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## INFORMAL EDUCATION – OPPORTUNITY FOR SUCCESSFUL CAREER DEVELOPMENT

**Abstract:** The knowledge in the 21st century is a significant link in the development of society. However, the question arises as to how much formal education manages to keep up with the changes that are taking place in society. Hence, the need to introduce an unconventional form of education is imposed, as an opportunity to overcome the gap that arises with the speed of change and the inertia of formal education.

Therefore, the aim of this work is to emphasize the role and importance of non-formal education in society, as an important tool for acquiring additional skills appropriate to the current changes in society.

As a starting point in the research for this article, conclusions and recommendations arising from the exchange of experiences with the business community were used. On the other hand, attention is paid to the relationship to knowledge, as one of the most important features of the 21st century. This means, having in mind the rapid technical and technological development, we can freely say that today, new educational challenges have been set for all those who want to remain competitive on the market and develop their careers. This emphasizes the need to adapt the process of education to the changes that are taking place in society.

Thus, given the nature and nature of formal education, and how much we work on its flexibility, we cannot always follow all the changes and new knowledge. In response to this phenomenon, we have the phenomenon of decentralization of the educational process and strengthening of informal and non-institutional forms of education. This means that non-formal education should be a carrier for reducing the gap between existing and necessary education.

Although non-formal education does not have directly defined rules for what it should look like, there must still be a framework in which it will be implemented. Therefore, due to the differentiation of educational content, it must be flexible and appropriate for all participants.

**Keywords:** Non-formal education, Education, Competencies, Career development

## **Introduction**

The ability to perceive, analyze, approach and solve the most complex tasks requires competencies acquired through education, which allows higher education to be the main driving force of quality changes in society. The theory presented in this way requires that the overall quality in higher education be improved, which will contribute to improving the competencies of students for creative professional work and active participation in a democratic society. All this will have a positive impact on society as a whole, encouraging socio-economic growth and development. Thus, the goals defined in our country should and must be in accordance with the goals defined by the EU.

Therefore, the educational process should be better adapted to the acquisition of the necessary competencies for students. In order to achieve this goal, essential changes are needed in the system of the higher education process, its organization, and the resources available to higher education institutions. Further development of quality assurance mechanisms is necessary to ensure system efficiency and optimal use of existing and new resources.

In this sense, it is necessary to encourage studies that are necessary for the education of personnel with occupations that are insufficiently represented in the existing system, and which are directly expected to increase employability and have a positive impact on the economy and society. In this context, the role of non-formal education as an option in the development and retraining of quality staff from different profiles should be highlighted.

## **Career Development Through Non Formal Education**

Since education is a dynamic process, which produces and provides individual knowledge and skills, which are significant and contribute to social growth and development, we can say that in modern society we distinguish 3 basic forms of education:

1. Formal education
2. Informal education, and
3. Non-formal education.

### **Formal Education**

Formal education is defined as an institutional form of education and the same implies a process that takes place within a clearly defined formal educational system, legally, with the end result, the acquisition of certain knowledge and skills. This term covers all forms of education, from primary to higher education, including secondary vocational schools and gymnasiums, whose founder is the state or a specific institution authorized by the state, and which fulfill certain regulations in the field of education, therefore formal education is often called "certified education"<sup>20</sup>.

The objectives of formal education or learning are clearly defined, they are periodically reviewed and lead to the acquisition of a diploma, which enables further education and/or admission to a particular job. This type of education is targeted and conscious, and some of its types are legally compulsory (primary and secondary education). In this case, lecturers must meet formal criteria, which are regulated by laws and other regulations in the field of education.

### **Informal Education**

Informal education implies various forms of acquiring knowledge and skills that include self-initiated or spontaneous forms of education, i.e. spontaneous forms of transfer of knowledge,

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<sup>20</sup> Mr. sc. Ermin Kuka, **KONCEPT NEFORMALNOG OBRAZOVANJA**, Sarajevo, Bosna i Hercegovina, 2011

attitudes, and skills. Informal education takes place in situations that are not usually perceived as learning situations. When a person experiences a new experience, sees, hears or does something new, and then thinks about the situation, then from such an experience he inadvertently gains new knowledge and has a learned experience.

Informal education can consist of: observing certain situations, testing, reading, using the media, practice, visiting professional fairs, exchanging experiences with other people, etc.

For these reasons, informal education is described as highly individual. It differs from non-formal because in most cases it does not represent conscious/intentional learning and is described as unsystematic learning in everyday life.

