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INFORMAL ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED AS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SELECTED MICHIGAN HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS

Michigan State University PH.D. 1983

INFORMAL ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED AS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SELECTED MICHIGAN HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS

By

June Pierce Youatt

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ABSTRACT

INFORMAL ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED AS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SELECTED MICHIGAN HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS

By

June Pierce Youatt

The purpose of this study was to identify the types of informal experiences and activities which contribute to the professional development of selected Michigan home economics teachers and to determine how these experiences and activities influence them in their roles as classroom teachers. Informal activities are defined as those activities in which individuals voluntarily engage that foster learning and professional growth, but are not necessarily designed for that purpose. Selected professional characteristics of the teachers who found informal experiences to be of most value were also studied.

Data for this study were collected in two phases; first teachers in the sample met with the researcher for small group interviews. This initial meeting also served as an orientation to the written questionnaire that followed.

Data from the interviews and written questionnaires were content analyzed. Fourteen categories of informal activities and experiences were identified. The most frequently mentioned growth-producing experiences were those related to home and family. Interaction with resource

people, colleagues, and use of the popular media were categories also frequently cited.

Informal activites and experiences were found to have four areas of impact on the classroom teacher. Informal activities were beneficial in acquiring content knowledge and new teaching methods and materials. They were also credited with influencing the teacher's views of students and of self as teacher. Data indicate that teachers found most valuable those activities and experiences which influenced their view of self as teacher.

Differences were found in the types of informal activities and experiences engaged in by teachers with more than six and six-or-less years teaching experience. More experienced teachers reported valuing different outcomes from informal activities than less experienced teachers. There was also an indication that teachers from schools with fewer resources to support participation in formal professional development activities valued different outcomes from informal activities and experiences than teachers from schools with greater resources.

To

Marilyn Parkhurst, Ph.D. whose commitment to home economics lives on through those whose lives she touched.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to my committee members Charles Blackman, George Ferns, Richard Gardner, Joanne Keith and Mary Louise Holly for their kind assistance to me throughout this project. Each contributed in a very special way. Mary Louise Holly must be especially recognized for her generous contributions of time and ideas. Special appreciation is extended to Charles Blackman. His insight, guidance and patience were invaluable, and working with him was as pleasurable as it was rewarding.

Finally, I must affectionately acknowledge the assistance of my husband, Bill, the "wind beneath my wings."

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

For at least the last 135 years teachers have engaged in some form of inservice education. The earliest form, "teacher institutes," was designed for teachers who may have had little or no formal pre-service training. In the summers, teachers might attend special summer courses offered by the normal schools.[1] By the early twentieth century the university became the dominant force in inservice education.[2]

In the late 1930s inservice activities began to be initiated at the local level. These post-depression inservice programs grew out of a wave of curriculum development projects aimed at creating educational programs designed to better serve the youth of that day.[3]

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[1]Ralph W. Tyler, "In-Service Education of Teachers," in Improving In-Service Education, ed. Louis J. Rubin (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1975), pp. 5-15.

[2]Roy A. Edelfelt and Margo Johnson, "A History of the Professional Development of Teachers," in The 1981 Report on Educational Personnel Development, ed., Emily Feistritzer (Washington, D.C.: Feistritzer Publication, 1980), p. 6.

[3]Tyler, p. 11.

In time, state departments of education and teacher unions made their way into the inservice arena. And finally, the teachers themselves became involved in leading their own continuing development through the adoption and adaption of the English model, the teacher center.[4] An examination of the history of inservice education reveals several changes over time; changes related to the primary purpose of inservice education (remediation vs. growth), and changes in the forces and conditions which determined or influenced teacher participation. In spite of these changes, inservice education in one form or another has been viewed as the primary vehicle for bringing about improvement in the practicing teacher.

Although "from its earliest beginnings, inservice education has been a topic of considerable interest with professional educators,"[5] the wealth of recent publications dealing with inservice education suggests growing attention. Edelfelt reported that from January 1978 through December 1979 the number of inservice education entries in the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education increased nearly 50 percent.[6] The vast majority of current and earlier research

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[4]Edelfelt and Johnson, pp. 7.

[5]Marsha A. Ream, Inservice Education of Teachers (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, Research Summary 1966-71, 1966), p. 24.

