

PARTICULARITIES OF INFORMAL EDUCATION AS A SUBJECT OF PEDAGOGY OF INFORMAL EDUCATION

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Abstract. The article presents the particularities of informal education as a subject of the new Pedagogy of Informal Education, created by the author in 2020 as a new self-contained branch of pedagogy. The principles and functions of informal education are presented; types of informal education; the characteristics of adults as subjects of informal education; the particularities of individual informal education. Fourteen terms have been identified that form the terminological environment of informal education.

Keywords: educational triad; formal education; non-formal education; informal education; Pedagogy of Informal Education; informal educators; Homo creabilis

1. Introduction

In 2020, after a serious rethinking of the own theoretical positions related to informal education for twelve years, as a natural result of the accumulated research experience, *Pedagogy of informal education* (PIE) as a new self-contained branch of pedagogy was born (Zhelyazkova-Teya 2022a).

The PIE not only sorted out the realities surrounding informal education, but also conceptualized it in a new, expanded and deep theoretical way. Informal education is not only a significant element of the “*Educational Triad*” (Zhelyazkova (Teya) 2010a) and “*Educational Pyramid*” (Zhelyazkova-Teya 2010b), but also an independent, complex, three-component category, which is a special subject of PIE.

The largest library in the world (British Library) stores 8934 library items under the keywords “informal education”. The oldest book to include informal education in its title is from 1946 (Brew 1946), but it is about club news and reports, which means that what informal really means is non-formal education.

“Principles and Practice of Informal Education: Learning Through Life” (2004) is an example of the use of the term “informal education” when referring to non-formal education. In the course of our research, we found that when all

three parts of the educational triad - formal, non-formal and informal education - are not in one literary source in English, very often formal education is compared with non-formal education, expressed by the term “informal education”.

Of the first 150 sources in the British Library, only one showed the simultaneous use of formal, non-formal and informal education, which shows that the author distinguishes between them (Eshach 2007).

Modern research on informal education in English is connected with a wide range of topics in the main spheres of life of a modern person:

- out-of-school education, scientific excursions, informal education in the city;
- learning in a digital environment, computer thinking, use of tablets and mobile phone interface for informal learning;
- social work, youth work and spirituality, human rights, family play education, active aging;
- mass media, public libraries, museums;
- education of doctors through the Internet, the study of genes and evolution, health promotion.

Griff Foley – Director of the Center for Public Education, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia – offers a contemporary perspective on informal education. Griff Foley (1999) uses case studies of socially active citizens from the USA, Australia, and Third World countries Brazil and Zimbabwe to show the importance of *non-educational contexts* and *informal circumstances* in which people learn. Professor Foley argues that the importance of *random adult learning* should not be overlooked.

An interesting combination of two disciplines - informal education and open education – is offered by Tony Jeffs and Jon Ord (Jeffs, Ord 2017). They offer innovative ways to live sustainably, reimagining *outdoor and adventure education* in wild nature, aquatic environment, mountain climbing. To do this, they use the term *informal outdoor education*.

The article “The Art of Getting Lost: Benjamin on Distraction and Informal Education of the City” shows the specifics of formal and informal education using the example of distractions. In formal education, distraction is counterproductive and efforts are made to nurture attention. Conversely, in informal education, distraction is creative in that it carries “a different kind of educational potential, a different type of educational environment”. The author cites Walter Benjamin, who argues that cities are “places for the cultivation of productive distraction in the form of open and alert attunement to new ways of experiencing”. They “become educational spaces that teach lessons in an abstract form of life that culminates in creativity” (Lewis, Kraehe 2019).

In order to avoid the frequent misleading translations in the English-language literature of the constituent parts of the educational triad, it is necessary to

introduce the general criteria and comprehensive definitions of its parts, which show the common and different between them.

Formal education: institutionalized, organized, systematized and limited in time and place education for the accumulation of knowledge, development of skills and the formation of competencies in a highly structured, programmed, planned and psycho-pedagogical process to achieve levels in the national qualifications framework of countries, which ends with a qualification document.

Non-formal education: institutionalized, organized, systematized and limited in time and place education for the additional accumulation of knowledge, development of skills and the formation of competencies in a structured, planned and teacher-guided process of supporting professional and personal development, which ends with a certificate of development of skills without qualification value.

