

Informal Education as a Source of Teacher Development

A rapidly changing learner population, education reforms, and the development of national standards are placing a number of new demands and requirements on language teachers, which make continuing professional development crucial. Modern education makes a distinction between formal in-service training and informal teacher professional development. Formal in-service training adapts too slowly to the new changes in society as it is organized "from top to bottom", all the courses being provided by employers and the state. Informal education, in its turn, is organized by teachers themselves and is identified through a bottom-up approach.

Informal professional activities, such as discussion, talks or presentations, advice and guidance, are carried out in a flexible way in informal situations. Other forms of informal knowledge transfer include a spontaneous meeting on the Internet or in real time, instant messaging, a scheduled Web-based meeting with colleagues and a phone call to someone who has information you need. Informal professional development allows teachers to focus on specific professional and personal needs, to feel internal responsibility for the result of the professional development, to be engaged in new professional activities and to adapt to the rapidly changing modern world. Informal learning keeps teachers vibrant, mentally active and interested in their own professional development and in the world around them.

References

1. Bjonavold J., Making Learning Visible. Identification, Assessment, and Recognition of Non-Formal Learning in Europe, Thessaloniki, CEDEFOP, 2000, p. 12.

2. Jeffs, T. and Smith, M. K. (1997, 2005, 2011). ‘What is informal education?’, the encyclopaedia of informal education. [http://infed.org/mobi/what-is-informal-education/].
3. Non-formal Education. In: Glossary of Adult Learning in Europe, ed. by Paolo Federighi. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education, 1999, p.23. [URL:http://www.eaea.org/index.php?k=15112](http://www.eaea.org/index.php?k=15112)].