

Learning in Different Educational Settings; Methodological Concerns

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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 fewer than three main forms combining and complementing each other: formal, non-formal education and informal education. This research aims to highlight the implementation of learning theories in these three forms of education systems.

Keywords: Formal, Non-Formal, Informal education, Learning Paradigms, Learning theories.

I. Introduction

Receiving education, in a global sense, can be defined 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, physis, 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 multiple facets: intellectual, moral, esthetical technological, physical, each of them aiming a certain part of the personality.

Learning is one of the most important activities in which humans engage. It is at the core of the educational process. Education is not possible without learning. So before entering deeper into this subject matter the following crucial terms have to be defined briefly first. Learning, Theories of learning, Paradigms of Learning.

Learning: “Learning is often defined as a relatively lasting change in behavior that is the result of experience”. Learning is the comprehensive process of development and unfolding of those skills that make it possible for humans to learn, develop performance potential, act, solve problems and shape relations. Educating young people in this sense is not solely the task of schools. Successful conduct of life and social integration likewise build on learning processes in families, day care centres, youth work and vocational training. Even if the school is accorded a central status, learning nonetheless extends far beyond school

Theories of Learning:

Learning theories are usually divided into several paradigms which represent different perspectives on the learning process. Theories within the same paradigm share the same basic point of view. Currently, the most important paradigm of learning are behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, connectivism, and humanism.

Behaviourism:

- Founder and proponents- John B .Watson in the early 20th century, Ivan Pavlov and others.
- Basic idea- Stimulus- Response. All behavior caused by external stimuli (Operant Conditioning). All behavior can be explained without the need to consider internal mental states or consciousness.
- Learner is viewed as- Passive, responding to environmental stimuli.
- Behavior may result in reinforcement (increased likelihood that behavior will occur in the future) ; or punishment.

Cognitivism:

One of the first criticisms of behaviouristic learning approach came from gestalt psychologist during the first decades of the 20th century and was related to behaviorist dependencies exclusively on overt behaviour. It was the gestalt views on learning that influenced new approaches extending beyond behaviorism and setting the basic principles of what is today known as cognitive learning theories. In the 1960s behaviorism was as a dominant learning paradigm slowly replaced by cognitivism.

Cognitive approach to learning, unlike behavioral,

- sees learning as the active acquisition of new knowledge and developing adequate mental constructions,
- sets the learner as the locus of control and not just as a passive participant in the process of learning,
- attempts to open the “black box” of his mind and explain complex cognitive processes and architecture,
- addresses learning with regard to insight, information processing, memory, perception,
- emphasizes the role of prior knowledge and experiences for learning outcomes, and
- sees learner as an organized information processor.

Humanism:

Humanism as an approach to education and learning paradigm was being developed since the 1960s as a contrast to cognitivism and behaviourism and the perception of a human being as an object in scientific inquiry. Humanism starts from the belief in inherent human goodness and contrasts Sigmund Freud’s and biological approaches, which claim human behaviour and cognition are determined by experience and prior events. Most important humanist authors that shaped this theory were Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow whose works were mostly orientated on understanding of personality.

Humanists emphasize:

- importance of responsibility for individuals actions, and present moment,
- worth of every individual, and
- Happiness through self-achievement as the ultimate living goal.

Humanist perspectives on learning suggest:

- learning is a natural desire, a mean of self-actualization and development of personal potentials
- importance of learning lies in the process, not outcome,
- learners should have more control over the learning process, which should be based on observing and exploring
- The teacher should be a role-model encouraging the learner and provide him with reasons and motivation for every new part of the learning process.

Constructivism:

Opposing to behaviourism and cognitivism, learning paradigms which begin from a point of view that world external to the learner is objective and real and the learner needs to map it's principles and facts, constructivism as a learning paradigm suggests that:

- learning is not a passive, but an active, socially enhanced process of knowledge construction,
- knowledge cannot (and need not) be transferred to the learner, but rather constructed by the learner,
- the learner constructs his own subjective interpretation and subjective meaning of the objective reality by cognizing subject,
- learning occurs through interaction of learner's prior knowledge (knowledge schemata), ideas and experience,
- learning occurs in certain social, cultural and linguistic settings.