[6]Roy A. Edelfelt, "Six Years of Progress in Inservice Education," Journal of Research and Development in Education (Vol. 14, No. 2, 1981), pp. 112-118.

on inservice education is "oriented toward specific programs, toward techniques and methods, with the results usually suggesting that programs and activities lack certain qualities or characteristics."[7] It appears that most of these studies really stop short of trying to understand the substance and nature of professional development.[8] In fact, the terms inservice education and professional development may be too readily equated.[9] Rubin notes that professional development is a complex phenomenon of which very little is known about the subtle interplay among the various factors involved.[10]

While formal inservice education programs may in fact contribute to the professional development of a teacher, they do not constitute professional development. Inservice education may be viewed as just one of the factors that may contribute to the professional growth of a teacher, but it should not be equated with professional growth. Professional development is an individual process.[11] Newton

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[7]Ben M. Harris, "The Evaluation of Inservice Education: Taking a Closer Look," The Developer (June 1982), p. 4.

[8]Herbert Hite and Kenneth Howey, Planning Inservice Teacher Education: Promising Alternatives (The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and the ERIC Education, May 1977), p. 6.

[9]Lawrence Ingvarson and Philip Greenway, "Portrayals of Teacher Development," U.S. Department of Education, National Insdtitute of Education, ERIC Reprint 200600, pp. 2-3.

[10]Louis Rubin (Preface), The Inservice Education of Teachers: Trends, Processes, and Perspectives, ed. Louis Rubin (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1978).

[11]Ingvarson and Greenway, p. 2.

describes professional development as the interactive effect of formal (like inservice activities) and informal experiences.[12] According to Newton, informal activities are those in which one engages that "foster learning and professional growth, but are not necessarily designed for that purpose."[13] These informal activities may be no more than the teachers day-to-day life experiences,[14] or they may be as complex as the learning projects investigated by Tough.[15] In any event, they represent a component of the professional development of teachers which has gone largely unexplored. As Rubin states, "it is essential that we enlarge our conception of the ways in which professional growth can occur."[16] This study will explore the informal activity as a contributing factor to the professional growth of inservice teachers.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify the types of informal experiences and activities which contribute to the professional development of selected Michigan home economics

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[12] Mark Newton. "Perspectives on Professional Development." Vocational Education, (Vol. 55, No. 6), pp. 30a-30f.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Rubin, p. 8.

[15] Allen Tough. The Adult's Learning Projects: A Fresh Approach to Theory and Practice in Adult Learning, (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1971).

[16] Rubin, p. 5.

teachers.

The primary objective which guides this study is to examine the types of experiences and activities apart from formal inservice events that teachers feel positively influence how and what they teach. The informal activities of interest may include experiences from nonformal educational offerings to unintentional learning derived from day-to-day living. The intent is to discover the range of experiences that have meaning to home economics teachers in their role as classroom teacher.

The second objective of the study is to discover selected professional characteristics of the teachers who find informal experiences to be of most value. The study will explore 1) if there is a significant relationship between the number of years of teaching experience and the perceived value and use of informal activities as professional development experiences; and 2) if a significant relationship exists between access to formal professional development activities and the perceived value of informal experiences.

A final objective is to determine if the teachers are aware of a purposeful or deliberate attempt to process the learning from the informal experiences they identified, and if the presence or absence of a conscious attempt makes a difference in the value of the experience. The experience itself may be insufficient to stimulate growth. To achieve growth, teachers may need to go beyond <u>having</u> the experience

to benefiting from it. This requires some time and effort to make sense of the experience, so that change can result from the experience. This study will explore whether or not teachers are concious of an effort to process information from experiences.

Research Questions

The questions that guide this research are as follows:

1. What types of informal activities do teachers identify as contributing to their professional development?

2. In what ways does learning from informal experiences specifically influence the teacher in her role as classroom teacher?

3. How valuable do the teachers identify each activity?

4. How do teachers process the information from informal activities?

5. Is there a relationship between the perceived value of the activity and whether or not a conscious attempt was made to process the information from the activity?

6. Are there differences in the types of activities ranked as valuable by teachers with more than six years of teaching experience and those with six or less?*

7. Do teachers from schools with fewer resources available to support participation in professional development activities value informal activities more than teachers from schools with greater resources?