Informal education: non-institutionalized, unorganized, unconstrained, unlimited, free, accessible, constant and widespread accumulation of knowledge, development of skills and the formation of competencies in the life path of people of different ages, supporting their personal self-development and self-creation (Zhelyazkova-Teya 2022a, p. 42).

These are expanded definitions of the ones used in the European context in the Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (CR 2012), as well as the proposed definitions in the Bulgarian regulatory framework from 2015 in three laws (Preschool and School Education Act, Vocational Education and Training Act, Employment Promotion Act), where the term 'informal learning' is used.

Lifelong learning is not at all a fashionable trend declared as such in the second half of the twentieth century. The whole history of mankind, presented through philosophical and pedagogical foundations on informal education, has shown that the process of life is impossible without constant training for a person as *Homo creabilis* (Zhelyazkova-Teya 2022b, pp. 387, 389, 390). Here we analyze informal education, the oldest form of education, precisely as a mechanism throughout life to provide learning as a continuous process “from cradle to grave” (Memorandum 2000, p. 7).

2. Methodology and methods of research

As a result of many years of research on informal education, research of the experience of other authors and conducted own composite empirical research, we came to the logical conclusion: *informal education is a complex category with an integral meaning*. The table presents the typology of integral components of informal education.

| Implicitly informal education | Procedurally informal education | Meaning-to-life informal education |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Accidentally Unintentionally,</i> | <i>Deliberately Intentionally</i> | <i>Essentially Substantially</i> |
| Incidentally Accidentally Unconsciously Unplanned Unintentionally Uncollected Untargeted Spontaneous Unadjustable | Expected Not by chance Consciously Planned Deliberately Collected Purposefully Do-it-yourself Adjustable | Realistically Actually Realized Systematically Considered Earned Expedient Meaningful Inevitably |

Such structuring of informal education is due to the theoretical need to demonstrate its complexity and disambiguation, which often makes it difficult for researchers to define it in the traditional way. In fact, informal education is manifested in its integrity and structural unity.

Firstly, this is its *accident: implicitly informal education* occurs precisely because it is an unconscious education that a person receives in the course of his daily existence.

Secondly, we consider *procedurally informal education* more broadly, as a conscious, thoughtful and *purposeful* work of an individual on himself, in which *informal educators* can also participate.

Thirdly, we consider the third type of informal education, which we call *meaning-to-life informal education*, as the existence of an individual in a general life context in which he is immersed, often outside of any organizational structures. Of leading importance in this type of informal education is its *expediency*.

Only one type of informal education is *unintentional*, namely *implicit informal education*. In certain circumstances, informal education is structured, for example, in search of hobbies, which can lead to high professionalism. Informal education itself is not associated with certification, but the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired with its help can be certified through the formal education system, the procedure for which is regulated in the Bulgarian and European regulations.

In revealing the subject of the research (Particularities of informal education as a subject of Pedagogy of informal education) the following philosophical, general scientific and specific scientific methods were used: analysis of bibliographic sources (scientific publications, reference books, dictionaries), theoretical analysis, interpretation, description, analysis and synthesis, classification, analogy, abstraction, ascent from the abstract to the concrete, heuristic methods for generating new ideas.

3. Results

The particularities of informal education as a subject of PIE are a logical continuation of its presentation as a theoretical construct at the beginning of 2022 in the magazine "Pedagogy". PIE has its object, subject, general scientific definition, categorical apparatus, prerequisites, purpose, tasks, principles, laws, approaches, methods, learning models, components of the educational process, sections and as transpedagogy is part of a large pedagogical family (Zhelyazkova-Teya 2022a, pp. 44 – 48).

Principles of informal education

- “Lifelong learning” and “Lifewide learning” (Memorandum 2000).
- The principles of anthropological everyday life, the development of educational needs, the context of learning, individualization of learning, reliance on the experience of the student, updating learning outcomes, variability of choice, joint activities (Okereshko 2016, tabl. 4).
- The principles of holism, anthropocentrism, subjectivity, situational learning, non-linearity of the educational process, nature conformity, proactivity, axiological (Okereshko 2016, p. 47).
- Principles of creativity and self-management of learning (Kutepova 2017, p. 110).
- The principle of self-creation of personality (Homo creabilis – Zhelyazkova-Teya 2022b, pp. 387, 389, 390).