Connectivism:

Connectivism is a new learning paradigm or a learning theory introduced in **2004** by George Siemens. This theory attempts to approach learning and knowledge in context of technological development during the last few decades, since the impact of technological achievements on learning and knowledge cannot be ignored. Siemens' connectivism incorporates ideas from:

Chaos theory - Recognizing complex patterns and deep sensitivity on small changes in initial conditions are important properties of learning and decision-making as well as key aspects of chaos theory.

Self-organization - This term usually refers to “the spontaneous formation of well organized structures, patterns, or behaviors, from random initial conditions.” Self-organization is according to Siemens a characteristic of knowledge on personal as well as on institutional or corporate level.

Networks - Network models were acquired because of their applicability and simplicity. Networks are sets of relations between elements which integrate those elements into a whole.

Connectivism is criticized for being more a pedagogical approach and a model rather than learning theory, since it doesn't really attempt to explain processes of how people learn. It also describes learning as actionable knowledge emphasizing only the result, not the process of learning.

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.

Learning in varied situations:-

1. Formal education
2. Non-Formal education
3. Informal education

Formal Education

Formal education 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. It is characterized by a contiguous education process named, as Saramona remarks, "presential education", which necessarily involves the teacher, the students and the institution. It corresponds to the education process normally adopted by our schools and universities. Formal education institutions are administratively, physically and curricularly organized and require from students a minimum classroom attendance. There is a program that teachers and students alike must observe, involving intermediate and final assessments in order to advance students to the next learning stage. It confers degrees and diplomas pursuant to a quite strict set of regulations. The methodology is basically expositive, scarcely relating to the desired behavioral objectives - as a matter of fact, it is but seldom that such targets are operationally established. Assessments are made on a general basis, for administrative purposes and are infrequently used to improve the education process. Their character is, for the most part, punitive, obeying a mono-directional methodology that fails to stimulate students and to provide for their active participation in the process, though in most cases, failures are ascribed to them. The setting-up of a formal education system does not consider the students' standards, values and attitudes that are relevant to the education system which, generally, is not tested or assessed at the level of student acceptance, as well as for efficacy and efficiency. The same methodology - poor, ineffective, scarcely creative - is adopted, whether the universe contains 10, 50 or 200 students. Other institutional resources than the expositive method are seldom employed and, when they are employed, the basic learning principles are disregarded. The subjects are presented in isolated blocks, whether as to content or methodology. Thus, for instance, in the case of Physics, for techno-administrative reasons the subject is divided into theory, laboratory and exercises and, their adequate order and correlation is disregarded. In general, the objectives aimed at the personal growth of students are negligence and, the basic principles of learning fail to be considered in the planning and the performance of education systems. It is not excessive to say that in the case of formal education, for the most part teachers pretend to teach; students pretend to learn; and, institutions pretend to be really catering to the interests of students and of the society. Thus, generally, formal education cannot disguise its aloofness from the real needs of the students and of the community.

Non-Formal Education

Defining non formal education is notoriously difficult. The definition offered by Coombs, Prosser and Ahmed (1973), which assigns NFE its place in the educational universe, has become a classic. Carron and Carr-Hill (1991:5-6) summarize the distinctions they offer as follows: ... formal education ... (is) the institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured education system, running from lower primary school to the upper reaches of the university, generally full time and sanctioned by the state; non-formal education ... (comprises) all educational activities organized outside the formal system and designed to serve identifiable clientele and educational objectives ... with all remaining educational activities being categorized as informal education ... (is) the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experience and exposure to the environment...

