



ELSEVIER



CrossMark

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 209 (2015) 337 – 343

---

---

**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

---

---

International conference “Education, Reflection, Development”, ERD 2015, 3-4 July 2015,  
Cluj-Napoca, Romania

## The necessity of reconsidering the concept of non-formal education

Oana Moldovan<sup>a</sup>, Victor Bocoş-BinţiŃan<sup>b</sup> \*

*Babeş-Bolyai University, Educational Sciences Department, Al Papiu Ilarian Street, no.37, Tirgu-Mureş, Romania*  
*Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Environmental Science and Engineering, Fantanele Street no. 30, 400294, Romania*

---

### Abstract

Reaching the educational finalities that derive from the educational ideal of the Romanian school, stipulated into the National Education Law no. 1/2011, article 1, line (3), is conditioned by the ensuring of a functional complementarity between the three forms of education: formal, non-formal and informal.

In the present study we suggest both a re-consideration and a re-signification of the concept of non-formal education taking into consideration the current educational paradigms, the conceptual, curricular and methodological current evolutions and the legal context.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the Scientific Committee of ERD 2015

*Keywords:* educational finalities, non-formal education, formal education, instructive-educative activities.

---

### 1. Paper Rationale

The knowledge that we have our way of being and of behaving represents the result of all the educative influences that we encounter in our everyday life, in our society. The formal education must accept the existence of the informal and non-formal education and to use them in a useful way, for teaching, their influences with the purpose of achieving the function of ensuring a social active insertion of the human subject. Accomplishing the educational finalities which derive from the educational ideal of the Romanian school requires the coordination and the integration of the three forms of the education that support and empower each other. In order to achieve the

---

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +4-0726-740-014

E-mail address: [oanamoldovan84@yahoo.com](mailto:oanamoldovan84@yahoo.com)

correlation of the formal, non-formal and informal education efficiently, first of all a clear perspective of these is requested. Therefore, we want, in the present study, reconsideration and re-meaning of the non-formal education concept, that which, all over the years has been approached in different ways.

Here introduce the paper, and put a nomenclature if necessary, in a box with the same font size as the rest of the paper. The paragraphs continue from here and are only separated by headings, subheadings, images and formulae. The section headings are arranged by numbers, bold and 10 pt. Here follows further instructions for authors.

## **2. Paper theoretical foundation and related literature**

The non-formal education relies on the objectives and the contents of activities structured and organized in an institutionalized framework, with an optional character, complementary to school. This is made within organizations for youth, leagues and pupils/students' associations, clubs, artistic and sporting associations. Also the extra-curricular, para-scholastic activities (training activities, visits to specialized units, exhibits, scholastic contests, Olympics, competitions) and the peri-scholastic (visits to the museum, trips, camps, scientific classes and viewings of shows and movies), organized by the teachers, determine influences which go under the protection of non-formal education. All these types of actions have a flexible character and are varied, offering the students the chance to choose according to their interests and abilities.

The non-formal activities are coordinated by specialists, like teachers, technicians, instructors, but, unlike the role that they traditionally have in school, here they are also moderators.

Another difference to the formal education is the assessment way, which, in the non-formal environment is unsystematic and less organized, determining the precarious control of knowledge transmitted and there are reduced chances of continuous development of the strategies and of the means of forming (Ionescu, I., 2006), this weakness encouraging the judicious collaboration with the formal education.

All through the years, the concept of non-formal education has been defined in different ways, trying a clearer and more explicit shaping of this term.