Functions of informal education

- “Self-developing – improvement of a personal picture of the world, one's consciousness, memory, thinking, creative qualities.
- Extensive (cognitive – informational or educational).
- Methodological – overcoming professional narrowness.
- Compensatory – the elimination of “white spots” in their education.
- Self-identification, orientation, adaptive, communicative, therapeutic (including rejuvenation), psychological and psychotherapeutic, gerontological, rehabilitation, motivational-stimulating, axiological, co-creative” (Okereshko 2016, pp. 52 – 53).

Species of informal education

Informal education depending on the participants: Answers the question *Who?*

- informal education with the help of family members and relatives;
- informal education with the help of colleagues;
- informal education from friends;
- informal education from communication with people of different sex, age, cultural and religious affiliation;

- informal education from random people and fellow travelers;
- informal education with so-called informal educators - includes all of the above plus teachers, mentors, methodologists, curators, crammers, tutors, consultants, coach and personifier.

Informal education in accordance with the main life priorities: Answers the question ***What?***

Education, free time, daily activities, family, hobbies, work, self-development.

Informal education depending on the place: Answers the question ***Where?***

- informal education at home;
- informal education in small or large settlements;
- informal education in conditions of temporary residence (cottage, camping, camper, tent, hut, hotel, ship, yacht);
- informal education in nature;
- informal education in the workplace or from visiting other people's workplaces;
- informal education in museums and cultural institutions (cinema, theatre, opera, ballet, concert, circus, exhibitions and galleries, libraries);
- informal education from attending open lectures, seminars and public speaking, interest clubs, master classes and workshops;
- informal education at public events and meetings (civic education in action).
- “global informal educational environment (should be based not only on elements of pedagogy, but also on universal and spiritual culture)” (Pavlova 2013, p. 48);
- the person's being here.

Informal education in time: Answers the question ***When?***

- understanding of experience (past);
- real life (present);
- life planning (future).

All this happens here and now, which is typical for the personal informal education.

Informal education on training aids: Answers the question ***How?***

- informal education with books and other printed materials;
- digital informal education (computer, tablet, phone and other gadgets, networked);
- informal education through research and creative activities;
- informal education through radio, television and other media;
- informal education through charity and social work;
- informal education through holidays, parties, entertainment;
- informal education through tourism and adventure;
- informal education through horticulture and agricultural activities;
- informal learning from activities to maintain physical condition and a healthy lifestyle (nutrition, sports, dancing, fitness, meditation, health prevention);

- informal hobby education;
- informal education through the development of personality and its being.

Informal education depending on the results achieved: Answers the question *Why?*

- increasing the knowledge, skills and competencies of the personality;
- assimilation of values and norms;
- creation of innovative practices – a constant stream of personal innovations;
- choice of direction in life and comprehension of life experience;
- maintaining individual achievements;
- development of the soft skills;
- development of social skills;
- active citizenship;
- self-development;
- self-creation (master of oneself).

Particularities of an adult as a subject of informal education:

– *Psychological characteristics* – formed and fixed individual biopsychic properties and particularities of mental processes as psychological mechanisms of a person in adulthood.

– *Pedagogical characteristics* – the presence of social experience and a conscious orientation of the individual, which allow an adult to engage in auto-pedagogical activities with their own pedagogical style.

– *Social characteristics* – the presence of a certain social status associated with the family profile, profession, nature of the work performed, place on the career ladder, economic independence, social activity.

Particularities of individual informal education – new terms:

– **Informal personal transformation (IPT)** – question Who? Subject. Context of subjectivity.

– **Informal Lifestyle (IL)** – question What? What happens in life and what behavior people are aware of. Context of objectivity.

– **Informal Living Space (ILS)** – question Where? Place – life happens everywhere. Context of space.

– **Informal Life Time (ILT)** – question When? Time 24/7. Time context.