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* Six years was chosen because of the State of Michigan continuing certification guidelines which require participation in a formal continuing education program in order to receive continuing secondary education teaching certification at the end of a six-year period. The State Department of Education requires completion of a minimum 18 semester hour program of coursework at an accredited teacher education institution.

Importance

The findings of this study provide contributions to what is known both about the professional development of teachers and adult learning. First, as noted, the majority of the studies related to inservice education have had as foci needs or problems. By contrast, this study contributes to what is known about (perceived) growth enhancing activities. Second, a review of the studies which have investigated inservice activities teachers regarded as beneficial have generally ignored all but formal activities. This research may lead to a broader understanding of ways in which professional growth does occur.

This study of informal professional development experiences is also important because of decreased participation in formal professional development activities by maturing or more experienced teachers. Due to declining public school enrollments, and thus fewer teachers being hired, the teaching population is shifting to older professionals. In a recent study of Michigan teachers, Heitzeg found that older, more experienced staff members were less inclined to participate in formal professional growth activities than their younger counterparts.[17] He indicates however, that the decline in participation in professional development events did not necessarily include

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[17]Howard Heitzeg. Student Enrollment Decline: A Model for Determining Implications for Staffing and Staff Development in Public Schools. (Unpublished Ph.D. disseration, 1978, Michigan State University).

informal professional development events.[18] Informal activities and experiences may be significant in enhancing the professional growth of maturing teachers.

Formal professional development activities may be less meaningful for more experienced teachers if they are inappropriate for the career stage of the maturing teacher. Fuller[19] and Yarger and Martens[20] have described career stages through which teachers progress. These stages can be characterized by specific concerns and interests. While formal activities and experiences may not be designed to match the concerns and interest of more experienced teachers, informal activities may be highly appropriate because they are defined and selected by the teacher on the basis of personal needs or interest.

The study will also contribute to what is known about adult learners and the types of learning experiences they find valuable. There has been a good deal of research done in this area. Most of this research, however, has looked at either how students self plan learning projects or why adults engage in these projects. This study will identify the specific activities from which learning resulted, as

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[18]Ibid., pp. 72 and 74.

[19]F.F. Fuller. "Concerns of Teachers: A Developmental Characterization." American Educational Research Journal, No. 6(2), 1969:207-226.

[20]S.J. Yarger & S.K. Mertens. "Testing the Waters of School-based Teacher Education." In Concepts to Guide the Teaching of Teachers. D. Corrigan and K. Howey, Eds., (Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, 1980).

well as experiences that may have resulted in unintentional or non-deliberate learning.

Finally, this study will contribute to what is known about how teachers process information. Previous studies have examined this process within the context of the classroom, and the relationship of information processing to classroom decision making. This study will explore how and what types of information are processed by teachers for professional growth outside the formal classroom arena. If informal professional development activities or experiences are viewed as stimuli, what kinds of stimuli are perceived by teachers? On what basis are they differentiated as relevant or irrelevant? How are these stimuli understood or comprehended? Are teachers conscious of this comprehension phase? What is the teachers' response to a given stimulus? These are subquestions of research questions 4 and 5 which guide this study.

Assumptions

This study is based on the following four assumptions. The first is that informal activities do, in fact, contribute to the professional development of teachers. The second is that home economics teachers are engaged in informal activities which contribute to their professional development. The third assumption relates to the selection of the population of the study. It is assumed that informal activities may play an especially significant role in the

professional development of home economics teachers due to the nature of the content they teach. The content of home economics has been described in a variety of ways, from a study of the family in it's near environment to the "triffles of everyday living."[21] The skills required for everyday living with which home economics deals include managing resources, making decisions, getting along with family members, establishing personal goals, establishing and maintaining personal relationships, and coping with and creating change. Clearly, what home economics teachers teach closely matches the kinds of skills and knowledge they use each day in their personal lives. It is assumed, therefore, that the learning derived from informal day-to-day living experiences could contribute significantly to the home economics teachers ability to teach daily living skills.

Finally, it is assumed that the identification of these informal experiences and activities has important implicatons for those involved in the preservice and inservice education of teachers. Those involved in the planning and preparing of formal professional develoment programs may benefit from knowing:

- -what kinds of experiences and activities teachers prefer to engage in to enhance their professional skills
- -what needs or interests are reflected in the activities and experiences selected

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[21]Marjorie East. Home Economics Past, Present and Future (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980), p. 198.

by teachers for their own professional development

-what types of activities and experiences are preferred by teachers at different stages in their career development.