- The non-formal education comprises the multitude of educative influences that are going on outside the classroom (extra-para-peri-scholastic activities) or through optional or facultative activities. The non-formal term designs a less formalized or un-formalized educational reality, but always with formative effects. (Cozma apud C. Cuciş, 2002)
- Etymologically, the term of non-formal education has its origins in the Latin word “nonformalis”, taken over with the meaning “except some specially/officially organized forms for a certain type of activity”. Non-formal is not a synonym with un-educative, but it designates a less formalized or un-formalized educational reality, but always with formative-educative effects. (Cristea, S., 2008)
- Conceptually, the non-formal education comprises the ensemble of activities and actions which unfold in an institutionalized environment, in an organized way, but also outside the school system, constituting itself as “a bridge between the accumulated knowledge within the classes and the information accumulated later on”. (Văideanu, G. apud Cristea, S., 2008)
- Non-formal education represents any educational activity organized outside the existent formal system – either it takes place separately or as an important element of a wider activity – which is meant to respond to the needs. (Costea, O., 2009)
- The non-formal education represents the educational activity organized outside the existent educational system, meant to respond to the educational needs of a certain group and that target in an organized manner the accomplishment of clear educational objectives. (Valchev, Pilavak and Cerna apud Ciurea, A., 2012)
- The non-formal education is defined as “any educational, intended and systematic activity, whose content is adapted to the needs of the individual and to special situations usually done outside the traditional school, with the purpose of maximizing the learning and the knowledge, and that of minimizing the problems with which it confronts in the formal system” (the stress of writing marks in the catalogue, the imposed discipline, doing homework, etc.) (J. Kleis apud H. Şerbănescu, 2010)
- The non-formal education represents the ensemble of organized actions in an intentional and systematic way, made in an institutionalized environment, but in institutions which do not have an explicit and systematic educational destination, so outside the school system. The non-formal educational activities are characterized by

variety, flexibility and they have an optional and facultative character. In this category fits the educational activities from museums and libraries, the self-instruction and self-education activities, the activities from the students' clubs, scientific range, etc. (D. Andronache, 2013, page 26)

- The non-formal education comprises the totality of the actions organized in a systematic way, but outside the formal system of education. (M. Iacob, 2014)

In the reconsidering and the re-signifying the concept of non-formal education we would like to start also from the legislative Romanian context of this form of education, that is the Law of National Education no. 1/2011 and the Ordinance no. 5567/7.10.2011 for approving the organization and functioning Regulation which offers the extra-curricular activity (Annex 1 and 2).

The National Law of Education no. 1/ 2011 stipulates the following, according to the non-formal education: Chapter VI, Section 1, Art.81:

- (1) Ante-pre-pupils, pre-pupils and the students from the pre-academic system have equal rights to education, through extra-curricular activities organized by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports.
- (2) The extra-curricular activities are done within the pre-academic schools, in clubs, in children's palaces, in school camps, in sporting, touristic and recreation grounds or in other units accredited for this purpose.
- (3) The organization, the accreditation, the control and the competences of the units which offer extra-curricular education are established by a regulation approved by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports.

From Ordinance no. 5567/7.10.2011 for the approval of the organization and functioning Regulation which offers extra-curricular activity (Annex 1) we select several articles and paragraphs which are useful in the definition of non-formal education:

Art. 2. – The non-formal education represents an integrant part of the national system of education, alongside the formal education.

Art. 3. – The non-formal education organizes and unfolds according to the educational ideal and to the principles stipulated in Law no.1/2011.

Art. 4. – The non-formal education has as a purpose the development and the diversification of the key components and the forming of the specific competences according to the area and the profile of the extra-curricular activity.

Art. 6. – The extra-curricular educative activity unfolds, outside the school classes, in spaces belonging to the school units, in the children's palaces and clubs, in sport, touristic and recreation grounds, and in other educational, cultural, scientific, sporting locations.

Ordinance no. 5567/7.10.2011 for the approval of the organizing and functioning Regulation of the units which offer the extra-curricular activity (Annex 2) requires the following, according to the non-formal activities:

Art.1. - (1) The extra-curricular educative activity organized and unfolded in other state or private units/institutions which offer non-formal education can be: cultural, civic, artistic, technique, applicative, scientific, sporting, touristic, entrepreneurial and of volunteering.

(2) The extra-curricular educative activity organized and unfolded in other state or private units/institutions which offer non-formal education can be: educative projects and programs, contests, festivals, exhibits, campaigns, cultural exchanges of students, trips, festivities, expeditions, schools, thematic camps and caravans, debates, training sessions, symposiums, study visits, workshops, etc.

(3) The extra-curricular educative activity can unfold on sporting, entertainment and recreation grounds, camps, cultural educational, cultural, sporting and touristic locations with such a destination.

### 3. The author’s contribution on the existing theory and practice in the educational field

Starting with the definitions from the specialized literature, as well as the legal context, taking into consideration the actual educational paradigms, the conceptual, curricular and actual methodologies’ evolutions, we can define the non-formal education in the following way:

- The non-formal education comprises the totality of the activities and educational influences with an optional or facultative character, unfolded within and outside the teaching system, organized, systematic and deliberate, which respond to the consonant educational influences with those of formal education and which are connected to the learning needs of each individual or to a group of individuals who have common values and goals.