– **Informal Survival Mechanism (ISM)** – question How? Procedure, principles (of what), tools (with what) – how to provide for your life. Action context.

– **Informal meaning of existence (IME)** – question Why? Goals – why is anything happening at all and the personal role of each person in a changing world? Causality context. (Zhelyazkova-Teya 2020)

Terminological environment of informal education. These are the species of education with which informal education is thematically connected. In terms of volume, informal education is wider and more complex than any of them individually, because it has the character of a consolidating educational activity.

“E-learning” – learning is carried out by teaching at home using computers and courses provided on the Internet (Cambridge).

“Lifelong Education” – “the constant creative renewal, development and improvement of each person throughout life” (Jenciklopedija).

“Education for All” – an international project (World Conference 1990 in Jomtien – the basic learning needs of all children, youth, and adults) – “a global concept for the development of education, recognizing the educational activity of a person as a natural element of his way of life at any age” (Osnovy andragogiki).

“Lifelong learning” – “Lifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training; it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts” (Memorandum 2000, p. 3).

“Lifewide learning” – “The ‘lifewide’ dimension brings the complementarity of formal, non-formal and informal learning into sharper focus. It reminds us that useful and enjoyable learning can and does take place in the family, in leisure time, in community life and in daily worklife” (Memorandum 2000, p. 9).

“Permanent education” – “Romance-language version of the idea of education that accompanies a person throughout his life” (Osnovi andragogiky).

“Lifetime education” – “one of the names of lifelong education, containing the idea that learning activities are an integral part of the lifestyle of an adult at all stages of his age” (Osnovi andragogiky).

“Following education” – “the second stage of lifelong education, the development of acquired and the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, abilities, qualities, the deepening and strengthening of worldview, value orientations, the disclosure of all human abilities in changing socio-economic conditions” (Osnovi andragogiky).

“Recurrent education” – “renewed education. The term has two meanings: a) return to systematic learning activities after a more or less long break; b) a system of exercises designed for people who have a long break in their studies” (Osnovi andragogiky).

“Parental education” – “the enrichment of knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for the care and upbringing of children, the harmonization of family relations, the fulfillment of parental roles in the family and society” (Osnovi andragogiky).

“Self-actualization” (self-realization) – “the highest vital need of an individual, by which A. Maslow understands a person’s desire to identify his potentialities, to manifest his abilities to become whatever he wants, to achieve his goals, to manifest his universal and personal essence” (Osnovi andragogiky).

“Free (Open) learning” (English, open learning) is a “form of organizing the learning process based on the principle of freedom of choice of time, place, duration, cost, type and form, goals, organization, methods, sources and means,

sequence, content, assessment, training programs, consultants, mentors, teachers, educational institutions, level and documents of education” (Osnovi andragogiky).

“Social role education of adults” – “education that meets the needs of a person in the effective performance of social roles” (Osnovi andragogiky).

“Serendipity” (English serendipity) – instinctive (intuitive) insight. The American English Dictionary has three meanings: “1. The ability to make lucky discoveries by chance. 2. The fact or occurrence of such discoveries. 3. An example of making such a discovery” (AHD). The ability to let your mind float freely as a condition for effective informal education.

4. Conclusion

The results of the research work on informal education show that it has a complex and multifaceted essence, which makes it a complex subject of the Pedagogy of Informal Education (PIE). To understand PIE, one has to look at another, rather unusual way of pedagogy itself. PIE is an attempt to get out of the “classic costume” of pedagogy as a science and give the opportunity to constantly change clothes in different styles and fashion trends, depending on the specific “*pedagogical situation*”. The pedagogical situation in PIE is understood as every moment in the life of an informal student in which he is a self-taught (autodidact), self-study or he needs some kind of collaboration with another person.

Now let's look at this setting in classical pedagogy in a non-classical way. First of all, it did not oblige always and everywhere where informal education is carried out, to “conduct” a holistic pedagogical process. The pedagogical process can be partial or even spontaneous. In the Pedagogy of informal education, teaching is also carried out (life experience, advice, good practice) and hidden educational work is carried out (motivation, value information, life orientation). And this has happened since ancient times until today. In confirmation of the PIE's motto: “First in the past, modern today, leading tomorrow”.

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