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## ***Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Interdependence in Education***

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**Abstract:** *Throughout its existence, every person is concurrently or sequentially under the impact of multiple educational influences that contribute to their formation. These influences, purposeful educational, triggers and produce changes in the internal structure of the human personality, whether having an intentional, systematic, organized character, or acting spontaneously, accidentally. Given the different degree of intentionality of education influences and the existence of different learning situations, education is found under three main forms combining and complementing each other: formal, non-formal education and informal education. While formal education has, however, the central role in the process of forming human, the school of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium cannot remain impassive to the messages coming on non-formal and informal channels, the more as their impact on human personality is growing. This research aims to highlight the characteristics of the three forms of education (through documentation in the literature), the relations between them and their contribution in shaping students' skills at the "George Bacovia" University in Bacau. Using as research method the interview - based survey, the research aims to determine the attitude of students towards non-formal education, the identification of skills and competences which it forms, and the influence it exerts on the young people.*

**Keywords:** *education, formal, informal, non-formal*

### **Introduction**

Approaching education, in a global sense, we may define it as a right of every human being since they are born. Every experience has, without any doubt, a formative effect on the development of the human being, in the way one thinks, feels and acts. The most important contribution resides in what and how we learn and improve ourselves through the educational processes, both in formal and informal settings.

Education means the assembly of measures applied in a systemic way in order to create and develop the individual from an intellectual, psychic, physic, affective, socio-professional point of view. It can be seen as complex process which contributes to the formation and the development of human personality and the assuming a system of cultural and professional values necessary to the individual development and their adapting to the active social life. Education has more sides: intellectual, moral, esthetical technological, physical, each of them aiming a certain part of the personality.

Cerghit (1988) identifies the following possible perspectives to understand education. He speaks of education as a process (a positive and long-term action to change the individual with some precise finality). He also mentions that education can be seen as an action to build the evolution of the individual towards an autonomous and responsible person. In his opinion education can be the social action based upon a social project having a personality model. Approaching education as an inter-human relation we must speak about the existence of two actors – the educator and the person to be educated.

The triple aspect of education as a process (humanization, socialization, culturing) is in the meaning of any educational events, no matter how understandable (education as an act of communication, as action of management, as a system of influence, as social action, social and human interrelation) and structured it is. The development of educational action supposes a permanent orientation towards the social aspect. In present days, the role of education becomes even greater, because it can offer new solutions to the global

matters of the society: the new education forms. The complexity of education lies in the fact that she is not only an objective study of pedagogy, it is studied by other sciences: philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, etc. Each of these approaches science education phenomenon proper angle, and associating certain traits and assigning a specific place in all the other social phenomena.

From a pedagogical perspective, we can state that education represents the working framework of actions and influences having as final point a direct or indirect formation, achieved in a pedagogical and social determined time and space. The educational activities generate interdependence between the contents which reflects human fundamental values and general forms adopted according to a context of institutional or non-institutional systems and processes, both organized and spontaneous.

### 1. Forms of Education

The analysis of the general forms of education (formal, non-formal, informal) supposes the valorisation of the classification criteria applicable at the level of this fundamental pedagogical category noticing the essential differences existing between the pedagogical circumstances based on organized actions or only onto spontaneous influences, developed within a framework conferring to the projection an institutional or non-institutional character. Thus, the comparative analysis of the formal, non-formal, informal education concepts have in view: the definition, type of influence, the involved factors, types of activities, the way for achieving them, effects, advantages and disadvantages (table no. 1) [1; 2; 3].