Limitations and Scope

This study is limited to the perceptions of 20 Michigan home economics teachers currently teaching in vocationally reimbursed programs. The following are acknowledged limitations of the study.

1. The subjects of the study were self-selected, so findings of the study may not be generalizable to other populations. Randomly selected Career Education Planning Districts (CEPDs) were selected as the data collection sites, but teachers within these CEPDs elected to participate on a volunteer basis.

2. The subjects of the study represent a small sample of Michigan home economics teachers, so findings of the study may not be generalizable to other populations. The subjects were drawn from the pool of teachers currently teaching in vocationally reimbursed secondary home economics programs in Michigan. The sample represents about 2.5 percent of this population, but may not be representative of all home economics teachers in Michigan, particularly those teaching in programs not meeting the State Department of Education guidelines for vocational reimbursement.

3. The study is limited to the perceptions of the individual teachers. The teachers identified those activities and experiences in which they found personal meaning for professional development. While teachers were given a context in which to define and identify these experiences, the researcher is dependent upon their individual conceptualizations of "professional development" and their interpretations of the significance of the activities and experiences.

4. The study is limited to the activities and experiences in which teachers participated in the last two years. This limitation was imposed to help the teachers focus more carefully on their recent experiences, and thus, to provide more reliable and detailed data. The imposed limitation may, however, have eliminated some potentially helpful data.

5. The size of the sample made analysis of the data for some questions difficult. Specifically, inter-group comparisons were sometimes difficult due to the small sample size. While in some cases the sample size may have inhibited some highly definitive findings, the results still serve as strong indicators.

Definition of Terms

Definitions of key terms as they are used in this study follow.

Professional Development. A process of promoting growth or evolving the possibilities of persons who already possess specialized knowledge. It encompases a broad range of experiences, the interactive effect of which contributes to the individual's efficiency and/or effectiveness in relation to his/her work role.

Secondary Home Economics Teacher. An individual currently employed in a secondary school (grades 9-12 or 10-12) teaching home economics classes in a home economics program which receives vocational education reimbursement funding.*

Formal Professional Development Activities. This refers to those standard activities in which individuals intentionally engage to facilitate a desired change.

Informal Professional Development Activities. This refers to those activities in which individuals engage that foster learning and professional growth, but are not

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*The State Department of Education, Vocational-Technical Education Service has established certain guidelines for vocational education reimbursement funding. School districts are reimbursed an amount of money per pupil enrolled in qualifying courses within an eligible vocationally reimbursed program. Qualifying requirements include that Consumer Education be taught within the home economics program, and that all funded courses be taught by a home economics teacher with a valid vocational authorization.

necessarily designed for that purpose. Included in this category may be general life experiences, work related activities, both paid and voluntary, reading, television viewing, and interaction with peers and friends.

Processing. In this context the term processing will be used to describe the actions taken by teachers to perceive and sort potential growth-producing experiences and reflect systematically on the information acquired from the informal activity so that the experience is transferred as learning to be utilized in their professional role.

Procedures

The outcome of this study is a description of the types of informal activities which have been identified as valuable professional development experiences and of those who use them. To develop these descriptions the following steps were taken.

First, subjects of the study met in small groups where the concept of informal activities as professional development experiences was explored. A questionnaire utilizing the content from these meetings was designed and distributed to participating home economics teachers.

The information from the questionnaires was content analyzed, categorized, and frequency counts were compiled in order to identify types of valued activities and experiences and the characteristics of teachers by whom they were identified.

Summary and Overview

Most previous research on inservice education and the professional development of teachers investigated only formal activities. This study describes informal activities that teachers identify as valuable in their professional development. It is postulated that informal activities may have special relevance to teachers of home economics.

This descriptive study is reported in five chapters. Chapter I consists of an introduction contrasting inservice education with professional development, a statement of the purpose and objectives of the study and related research questions. Statements of assumptions, key definitions, limitations and significance of the study are also included in Chapter I.

In Chapter II selected literature is reviewed. The focus is upon the role of informal experiences in professional development. Literature related to inservice education and adult learning are reviewed.

