

What is education?



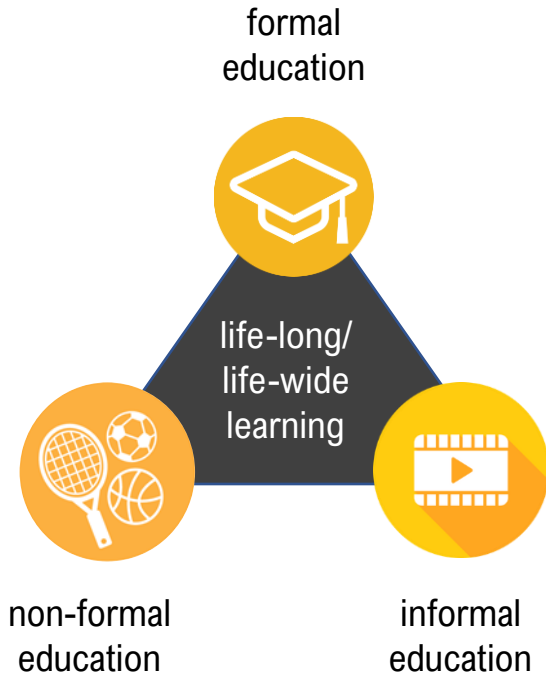
Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs, habits, and personal development [...]

Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators; however, learners can also educate themselves.

Education can take place in formal or informal settings, and any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational.

We typically distinguish between **formal**, **non-formal** and **informal** education

What is the difference between formal, non-formal and informal education?

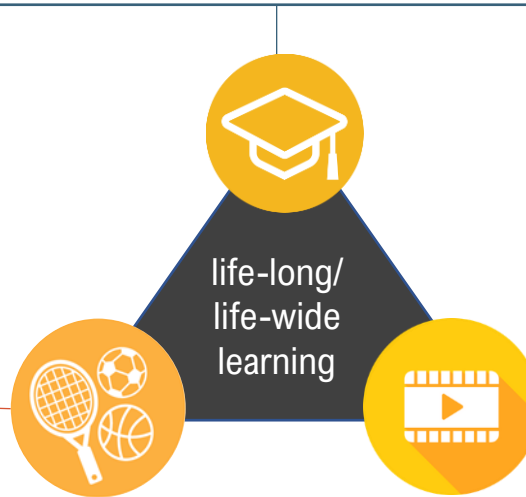


formal education	non-formal education	informal education
Refers to the public education system from primary school to university. Formal education is also often referred to as school-based education	Refers to any program of personal and social education for young people planned outside the formal curriculum that serves to improve specific skills and competencies.	Refers to lifelong learning processes in which people acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge through influences and sources from their own environment and daily experience.
Formal, non-formal and informal education are complementary and mutually reinforcing elements of a lifelong learning process. They can be defined both by the setting in which education takes place and by the attitudes and principles with which education is imparted.		

What is the difference between formal, non-formal and informal education?

Formal education refers to the public education system from primary school to university. It is planful, deliberate and systematic. Formal education is expected to provide the basis for an individual's whole future life. The focus is therefore rather long-term and general. As an important outcome learners obtain formal qualifications and certificates which requires that the learning content is at least partially standardised. The process is usually institution-based, rigidly structure, isolated from other settings and externally controlled.

Non-formal education refers to any program of personal and social education for young people planned outside the formal curriculum that serves to improve specific skills and competencies. Non-formal education is offered by a variety of providers, who usually have much more autonomy about their programmes. It also includes planful and structured learning, but the process can be more flexible, more learner centred, more practical, more democratic etc.



Informal education refers to lifelong learning processes in which people acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge through influences and sources from their own environment and daily experience. It is usually unplanned and unsystematic and often happens by chance. It includes peer and self-learning, is often experiential and involves trial and error elements.

Let's meet Maria (17) to see how the different types of education are inter-connected

Maria is a last year high-school student. She's doing quite well at school. Not so much in languages, but she is very talented in natural sciences.

After graduating next year, she'll move to the capital and enroll for a Bachelor programme in biology at the University.

Living alone in the big city, starting a new phase in life will sure be a major challenge for her...



In her free time, Maria plays tennis at a local sports club. She has been training several times a week since she was 8 years old.

Even though it was often very tough, she never gave up and is currently ranked within the top 10 juniors nationally.

She trains top-spins and long-lines, but also decision-making, finding creative solutions, treating others respectfully, not getting distracted, admitting mistakes...

French films are Maria's other great passion. Whenever possible, she watches with her friends. Usually online and of course never translated. As a bonus, her grades in French have also improved a lot.

Summary: Non-Formal Education is...

... an organised educational process that takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to certification. Participation is on a voluntary basis, and individuals can take an active role in the learning process. Non-formal education gives young people the opportunity to develop their values, skills and competences in a different way than in formal education. The [soft] skills developed in non-formal education

include a wide range of competences such as conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning-, organisation-, coordination- and practical problem-solving skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline and responsibility. In non-formal education, learning is understood as an ongoing process in which learning by doing and experiential learning are crucial. That this process is 'non-formal' does not mean that it is unstructured. Rather, the process of

non-formal learning is designed to create an environment in which the learner can become the architect of his or her own competence development."



Source: Nomikou, M. (Ed.): NFE BOOK. The impact of Non-Formal Education on young people and society. AEGEE Europe. P.9. Text slightly shortened and modified for better comprehensibility