The para and peri-schooling activities are anchored in the teaching system, having at their basis the contents used by it, to which others are added, they start from the same educational finalities by extending them and sometimes they take place in teaching institutions. This type of activities is dedicated to all the students, but chosen, according to preferences, only by those who are interested.

The other category of activities, those unfolded outside the teaching system, are initialized by youth organizations, leagues and pupils/students associations, clubs, artistic and sporting associations having at their basis pre-established finalities, specific contents and a handling specific to each structure (institutions/organizations), provided in documents made specifically, these have flexibility, separated according to: age, sex, socio-professional categories, the participants’ interest, their aptitudes and inclinations. These activities are complementary to the formal activities.




We can also add the fact that the non-formal education is initialized by organizations and institutions specialized in educating different categories of children, young people and adults, and the types of activities that are done respond the interests, aptitudes and desires of the participants, being especially looked for, independently, by the beneficiaries. The activities are not initialized from the exterior of the student, as they are in the formal context, nor left to hazard, as they are in the informal education.

### 4. The author’s contribution to the topic

In order to have a clearer image of the differences between the forma, non-formal and informal education, we suggest the following criteria in the delimitation of the educational forms, which basically has the structure of a check-list:

Table 1. A discriminative analysis (a personal approach)

Criteria	Formal education	Non-formal education	Informal education
Mandatory – the degree of compulsoriness	High	Low	Very Low
The pre-established space ergonomics	High	Low	Very Low
The flexibility of interactions	Low	High	Very High
Organised frame	High	Low	Very Low
Rigour (not strictness)	High	Low	Very Low
Institutionalised	High	Low	Very Low
The dimension of the followed learning	High	Low	Very Low
The existence of the direct interaction educator-educated	High	Low	Very Low
Intentionality (objectives)	High	Low	Very Low
Monitoring	High	Low	Very Low
The evaluation of activities	High	Low	Very Low
The control of the influence over the educated	High	Low	Very Low

Ranking	
Specific contents	
Curriculum	

We can distinguish multiple criteria which are found at the forms of education, the formal and the non-formal. The only criteria that area apart are the degree of compulsoriness and the pre-established space ergonomics, that the formal education has, while the non-formal education hasn't; as well as the flexibility of the interactions that we find at the non-formal education while at the formal education we have an official communication.

The formal and non-formal education take place in an organised frame, following pre-established standards and rules within educative institutions/organisations; and the interactions between educated and educator are, most of the times, direct. These forms of education have at their basis educational finalities that allow the monitoring and evaluation, thus having control over the influence over the educated. We have a well-shaped curriculum, with specific methods and means and with contents used as vehicles in the achieving of educational finalities.

Regarding the informal education, the differences are more, this not being organised as a result of pre-established educational finalities, it takes place in unconventional spaces, it does not follow a hierarchy and it does not suggest evaluations with an educative purpose. The dimension of the learning is not followed by not making permanent monitoring which determine a control of the influences over the individual. The informal education is perceived as being a complex of educational influences generated by the family, the group of friends, the social and the cultural environment and the media. Although there are institutions, components of society which can determine the educational influences, we cannot state that they offer informal education, not having the mission to educate individuals. We can distinguish a curriculum, there being specific contents and methods even if the promoters of the informal education do not establish, in advance, educational objectives. There is also a flexibility of interactions which cannot be direct or mediated.

Also, in order to compare the three forms of education we suggest the following table, which is more analytic and more explicit:

Table 2. The characteristics of the three forms of education (Costea, O., 2009 and S. Cristea, 1998 )

	Formal education	Non-formal education	Informal education
The agents of the action	educator/teacher – student – parent	trainer/facilitator/coach - participant	family, group of friends, social and cultural environment, mass-media
Predominant areas of development	intellectual	physic, social and creative	social
The venue	In an institutionalised setting (schools and universities), through the educational system	In an institutionalised setting, but situated also outside the school	Outside an institutionalised setting, from the pedagogical point of view, on the street, within the group of friends, in the family
The accent falls on	The acquisition of knowledge and performance	The development of aptitudes and abilities	The shaping of the values promoted by society
Who it addresses	Children and youngsters, regardless the sex and the socio-professional categories	To all categories of age, regardless of sex and the socio-professional categories	To all categories of age, regardless of sex and the socio-professional categories
What it centres on	The process of teaching-learning-evaluation	The process of learning	Informing
Curriculum	National curriculum: the core curriculum and the school curriculum	curriculum at choice, flexible and varied	curriculum generated by each influence separately
Content	Established by the	Provided in the especially	Varied, undifferentiated,