**Table no. 1 Criteria for the analysis of the forms of education**

<b>Analysis criteria</b>	<b>Formal education</b>	<b>Non-formal education</b>	<b>Informal education</b>
Definition	<b>Formal education</b> corresponds to a systematic, organized education model, structured and administered according to a given set of laws and norms, presenting a rather rigid curriculum as regards objectives, content and methodology. Formal education has a well-defined set of features.	<b>Non-formal education</b> characteristics are found when the adopted strategy does not require student attendance, decreasing the contacts between teacher and student and most activities take place outside the institution - as for instance, home reading and paperwork. Educative processes endowed with flexible curricula and methodology, capable of adapting to the needs and interests of students, for which time is not a pre-established factor but is contingent upon the student's work pace, certainly do not correspond to those comprised by formal education.	<b>Informal education</b> is quite diverse from formal education and, particularly, from non-formal education, although in certain cases it is capable of maintaining a close relationship with both. It does not correspond to an organized and systematic view of education; informal education does not necessarily include the objectives and subjects usually encompassed by the traditional curricula. Informal education for instance comprises the following activities: (a) - visits to museums or to scientific and other fairs and exhibits, etc.; (b) - listening to radio broadcasting or watching TV programmes on educational or scientific themes; (c) - reading texts on sciences, education, technology, etc. in journals and magazines; (d) - participating in scientific contests, etc.; (e) - attending lectures and conferences
Contents	Systematized knowledge	Special knowledge	Multidisciplinary disciplines information
Type of influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formative-educative;</li> <li>- systematized;</li> <li>- organized;</li> <li>- reported to goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formative-educative influences correlated with those from the extra school environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- spontaneous;</li> <li>- diffuse;</li> <li>- heterogeneous;</li> <li>- pedagogically un-organized;</li> <li>- pedagogically un-prepared;</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- decided on the spot;</li> <li>- incidental;</li> <li>- non-systematized;</li> <li>- unreported to goals of short duration.</li> </ul>
Involved factors	Realized in specialized institutions (schools of different types).	Realized outside the school institution	The most significant messages are those issued by media (newspapers, magazines, posters, CDs)
Categories of activities	- formal activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>outside class</i> (Olympics, thematic circles);</li> <li>- <i>outside school</i> (performances, trips, conferences – other activities);</li> <li>- <i>after getting a job</i> (lifelong learning activities )</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- relaxing activities;</li> <li>- everyday training situations.</li> </ul>
Way of achieving	direct	direct	individual, implicit
Effects	projected, positive	projected, positive	Non-projected, positive and negative
Advantages	Assure the introduction of the students within the framework of intellectual organized work.	Valorise possibilities, resources, and local researches.	Determines the sensibility at the contact with the surrounding environment, generating an interest towards knowledge
Disadvantages	predominance of information upon the qualitative aspects of the change	the danger of the lowering of the pedagogical, scientific and formative value; the absence of some evaluative systemic actions	creation of a conflict having educational, moral and esthetical finalities

## 2. Interdependence Formal-Non-Formal-Informal

An analysis of formal, non-formal and informal education features suggests the existence of a range for transition from formal to non-formal education, as well as from non-formal to the informal one.

Whereas in formal structures the process focuses on the professor/school system, in non-formal education the focus is placed on the student - objectives, programmes, methodologies are developed with basis on their needs and characteristics. All activities are aimed at the students, from global strategies, to concern with formulation of instructional materials. In going from formal to non-formal education, we are perforce displacing the “centre of gravity” from the process of the **professor/school system**, to the **student**.

The three forms of education are in an interdependent relationship, given that human personality is formed from all the influences received. Formal education must capitalize on all the positive feedback about non-formal and informal, and to eliminate negative influences when it becomes aware of them. In conclusion, it is necessary to ensure synergy between formal, non-formal and informal, to opening the school for non-formal and informal educational influences and finding optimal ways of articulation between them.

Teachers should find ways to valorise the different form of learning experiences of the pupils/students, but also their own experiences, issued from non-formal or informal; education, in order to make the didactic processes more dynamic and efficient.

The reasons for which it is necessary to integrate the three forms of education are as follows [1, 47]:

- the need to respond to complex situations;
- awareness of the new situations or needs of individuals and groups;

- improve training of educators;
- facilitating educational training;
- joint efforts of several subsystems covering education.

How to integrate the three forms of education include various activities:

- courses in teams of teachers of various specialties;
- participating in practical training of specialists;
- visits to institutions, companies and so on;
- activities in response to the interest manifested;
- inclusion in the assessment of critical reporting on extracurricular influences;
- interdisciplinary approach;
- educational partnership involving the community;
- the introduction of optional subjects present in the curriculum;
- use of experiences and good practices that have started non-formal education sector, such as the introduction of new approaches to the transmission of knowledge, creating learning participatory bodies, emphasizing the idea of self-regulating learning.

The three forms of education make their contribution for the development of young people's personality and may lead to a sustainable development of the society through a process of interdependence. Thus formal education can gain if it can integrate in a creative way the multiple influences of the non-formal and informal education. At the same time the accumulations registered in formal education can contribute to the development and efficiency of the other two sides: non-formal and informal.

