

Lessons from informal education: practices for improving social, moral and intellectual competences

Since the beginning of informal education programmes their main focus was on the development of features needed not only for a professional career but for socialization as well. Informal education through encouraging communication skills, harmonious development and cultural consciousness helped students to take a meaningful part in social life, improve in the professional field, and effectively contribute to positive changes in society.

According to research, up to 68% of the students participate in some kind of informal education. The programmes are executed by schools as well as many independent organizations and they provide quite a few examples of very successful teaching practices. The aim of this report is to identify different values and competences approached by successful informal educators, analyze their methods and discuss the applicability of these methods and practices in the common school setting.

By implementing standard democratic procedures and executing self-governing, Lithuanian School Student Union (LMS), Lithuanian School Student Parliament (LMP) and other self-governing and political youth organizations help to encourage democratic principles and values. Lithuanian catholic federation ATEITIS, via their Union of Schoolchildren, encourage religious practice and develop catholic values, which are further supplemented with patriotic orientations of different boy-scout organizations. The practices of these educators provide valuable insights for developing strategies of school-climate improvements.

More individualistic approach, focusing on expressing inner beliefs, values and experience, is suggested by the educators, which focus on creative work of students. Examples, including highly successful, theatre-based programmes of House of Arts and Education, Youth Center “Babilonas” and others, suggest the ideas on encouraging expression of experience in children. Also, by promoting teamwork and cooperation in creative process, they help enhance communication abilities and socialization skills. The methods suggested by these educators might be useful in developing strategies for everyday work in class.

In attempt to create encouraging, supportive class and school environment, to improve school climate and reduce aggression, to encourage the development of proper socialization skills, it is worth to consider highly successful practices of informal educators. The integration of these practices in everyday educational process might help improve school climate, social integration of children and bring the positive learning experience to class.