Chapter III contains the methodology: instrumentation, sample and data analysis techniques. Chapter IV consists of the presentation and analysis of the data. The summary of the study is presented in Chapter V, along with conclusions and implications for both continuing teacher education and pre-service teacher education, as well as the researcher's personal reflections.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

What is the role of informal activities in the professional development of home economics teachers? In addressing this question, a clear conceptualization of professional development as distinguished from inservice education is necessary. Thus, literature related to both professional development and inservice education were examined. In addition, relevant literature in the areas of teacher career development, adult learning, professional development needs and preferences of home economics teachers and information processing by teachers were reviewed. Selected literature from these areas as is appropriate to support this study are included in this review.

Professional Development vs Inservice Education

Most discussion of the professional development of teachers is to be found in the larger body of literature on the inservice education of teachers. Ingvarson and Greenway note that inservice education and professional development are regularly equated.[22] They reject that practice,

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[22]Ingvarson and Greenway, p. 3.

however, and argue that professional development is not a particular program or strategy.

Nevertheless, the terms inservice education and professional development are often used synonomously. For example, Edelfelt writes in Rethinking Inservice Education:

> "Inservice education of teachers (or staff development, continuing education, professional development) is defined as any professional development activity that a teacher undertakes singly or with other teachers, after receiving his or her initial teaching certificate, and after beginning professional practice."[23]

Nicholson et al. in their review of definitions of inservice education probably best exemplify the lack of clear distinction between professional development and inservice education. They suggest a way of formulating a suitable synonym for inservice.[24]

> To form a suitable synonym for inservice education--1) choose one word for Column A and/or one word from Column B; and then 2) choose one word from Column C:

A	B	C
continuing	staff	development
continuous	professional	growth
	teacher	education
	personnel	preparation
		renewal
		improvement

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[23]Roy A. Edelfelt. "In-Service Education: The State of the Art." In Rethinking In-Service Education. (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1975), p. 5.

[24]Alexander Nicholson, Bruce R. Joyce & Donald W. Parker. The Literature on Inservice Teacher Education. Palo Alto, CA: ISTE Report III, June 1976.

In a more recent publication, some new synonyms are added to the list, including "on-the-job training." Harris notes a number of commonly used terms that are used "as if they were almost synonymous with the term in-service education."[25] Included in his list is professional development, as well as continuing education, renewal, on-the-job training and professional growth.[26]

Other writers, however, note distinctions between inservice education and professional development. The most often cited destinctions relate to scope and intent. For example, Hite[27] proposes this definition on behalf of teacher educators:

> "Inservice Education consists of those experiences which are designed to help practicing teachers improve their services to both clients and colleagues."[28]

He notes, however, that by attributing purpose to inservice education, incidental events which have learning value for teachers are excluded.

The definitiion of inservice education used in Harris and Bessent's book, Inservice Education: A Guide to Better Practice also illustrates the use of the scope and intent qualifiers in a definition of inservice education:

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[25]Ben Harris. Improving Staff Performance Through Inservice Education (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980), p. 20.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Hite, p. 6.

[28]Ibid.

> ". . . we are defining inservice education as planned activities for the instructional improvement of professional staff members."[29]

In contrast, there are a number of definitions of inservice education in the literature that fail to require any particular structure to an experience to qualify it as an inservice activity. The only qualifiers in these definitions are that the activities occur after professional practice begins, and that the activities produce learning. For example, in Inservice Teacher Education--Report I: Issues to Face, Joyce, Howey and Yarger review a wide variety of definitions of inservice education that are reflected in the literature, including

> "Inservice education is defined as all the experiences undertaken by a teacher after beginning professional preparation."[30]

This definition fails to qualify either the type or purpose of the experiences, and resembles some of the commonly used definitions of professional development. For example,

> "Professional development (may be defined as) enhancing the interests, improving the competence and otherwise facilitating the professional...growth

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[29]Ben M. Harris and Wailand Bessent. In-Service Education: A Guide to Better Practice. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 2.

[30]Bruce Joyce, K. Howey and S. Yarger. ISTE Report I, Issues to Face (Palo Alto, California, 1970).

> of faculty members, particularly in their roles as instructors."[31]

Repeated examples could be documented of the synonomous use of the terms inservice education and professional development, as well as the inconsistencies in the way these terms are defined. This study, however, relies upon a distinction between the two concepts, a distinction which delineates inservice education as having a role in professional development, not as a synonym for professional development.