### **3. Non-Formal Education at “George Bacovia” University in Bacau**

As a research method we used the inquiry based on interview, it ensuring flexibility, reflected in the possibility of obtaining specific answers to every question, higher response rate, the possibility of observing the non-verbal behaviour, questions sequence control. The interview was based on the following questions:

1. Which are the extracurricular activities you have participated (scientific circles, workshops, volunteering, trips / visits, thematic workshops etc.)?
2. Which is your attitude towards non-formal education?
3. How education helps non-formal professional development, what skills, abilities, does it form?
4. How do you think that young people can be influenced by non-formal education?
5. Do you consider that the skills acquired through non-formal activities should be recognized through means of diplomas and certificates?

The research aimed to identify the students' perception regarding the importance of non-formal education in training and developing their personality. The interview was applied on a sample of 65 students, chosen aleatory among the 615 undergraduate students. Among the respondents, 45 are females and 20 are males. Taking into account their specialization, 35 are from the Law specialization and 30 are from an economic specialization. As concerns the age they were as follows: 49 subjects aged between 20 and 24 years old, 12 subjects between 25 and 29 years old and 4 subjects between 30 and 34 years old.

The interviewed students have participated both to volunteer activities organized on the occasion of Easter or Christmas holidays in order to help the poor families in need living in the department of Bacau and actions organized on the occasion of “Opening University days”. Others were members of the “Mihai Eminescu” poetry circle taking part at events occasioned by the poet's commemoration or other esthetical or literary events, delivering concerts and poetic recitals. Some students took part at some European projects being involved in carrying out some tasks within the framework of the project, having us the possibility to use, valorise and check their informal skills and competences. There is also a category of students which took part at some national thematic Olympics.

Analysing the information resulting at the end of the interview we may state some of the identified aspects of the non-formal education such as:

- can be carried out at the level of the education institution outside the classes having an obligatory characteristics or inside cultural institutions, organizations (Olympics, scientific workshops, conferences, trips, shows);
- can take place outside the class framework, after getting a job – training sessions, lifelong learning module;
- the activities are focussed on the beneficiary and its needs;
- the actions have an optional characteristic;
- the activities contribute to the accumulation of special knowledge;
- the persons involved in carrying out the training have a more discreet role;
- can valorise the local potential and resources (education institution and local community involved together in common projects);
- can attract some marginal social categories offering them access to some sources of education attracting them in order to become integrated (illiteracy persons, disabled people, the poor category);
- is flexible, being based on methods which can be easier adapted according to the goals (taking into account the number of the people involved, their age etc);
- means, first of all, learning by experimenting and enables the valorisation of previous experiences;
- stimulates creativity;
- contributes to individual improvement;
- can lead to the recognition of the achieved competences (according to the forms of non-formal instruction, there are also situations when *diplomas* and *graduation certificates* can be awarded);
- enhance self-confidence;
- enlarge the knowledge horizon;
- improve communication skills;
- consolidate the involved subjects' background;
- make the subjects becoming aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

### Conclusions

The unprecedented development of modern society requires rapid adaptation to the new requirements of each individual and to acquire new knowledge to prove competence in the field of interest and to determine the rise in career. This involves switching from one set of knowledge and information skills (switching focus from "knowing" to "knowing how to do" and "to know to be"), from sending and storing information in skills training, abilities, skills, shift to learning through experience / practice.

As a result, education is not a limiting step of a certain age, but extends throughout an individual's life. It has several forms that define the external characteristics of certain types of actions or influences in teaching/learning processes and specific ways of structuring internal components against a dominant idea: rigor and regulatory requirement, if formal, flexibility and adaptability to the demands optional and optional for non-formal education, spontaneity, expansion and heterogeneity, where informal education.

In front of a group of students with an individual personality profile with different learning styles, with unique strengths and weaknesses, with varied behavioural repertoires covering complex needs, with a diverse range of expression of emotions, the teacher should construct creative educational contexts, efficient and tailored to individual training needs and future social requirements. Thus, although formal education contributes mainly to form the psycho-cultural profile of the human personality, giving the most important role to the educational actions, it is however seen that lately there is a more opening of the formal education towards non-formal and informal education.

The three forms of education interact each other, are closely interdependent - formal education providing favourable conditions for non-formal education and informal and non-formal education and the informal one offer, in turn, the necessary achievements for the proper conduct of the activities inside the school institution.

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