

## 2010 SEAMEO - Australia Press Award



### An Education primer and tips to get you started

#### **Welcome!**

***The Contest Organizers are keen on your submitting the winning entry. Therefore, here is a little background information you may find helpful. You may use this information to help you formulate ideas for your article or to help you find a project or the source for an article. Or you may feel free not to use it at all. Also feel free to go above and beyond the information contained below.***

***Good luck and happy reading!***

#### ***Education***

Education, upon first glance, may appear to be simple, diverse and complex all at the same time. Because few people realize how exciting education can be, let us start with a quick look at what the term includes. You may be pleasantly surprised.

Education may generally be defined as the process of passing along information, knowledge, skills and culture from one person or from one generation to another. Education has a formative effect on the character (e.g., good citizenship), mind and physical skills (e.g., carpentry, football) of students and even teachers. Even the simple teaching position has a hierarchy: an educator, an instructor, a teacher, or tutor. And don't forget parents!

It is also clear that the young can often be valuable teachers of the old. An article on this topic would be welcomed.

Education includes the theory, the practice and the art of both learning and teaching (see pedagogy). The teachers, schools, universities and book publishers comprise an **education industry** that has to be administered. Thus, we also need a **Department** or **Ministry of Education** or a public or private **school board** to keep everything running smoothly.

Each teacher may teach many subjects (as in primary or high school) or they may teach only one or two subjects, as in university or graduate school.

#### ***Formal, non-formal and informal education***

Education includes **formal education**, **non-formal education** and **informal education**. Both students and teachers can find themselves enjoying the benefits of two or all forms of these at the same time. Take for example, a senior university law professor (formal) who enrolls in a Vietnamese cooking class (non-formal), while coaching a ballet class during after-school hours (informal). In these, she is at once a formal professor, a self-help student and a casual instructor all at the same time.

Additionally, there is no requirement that the student and teacher be in close proximity. She can teach law over the Internet (distance learning), learn cooking by watching TV (ITC, technology; see passive learning) and teach swimming using movie clips from YouTube or Apple's new iPhone4.

In general, **formal education** includes properly trained teachers who teach in a classroom setting where the teaching curriculum is fixed and the teacher is not allowed to stray very far from the teaching guidelines. Grades and exams are given, attendance is monitored, and the students and the teacher are always the same – at least for the term, semester, etc. Obvious examples of formal education are primary school, high school, college and graduate school. In formal education, you generally know what the qualifications of the teacher are in advance (masters, PhD, JD, MD, etc.) and the students are generally pre-qualified via grades, entrance exams, certificates or degrees. Thus, formal learning environments tend to be highly structured and the courses usually span several months (freshman year) or even years (medical degree).

**Non-formal education**, by contrast, includes all learning and teaching that take place outside primary, secondary and tertiary schools. Non-formal education normally does not take place in a standard classroom with a whiteboard and regimented seating positions. The instruction “courses” are very short, usually an hour or two, one day, a weekend; and you may never know what the skills of the teacher (or students) are in advance. There are few, if any, education standards that have to be met. Non-formal education is less structured.

It includes adult literacy classes (GED certificate), sports (mountain climbing) and hobbies (painting) and vocational (plumber, welder) and professional (paralegal, medical assistant, pilot) training, even lifelong learning (just keeping up your general knowledge skills, such as who's the new prime minister of England?).

Teachers and students can get the information and materials from wherever they can find it: the Internet, libraries, friends, clubs, freelance teachers and the workplace (typing or English improvement classes). This kind of learning also takes place quite often in war and conflict zones, for example, in Afghanistan or among the displaced Tamil Tigers during the recent Sri Lankan Civil War.

**Informal education**, on the other hand, includes **self-teaching** (see, autodidacticism), homeschooling, even unschooling and youth work and activities. In these situations, it is not necessary to have a standard classroom or whiteboard. Indeed, many people have taught themselves simply by checking out many books from a library. Indeed, almost everything parents teach their children can be classified as informal learning. Informal learning tends to be immediate and very relevant, i.e., knowledge you can use! It has been estimated that 75 percent of all our knowledge comes from informal learning, which has the least amount of structure.

Informal education is mostly self-centered. It is something the individual wants to do or learn to benefit herself or himself. Indeed, informal learning can often be unintentional (failure to save your document, results in you losing your work).

Moreover, the distinctions among formal, non-formal and informal education are often blurred. Scuba diving courses are sometimes taught both in a formal classroom with a whiteboard, in a swimming pool and finally in the open water, while the students learn through visuals, audio, computer exams and hands-on experience. There is another positive factor. Some students, who merely survive in a formal education environment, flourish in an informal or non-formal setting, and vice-versa.

### *How people learn*

Don't forget the many **ways people learn** new information, which are **visual**, **auditory** and **kinesthetic**. Some people learn better by seeing something being done by another (how to assemble a tent); others learn by simply listening (learning a hip hop song on the radio); and some people prefer the hands-on method of learning (skiing, playing football).

### *Technology in Education*

Technology plays a key role in the delivery of education today. It is difficult to discuss education in 2010 without some reference to ICT (information and communication technologies) that assist in knowledge

transfer. ICTs comprise a wide variety of tools and software that are used to manage, store and transfer data, communicate ideas, create new information and disseminate knowledge.

Even sign language uses high technology today. Take the situation where a verbally challenged hospital patient who is miles away is unable to communicate with a doctor. A visual of the patient can be uplinked to the smart phone and a person far away who can read sign language can explain to the doctor what the patient's medical condition is.

There are entire university courses in Japan that are taught ONLY by mobile phone. College classes elsewhere are taught only over the Internet and the classes never physically "meet". Many learning institutions combine distance learning, online education, virtual learning environments, simulators (flight, ship piloting), interactive whiteboard, Audience Response Systems (ARS) – where students can respond to the teacher or a quiz instantaneously, so the teacher has immediate feedback on whether students understand.

Education is accomplished across classrooms and across continents via intranet, Internet, broadcasting (radio, satellite, TV, podcasts, Twitter and SMS) and telephony. You may want to think about how technology affects or could affect the topic of your article, but only if you think it is a good idea.

You may wish to consider how education, teaching and learning affect these relationships: teacher-student, student-student, teacher-teacher, parent-teacher, teacher-school administrator, parent-school board, school-parent, student-future employer, school district-local businesses, or any combination of these.

Finally, the Contest Organizers compiled a list of some education topics that might help spark some original ideas. They are just suggestions. Feel free to use one, more or none. Or even better, use the list to help you think of something that's not on the list. It's all up to you!

Happy writing!

*Sample list of education topics for  
2010 SEAMEO-Australia Press Award Contest*

- Adult education
- AIDS prevention through education
- Alternative education
- Autodidacticism (self-education)
- Benefits and detriments of cram courses
- Preventing brain drain
- Classroom of the future
- Collaborative learning (same school, different countries)
- Cross-border school projects
- Curriculum design
- Distance education
- e-Learning
- Education reform
- Education technology
- Entrepreneurship education
- Experiential education
- Gifted education
- Home schooling
- Instructional technology (ICT)
- Innovations in language education
- Learning by teaching
- Learning communities
- Life skills
- Lifelong education
- Not-for-profit education
- Online learning community
- Pedagogy
- Philosophy of education
- Remedial education
- School of the Future
- Single-sex education
- Special education
- Synchronous learning
- Tutoring
- Teaching English as a foreign language
- Virtual education
- Vocational education
- Young teachers of the old