Problem setting. Actuality of theoretical study of non-formal education as a category, determined by the need for unambiguous interpretation in scientific methodology; harmonization of the definitions of "adult education", "continuing education", "life-long education", "non-formal education", "informal education", "non-auditing education", "public education", etc.

Recent research and publications analysis. There are different approaches to the concept of "informal education" in modern publications. In particular, non-formal education is considered as a form of educational process in andragogy (A. Goncharuk, N. Goruk, S. Zinchenko, N. Martynova, N. Sulaev, L. Timchuk); as a condition for the self-realization of life (N. Verkhoglyadova, V. Davydova, Y. Derkach, M. Leschenko).

Also, the given term is considered as a synonym for extracurricular or non-auditing work in the educational process (T. Kristopchuk, V. Stryzhalkovsk, I. Yakovlev); as an unstructured, unsystematic and uncorrected process of knowing the new, by combining individuals with interests (S. Zakrevskaya, G. Nesterenko, O. Tishkova).

Paper objective. Analysis of author's approaches to the definition of the scientific context of the concept of "informal education".

Paper main body. The term "informal education" became a scientific turn in the researches of Western scholars at the end of the twentieth century as a reaction to the current social changes in creating conditions for attracting particular categories of people in the process of social development. In our opinion, the process of creating and using this term took place in an evolutionary way - through
the gradual extension and deepening of the understanding of alternative forms of education, and not as an artificially developed category to refer to a particular notion.

Thanks to the evolution of public consciousness, Ukrainian linguistic terminology has gone a long way in its formation. Different languages contributed to its formation at different stages, it was created under the influence of various cultural, social and political conditions [12], which in turn led to the emergence of new branches of knowledge.

Informal education in public authorities in Ukraine is a systematic education with a sorbet for acquiring new skills and professional competencies that does not include the award of qualifications recognized by either the state or the levels of education or the established state standard.

Informal or education (self-education) is an informal, self-organized or spontaneous education that occurs during purposeful or non-targeted extracurricular activities related to the need to acquire new knowledge and skills in the process of professional and other activities. Motivation to acquire information education motivates a person to have an individual educational activity that accompanies everyday life of every person happening in the family, among friends, in the workplace, in public associations.

Thus, informal education in public authorities in Ukraine, having certain common characteristics with other processes of cognition, education and upbringing, is an excellent category of other methodological foundations and technologies for its implementation. That is, it is important to highlight sufficient features of non-formal education in order to be able to separate it from other forms of education.

The analysis of theoretical studies made it possible to distinguish between the obligatory and variational specific features of informal education.

Mandatory characteristics that determine the essence and content of non-formal education are based on methodological approaches to implementation, serve as the necessary features of separating non-formal education from other
forms of education. Variant characteristics of non-formal education depend on the goals, value orientations and orientation of participants in the process of informal education; requests of social institutions that organize it; material, time and human resources.

Negative characteristics are important levers of influence on the quality of non-formal education, as they can reduce its value in people's representations. The main reason for the emergence and spread of such risk factors in the non-formal education environment is the lack of legislative provision of its activities in the legal and regulatory framework of Ukraine [4] and the threat of non-compliance with the current legislation.

It should also be noted that the effectiveness of using different types of forms of non-formal education contributes to improving the quality of human potential as an intensive productive factor of economic and social development, through investment in knowledge and skills development, the development of intellectual abilities of a person and the possibility of their implementation.

**Conclusions of the research.** The analysis of the content and forms of non-formal education determines the need for unambiguous use of the term "informal education" for its further implementation in public authorities, identifying the types of needs for organizing a system of training for socially excluded groups or increasing the competitiveness of youth in conditions of constant transformations; the possibility of forming the social competencies of participants in the process of informal learning depending on their needs and interests, the need to expand access to education as a condition for self-realization in society, the importance of practical implementation of leading scientific and theoretical approaches to educational processes for humanization and democratization of Ukrainian society.