	authorities, standardised, structured, organised and phased on cycles, levels and years of study in the school documents; it has a delayed applicative character	elaborated documents and differentiated according to age, sex, aptitudes, socio-professional categories, it has an immediate applicative character.	unorganised, unstructured from a pedagogical point of view; determined exclusively at an individual level.
The context of learning	Institutionalised, isolated by the environment	Integrated in the environment, based on communication	Informal (family, group of friends, social environments)
Finalities	General, on a long-term, deducted from the educational ideal and comprised in the school documents	Specific, on a short-term, complementary to formal education, with emphasis on certain sides of the individual's personality	They are of other kind than the pedagogical one that targets a wider range.
The relation educator-educated	A pre-established hierarchy between teacher and students, the responsibility comes to the teaching staff who has a special training for this purpose, addressing a public with the status of pupil or student.	A partnership between the non-formal educators (facilitators, moderators, animators) and interested participants, selected from the wide public	The learning can be individual or shared within a group, the informal educators being the parents, the friends, the colleagues, the relatives or the persons trained especially for this (see social workers)
Methods and means of teaching-learning	It has a methodical and monetary frame invested with specific pedagogical functions; the lecture - main source of transmitting the information	The strategies are looked for with the purpose of maintaining the interest (participative techniques) and the material endowment tends to be the newest	It does not have a methodical and monetary context from a pedagogical point of view; the learning is practical and related to real needs.
Evaluation	external, standardised tests which end up with grades or marks, on which promotion is ensured	Is less obvious; <i>self-evaluation</i> , <i>reciprocal evaluation</i> , standardised tests, applications for community projects; sometimes diplomas and participation certificates are given	A social "evaluation"; <i>internal</i> , conversation, participative methods of evaluation and reflection about one's own learning
The schedule	imposed	flexible	undefined
Participation	Mandatory (the preparatory group – X <sup>th</sup> grade) and optional	voluntary	unintentional
The time variable	It occupies less than de 1/3 of the individual's life, being the most important premises of the personality's forming and developing	It occupies that amount of time that the individual takes for this.	It is a life-lasting process.

## 5. Conclusions

During our existence we are subjected to multiple educative influences, some organized and structured, others spontaneous and occasional, some initialized from the exterior of the one who educates, others determined by him. All these determine the co-existence and interdependency of the forms of education, which influence each other.

Taking into consideration the current educational paradigms, the conceptual, curricular and actual methodological evolutions, and of course, the legislative context, we have formulated a new definition of non-formal education. Also, we have made a discriminative analysis of the forms of education, followed by a comparative analysis of their characteristics.

## References

- Andronache, D., Bocoș, M., Chiș, V., (2013), *Introducere în pedagogie și Teoria și metodologia curriculumului – Ghid de învățare pentru elevii liceelor pedagogice*, Editura Eikon, Cluj-Napoca
- Bocoș, M., Stan, C., Manea, A., (2008), *Educație și instrucție în școala contemporană*, Editura Eikon, Cluj-Napoca
- Cristea, S. (2008), *Curriculum pedagogic I* ediția a II-a, revizuită, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București
- Cristea, S., (1998), *Dicționar de Pedagogie*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București
- Costea, O., Cerkez, M., Sarivan, L. (2009), *Educația nonformală și informală: realități și perspective în școala românească*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București
- Cozma, T., Moise, C. (1996), *Reconstrucție pedagogică*, Iași, Editura Ankarom
- Cucoș, C., (2002), *Pedagogie*, ediția a II-a, Editura Polirom, Iași
- Ionescu, M., Bocoș, M., (2009), *Tratat de didactică modernă*, Editura Paralela 45, București
- Schaub, H., Zenke, K.G., (2001), *Dicționar de Pedagogie*, Editura Polirom, Iași
- Internet sources:  
[www.edu.ro](http://www.edu.ro) – accessed at 14.02.2013  
[www.nonformalii.ro](http://www.nonformalii.ro) – accessed at 14.02.2013  
[www.infed.org](http://www.infed.org) – accessed at 02.04.2013  
[www.leap.ro](http://www.leap.ro) – accessed at 12.01.2015