Informal education takes place in everyday situations, which are usually not perceived as learning situations. It develops from the experience that a person acquires, that is, from solving certain problems, and therefore it is not intentional, and only after thinking does the learning process itself takes place.

Such education is a form of individual learning and is related to the individual. Informal learning, from the student's point of view, is learning without a clear intention and takes place in everyday life and different contexts, in the family, at work, in free time, in the community. There are results, but these results are rarely recorded, have never been certified and are not directly visible to the student.

Official documents (diploma, certificate, certificate, etc.) are not awarded for the specified type of education.

### **Non-formal Education**

Non-formal education is a type of educational process that includes non-institutional educational activities that acquire certain knowledge and skills, and participation in such activities is voluntary.

Starting from the specifics of formal learning, in the opposite conclusion it could be concluded that informal is any education that takes place outside the formal, i.e. official school context and system.

However, there are some differences. Non-formal education is usually characterized as education independent of formal educational institutions. During non-formal education, the acquisition of knowledge and various skills happens very consciously, while achieving a specific learning goal. Therefore, non-formal education/learning can be said to take place in less formal institutions, establishments, organizations or groups.

The framework conditions, the structure and pace of learning, as well as the form of teaching, can vary significantly and are usually adapted to the needs of the target group. In this way, it is possible to establish clear, living and experiential contexts of education. Certificates (diplomas, certificates, certificates) are awarded independently of the formal education system.

*Non-formal education* offers a multitude of educational programs, which can be divided into two broad categories and these programs are intended for a wide variety of target groups:

1. Educational programs (for acquiring different knowledge and skills)
2. Programs related to education (learning attitudes and positive life values)

The target group in non-formal education has no age limit (of course, it must be within real possibilities, related to the program itself). For some people it may even be the only possible and only available education because, for various reasons, the door to formal, institutional education is closed to them. It can also be of great help to people who have acquired formal education, but it is not enough for them, so in that case we define it as "learning and empowering adults for work, life, social activities that are not directly subject to standardization and strict verification procedures".

On the other hand, the acquired formal education of a certain person can in some cases be of great practical use, but often formal education is completed after studies (undergraduate and post-graduate). And if a person follows the concept of continuous learning throughout his life, then, in addition to gaining practical and life experience, opportunities for informal education can be of great importance, even when a person is in his 30<sup>s</sup>, 40<sup>s</sup>, 50<sup>s</sup>. and later. Which means it's never too late to improve.

The objectives of formal education or learning are clearly defined, they are periodically reviewed and lead to the acquisition of a diploma, which enables further education and/or admission to a particular job. This type of education is targeted and conscious, and some of its types are legally compulsory (e.g. primary and secondary education). In this case, lecturers must meet formal criteria, which are regulated by laws and other regulations in the field of education.

## **How Important is Non formal Education for Career Development**

The need to pay more attention to non-formal education is conditioned by the accelerated development of science and technology in society, that is, as society develops, so does the need for additional knowledge. Precisely because of the differentiation of educational content, it must be flexible to suit all participants. What is typical of non-formal education is that there is voluntary participation of participants in these courses, seminars and the like, often regardless of age, experience and previous education.

Given the nature of formal education and the “rules of organization” of the learning process, it could not always keep up with the development of new knowledge. Therefore, in response to this phenomenon, non-formal education is being developed, which should provide an answer to the mentioned shortcomings. Thus, informal education serves to complement the formal one and give us the opportunity to access all those contents that are formally unavailable. In some cases, due to the lack of a sufficiently efficient model of flexible formal education, non-formal education is also the bearer of reducing the gap between the existing and required education, scientific disciplines and the wishes of young people. Non-formal education is carried out through activities such as courses, seminars, lectures, conferences, workshops, various types of training, as well as volunteering, which are carried out by Career Centers at the Universities.

On the other hand, non-formal education is intended for the most diverse population groups, from youth to adults, and is increasingly sought after and appreciated in the modern world and becomes a key factor for achieving success and competitive advantage in the labor market. Therefore, it is necessary to have a developed system of effective management and coordination of this type of activity in society. Everyone knows that without education there is no social progress. Such a conclusion comes from the fact that education is one of the basic pillars on which rests every community, society, and in a broader sense, this includes the state and the entire world.

It has become quite clear and obvious that non-formal education is an increasingly widespread and present form of learning and education, and that non-formal education has become a necessity of modern (business) life, work and living. Non-formal education expands cognitive possibilities, expands and builds on existing knowledge and skills acquired through formal education and acquire knowledge, abilities and skills not encountered during formal education. In this regard, non-formal education is implemented through the following forms:

- Seminars, trainings, courses, workshops;
- Summer camps and schools;
- Volunteerism
- Project work (teamwork)
- Conferences
- Lectures, etc.