As seen, formal education has a well-defined set of features. Whenever one or more of these is absent, we may safely state that the educational process has acquired non-formal features. Therefore, if a given education system is not presential most of the time - non-contiguous communication - we may say that it has non-formal education features. Likewise, non-formal education 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, but fit into the so-called non-formal education. Proportionally to the number of formal education factors that are absent from a process, we find several grades of non-formal systems. These preliminary considerations emphasize the need clearly and objectively to establish the possible basic features of non-formal education. This, however, is not an easy task. As remarked by Ward and collaborators, "A comprehensive and standard definition of non-formal education is not yet available in common usage. Perhaps such a definition will not emerge until after much more study of the educational issues and potentialities inherent in the variety of experiences now called non-formal education has been done." As regards the distinction between both educational models, the same authors point out that "the implied and real distinctions between formal and non-formal education should be seen within a systematic and holistic view of education." In the same paper, they remark that education remains relatively undefined because the non-school view of education has merited little interest and responsibility from educational planners. Notwithstanding the above, even a preliminary analysis of the existing non-formal systems reveals the constant presence of two features: (a) - centralization of the process on the student, as to his previously identified needs and possibilities; and, (b) - the immediate usefulness of the education for the student's personal and professional growth. Non-formal education seems better to meet the individual needs of students. According to Ward, et al.(1974) , a systematic analysis of the main features of non-formal education, diversely from formal schooling, shows that participants are led to non-formal programmes because these offer the expertise that they hope to acquire and the necessary assistance for a better understanding of their own selves and of their world. It is but natural that if the education offered by schools is without value for a student's life and fails to prepare him to deal with daily problems, he will simply refuse to participate in programmes that may finally disappear or, at best, have to be reformulated to gain significance for students. As non-formal education is focused on the student, it perforce presents flexible features as regards the initially established and adopted procedures, objectives and contents. It is therefore quicker to react in face of the changes that may affect the needs of students and of the community. With basis on these preliminary considerations we may easily conclude that the non-formal label encompasses a wide variety of educational systems endowed with features that either lead them towards or away from the established formal systems. Thus, we might infer the existence of a certain degree of continuity linking the formal and the non-formal education. This view is not limited to a merely academic interest because, as will be seen below, it is an extremely objective and practical one in the search for alternative solutions to educational problems.

Features of Non-Formal Learning:

- **Learning by doing.** The focus is on concrete doing such as assuming social responsibility and not learning theory or communicating via the teaching staff. Non-formal education is characterized by a large repertory of activities and working forms.
- **Process-oriented learning.** In non-formal education the focus is on the process. No pre-set degree is pursued and there are no curricula. In that way, the individual path to learning, the acquisition and collection of experience may be equally relevant for the acquisition of skills. Since there is no direct "time constraint" and no "pressure to perform", the methods of non-formal education can be adapted to the learners and "several paths" or different learning programmes can be tried out.
- **Learning as partners.** Non-formal education relies on active methods of cooperation and on group-dynamic processes. "Educating yourself" is no lonely, isolated procedure. Self-education occurs in an interplay of children/young people as subjects and their social environment.
- **Openness.** The openness of non-formal education leads to the necessity of constantly adjusting and re-evaluating one's own set of ideas and leads generally to a plurality of practices. Since both the contents as well as the results are open (but not arbitrary) such openness paves the way for the participants in the learning process to actively share in fashioning it: Children and young people are active co-designers of their own development and learning processes.
- **Learner-centricity.** Imparting and appropriating the learning content are dependent on the circumstances. Methods and objectives are geared in non-formal education to the particular participants and as much as possible adapted to their needs and interests.
- **Participation.** Shared responsibility and self-determination are both objectives of work with children and young people as well as also being important pedagogical working methods.
- **Voluntary nature.** The participation of the child in what the out-of-school care service has to offer is not statutorily mandated, but the parents can accordingly freely decide to take advantage of what is offered or not do so. This voluntary nature plays an essential role in the youth field since participation here is crucially dependent on the decision of the young people themselves.

