geared towards a knowledge based economy where “young people move across Europe for further education and prepare for new jobs and new activity areas, and companies increase their competitiveness by designing and producing knowledge intensive goods and services, more able to answer the customized needs in Europe and global markets” (Rodrigues, 2003 as cited in Robertson, 2008, p.92). This imaginary is based on global comparisons and influenced by globalization which is manifested in a neoliberal way (Fairclough, 2010), and Fairclough (2001) adds that one of the negative outcomes
of neoliberal globalization is its ability to eliminate democratic practices (p.252). Therefore, unless the EU abandons the thinking with a neo-liberal logic and starts to think in human terms or develop ideas based on human actual needs, then the situation will not change or improve (Torres & Rexhepi, 2011).

Referring to the first research question; what discourses are emphasized in the Europe 2020 Strategy and their relation to youth empowerment? One could conclude that through the major narratives identified; the transformation narrative has shown that the dimension of social transformation is directed towards two sub-narratives; ‘information society’ and ‘knowledge-based economy’. The adapting skills narrative clarified the burden laid on the learner to acquire certain skills that it claims increases his/her employability. Analysing these discourses that have been governing the way Europe acts, has shown to have implications on youth empowerment. It shows as Foucault claims that there is no truth without power and in such a ‘political economy’ society, truth is conveyed through institutional discourses where it resembles the certain ideologies and hegemony through power (Foucault, 1980). Empowerment in that sense is working with the system, where the EU has even utilized the nonformal education field to disseminate its power, and regulate and control people as well as their knowledge. The absence of critical thinking is that youth is not emancipated, as they do not challenge the situation and power structures, and are being empowered according to the EU needs, and promises that might not be fulfilled. This corresponds to Foucault’s theory of a gradual movement where empowerment is towards “softer, more subtle and pervasive forms of control” (Foucault as cited in Inglis, 1997, p.4).

Moreover, through this study one could notice how the discourses have nurtured the concept of empowerment and the activities to be delivered through nonformal education, and this provides answers to the second research question; how do the discourses seem to nurture and construct the concept of empowerment through nonformal education? The focus instead of emancipating and empowering youth according to their individual interests have turned towards an
economic driven focus. Nowadays, there has been a rapidly growing market for nonformal forms of learning (Biesta, 2005). Education, regardless of its field, is considered a value and our knowledge governs our behaviour and social life. Thus, in the ‘new times’ knowledge has been exploited and has been one of the significant cause for inequalities. The knowledge-based economy and lifelong learning systems produce different types of learners and skills, thus affecting “employment rates, productivity, income distribution and social cohesion, either directly or indirectly” (Green, 2007, p.40). As a result, the policy contributes to creating ‘classes’ among learners and produces the ‘others’ which comprise of workers with low skills or does not match the knowledge-based economy competences, the unemployed, immigrants, and the disabled. In this case, they are referred to as the ‘low-knowledge skilled’ learners (Brine, 2006). Taking into consideration that skills are identified by a top-down process and since the economic rhetoric is dominant, it makes sense that the EU needs to know how much is invested in NFE programmes and what is the benefit or the return in terms of money or investment in the labour market in the form of trained human resource rather than other intangible effects at individual level (Zarifis, 2010, p.209).

Most importantly, being critical does not denote negativity, as I am not implying that youth should be close-minded or intolerant to anything offered through nonformal education or through globalization. Thus, “a critically oriented discourse analysis can systemize awareness and critique ideology (which does not, of course, mean it is itself automatically immune from it)” (Fairclough, 2010, p.68). On the other hand, it deepens certain understandings that explain the current social situation and the realisation certain values. I do not claim that the competencies that youth could acquire through nonformal education are worthless, it only raises a concern that “the capacity of education to transform the competencies of individuals may not be as important as its capacity to transform their future prospects” (Bock, 1976, p.356). I therefore, hope for a more critical attitude among youth, where youth forums and organizations can be more critical in that sense and find solutions or alternatives that take into consideration people with different ambition in such a knowledge-based economy.
It is worth mentioning that the results presented throughout this study are suggestive and not conclusive, since the aim was to critically analyse the discourses and its effect on social change. I do not tend to make a generalization as a more detailed research and examination is needed to assess nonformal education programmes in the information society, not by looking at evaluations, as in most cases they also represent certain agendas, but asking questions that could further illustrate the level of empowerment achieved by youth, and whether these social changes driven by political power have influenced their identities and interests, especially bearing in mind that finding “a new identity is not always a positive experience” (Biesta, 2005, p.59). Also what could have been interesting, is to conduct a comparative study between different countries or in the developing nations to see the differences and similarities.

Furthermore, the EU has been working on creating validation systems to recognize the learning and competences acquired throughout nonformal education. Therefore, another suggestion for further research would be to analyse what implications does this validation system have on knowledge and social change, and whether it really has helped in increasing the chances for job opportunities among the youth. Taking into consideration that validation systems could possibly use a criteria that is used in formal education, and thus also risks in excluding the marginalized and those who do not meet the criteria. Therefore, it would be interesting to further investigate how to protect nonformal education from creating inequalities, as one of the reasons behind its inception was to help meet learning needs of the marginalized groups.
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