Although it is difficult to make a final decision about it, it must be noted that, in addition to formal, non-formal education is of great importance. Thus, acquired formal education and employment do not necessarily go hand in hand, from which comes the importance of informal education, which lies precisely in the relationship between specific knowledge and jobs. The theoretical basis provided by faculties focused on scientific-research work and not on practice is in many cases not sufficient for working in dynamic industries. It is therefore often necessary to combine specific knowledge from professional programs with theoretical knowledge for university education.

## **What is a Winning Combination**

The best strategy for increasing the value of the labor market is a combination of formal and informal education. This means that informal education often ends with an internationally recognized certificate, which in certain cases can completely replace formal education. The most widely applied tool of further training through non-formal education is observed in professions related to information technology, such as: designer of software systems, programmer or system administrator. In addition to all this, for most careers that are mostly related to the IT sector, recommendations from working on projects under the guidance of a mentor, then “soft” skills and other tools from the informal education system play a very large role.

When thinking about education, whether it is formal or informal, one of the key factors must be taken into account, and that is the relationship between higher education and the business world, i.e. industry. This means that support in mastering transversal skills applicable to any job can be a stepping stone to a career.

The functioning of the system thus established would be in the interest of the society if the interested parties are trained with the real working conditions in the relevant branch of the industry. This would mean providing assignments in the form of real projects under the guidance of a mentor, business training as well as other skills. Through direct contact with the local industry, an attempt will be made to transform informal education into a sustainable career plan for each individual, and internationally recognized certificates will be an additional guarantee of success.

If we take into account that the world is developing at a high speed, and that there is a need for additional knowledge, it is necessary to offer an opportunity for training young people with a narrower specialization for a specific position in the business entity through specially created workshops, seminars, conferences etc. For this purpose, and with the intention of smooth development and support of current and future students, such activities should be conducted through Career Centers.

## **Who is Informal Education for?**

In the experience so far, it can be noted that formal and informal education are separate. This means that formal education ends with the completion of studies, followed by informal education, which is organized in various forms. However, practice shows that the best results are achieved when these two forms of education are realized in parallel as a form of complementing formal education. Therefore, attention should be paid to improving the knowledge of young people through equally theory-oriented with practical work and the involvement of students in the industry.

## **A Decision for Your Own Career**

Building one’s own career is guided by the personal affinities and habits of the individual. However, if we feel that we want to stay on top, then trends must be followed, and professional development during the career should not be neglected. Career advancement in developed countries is set in such a way that influence, experience, skills, readiness for teamwork and willingness to take responsibility play a major role.

Therefore, the best solution is to embrace the philosophy of lifelong learning and continue independently, through training to improve knowledge and skills and respond to the demands of the industry, which is constantly changing.

The choice will largely depend on our life rhythm, obligations, habits and ambitions. Whichever form of education we choose, we should pay attention to several key elements when choosing. Care should be taken in the choice of an educational institution, in order for it to be related to the industry that is developing, and in which we can count on our career advancement learning by working on real projects, equipped classrooms and usable experience. The choice of the appropriate educational institution. It will largely direct us towards satisfying our requirements and expected results as well as quickly finding a job after graduation.

## Conclusion

Today, globalization and hyper competition are common trends, both in the world and in our country, which together affect the daily changes in society. As a result of these changes, it is necessary to improve the existing knowledge and skills, which means that it is necessary for every person to follow the trends in social and economic development through the forms of informal education, to improve himself during his life, how would you answer to the challenges of change and would enable us to trace our path in career development.

Non-formal education, which was often underestimated in the past, is of great importance, not only for the entire educational system, but also for the economy. Namely, in this way, thematic workshops and trainings can be chosen precisely for the knowledge and skills needed to achieve business success, which is a great advantage over formal education, which is often too broad and unnecessarily extensive.

In accordance with the above, each person can specialize very narrowly in those skills that are most needed to perform a certain job, especially when it comes to various trades, as well as jobs in the hospitality and food professions.

In the non-formal education system, the process of knowledge transfer is interactive, two-way and based on experiential learning. Non-formal education complements formal education, and provides access to all those contents that may have been discussed during formal education.

Any learning that leads to personal development and progress, better coping in life, as well as a more proactive attitude in society, should be valued and respected. It is necessary to encourage people, both young and old, to take advantage of all opportunities to raise the level of their own learning and improvement, both in an educational context and outside it.

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