Informal Education

Informal education 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. It is aimed at students as much as at the public at large and imposes no obligations whatever their nature. There generally being no control over the performed activities, informal education does not of necessity regard the providing of degrees or diplomas; it merely supplements both formal and non-formal education. 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. There are many instances of situations/activities encompassed by informal education, from those that may take place in the students' homes - such as scientific or didactic games, manipulation of kits, experiments, reading sessions (biographies, scientific news, etc.) - to institutional activities - lectures in institutions, visiting museums, etc. It is easy to see that the higher the degree of systematization and organization involved in informal education activities, the nearer it will be to non-formal education. This is a relevant fact inasmuch as it suggests the possibility of transition from informal to non-formal. We must ponder that, considered by itself, we cannot generally assert whether an educative action belongs to the formal, to the non-formal or to the informal universe. For instance, a visit to a Science Museum may be an informal education instance if arising from a personal and spontaneous decision by a student, as it is not directly related to his scholastic activities. However, if such a visit is part of an established curriculum, requiring from students a written report and including assessments by the teacher, or tutor, then it will probably be an activity associated to either the formal or to the non-formal education.

Methodology:

In this study researcher analysed the interdependence of Formal , Non-Formal and Informal education. Researcher tried to clear the concept of learning paradigms and implication of learning theories in Formal , Non-Formal and Informal education. The theoretical premises of Formal, Non-Formal and Informal education was studied from the following sources---“NFE development and learning” by Rogers , Non-formal education: information and planning issues by Carron and Hill , Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Interdependence in Education by Melnic and Botez. You will find out the results in next pages in the form of tables.

Results Tables:

Back to the formal end of the continuum, more recent discussions of Non- Formal education have attempted to distinguish non formal from formal education by contrasting their characteristics For instance, Rogers (1996:3 3) offers the following comparison:

Table no 1: Differential table of methodological issues:

	Formal	Non-Formal
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly young • Universal • Compulsory • Selective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly adults • Voluntary • Those interest • Open
Time scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full time • Primary activity of participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part time • Secondary activity of participant
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate from life • In special institutions • In sole purpose building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated with life • In the community • In all kinds of settings
Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run by professionals • Excludes large parts of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory • Excludes nothing
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One kind of education for all • Set curriculum • compartmentalised • Subject-centred • Controlled by teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • education to meet learner defined needs open • curriculum integrated • problem-centred • controlled by learners
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-centred • Mainly written 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner-centred • Much is oral
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conformist • Set by teachers • Competitive • Individualist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes • Independence • Set by learners • Collaborative

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egalitarian
Validation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terminal at each stage • Validated by education • Profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing • Validated by learners
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term and general • Certified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term and specific • Certificate not necessarily the main purpose
Control	External/hierarchical	Self-governing/democratic
Delivery system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigidly structured, teacher-centered and resource intensive • Institution-based, isolated from environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment-based and embedded in the community • Flexible, learner-centered and resource efficient

Table no. 2 Criteria for the analysis of the forms of education Analysis criteria

Analysis criteria	Formal education	Non-formal education	Informal education
Definition	Formal Education refers to the hierarchically structured and chronologically organised education system extending from primary school to university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and full-time technical and vocational training institutions.	Non-Formal Education is any organised, systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-groups in the population, adults as well as children.	Informal Education refers to a lifelong process by means of which the individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge through day to day experience, educational influences and the resources of his or her environment, that is, from family and neighbours, from the market place, the library and the mass media.
Type of influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formative-educative; • systematized; • organized; • reported to goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formative-educative influences correlated with those from the extra school environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spontaneous; • diffuse; • heterogeneous; • pedagogically un-organized; • pedagogically un-prepared;
Contents	Input-centred and standardised Academic Clientele determined by entry requirements Systematized knowledge	Output-centred and individualised Practical Entry requirements determined by clientele Special knowledge	Multidisciplinary disciplines information
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)
Way of achieving	Direct	Direct	Individual, Implicit
Categories of activities	Formal activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outside class (Olympics, thematic circles); • outside school (performances, trips, conferences – other activities); ▪ after getting a job (lifelong learning activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Everyday training situations ▪ Relaxing activities
Effects	Projected, positive	Projected, positive	Non-projected, positive and negative
Learning theories involved	Classical conditioning theory,	Tolman Theory of learning.	Wolfgang Kohler theory of learning
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.

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. The need to respond to complex situations;
2. Awareness of the new situations or needs of individuals and groups;
3. Improve training of educators;
4. Facilitating educational training;
5. 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.

II. 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 behavioral 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 favorable 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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