Orrange and Van Ryn define inservice education as a "portion of professional development."[32]

In his article, "Perspective on Professional Development," Newton refers to inservice education as a component of professional development in his discussion of the importance of inservice education for vocational teachers.[33] He characterizes professional development not as an experience or activity, but as the effect of experience.[34]

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[31]John Dopyera, Eric Beamick, and Helen Verec. Professional Staff Development in Two Year Colleges Final Report, (Research Pub. 80-7, New York State Education Department, 1979).

[32]Patricia A. Orrange and Mike Van Ryn, "Agency Roles and Responsibilities," Roy A. Edelfelt and Margo Johnson, eds., Rethinking Inservice Education. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1975, p. 47.

[33]Mark Newton. "Perspectives on Professional Development." Vocational Education. (Vol. 55, No. 6), pp. 30a-30f.

[34]Ibid.

Ingvarson and Greenway support this conceptualization of professional development by describing it as "an individual process" which may be influenced by, among other things, forms of inservice education.[35]

Jackson refers to this individual process too, in his discussion of a new approach to inservice education. He challenges educators to think seriously as to how professional growth and development can occur during or as a result of inservice education.[36]

Holly refers to professional development as a uniquely human process of complexity and interaction, beyond "training."[37] Rubin describes professional development as "an exceedingly complex phenomenon. . . about which little is known about the subtle interplay among the various factors involved."[38]

This conceptualization of professional development as a process rather than an event implies that "inservicing" teachers may not result automatically in growth or change. This has some serious implications for formal inservice activities. Horstrand notes that inservice education has

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[35]Ingvarson and Greenway, pp. 2-3.

[36]Philip O. Jackson. "Old Dogs and New Tricks: Observations on the Continuing Education of Teachers." In Improving In-Service Education: Proposal and Procedures for Change, ed., Louis J. Rubin (Allyn and Bacon: Boston, 1971), p. 28.

[37]Mary Louise Holly. "Teacher Reflections on Classroom Life: An Empirical Base for Professional Development." (Mimeo, 1982).

[38]Rubin, p. IV.

been viewed passively by teachers, as what has been done "to" or "for" teachers.[39] Teachers have allowed themselves to be "inserviced."[40] But the meaningfulness of such activities has come into question. Holly found that the inservice activites which were meaningful to teachers were those which had individual relevance and personal implications.[41]

In her research, Holly discovered a number of activities identified by teachers as being meaningful to their personal or professional growth which would not be classified on the basis of most definitions as inservice education. Among these activities or experiences were: talking with teachers, participating in extra-curricular activities with students, family life, politics, and travel and vacation.[42]

Some of these types of activities were also identified earlier in a National Education Association study as "types" of inservice. Their list included: committee work, work experience, cultural experiences and community

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[39]Richard Horstrand. "A Process for Self-Directed Professional Growth," Illinois Teacher, (September/October, 1979), p. 22-26.

[40]Toni Sharma. "Inservicing the Teachers," Phi Delta Kappa, (Vol. 63, No. 6), p. 403.

[41]Mary Louise Holly. "A Conceptual Framework for Personal-Professional Growth: Implications for Inservice Education." (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1977).

[42]Ibid., p. 91.

organization work.[43] Rather than types of inservice, these activities might be classified as informal professional development activities.

According to Newton, informal activities are those in which one engages that "foster learning and professional growth, but are not necessarily designed for that purpose."[44] Included are general life experiences, work related or work-type activities (including volunteer work), reading, viewing television, listening to the radio, and interacting with peers.

Thelen discusses his involvement in informal activities while teaching in a middle class suburban high school.[45] He relates how he and other teachers spent time on a picnic talking about school activities, spent weekends devising laboratory set-ups, and worked with colleagues inventing and teaching a new course. He notes that these activities were not thought of as inservice activities, but as a way of life.[46]

The types of experiences suggested by Newton and described by Thelen have been recognized as professional development experiences by those endorsing self-directed

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[43]"Inservice Education of Teachers: Research Summary, 1966-S1," Research Division, National Education Association, ERIC ED 022 728: 1966.

[44]Newton, p. 30a.

[45]Herbert Thelen. "A Cultural Approach to In-service Teacher Training." In Improving In-Service Education, ed. by Louis J. Rubin (Allyn and Bacon, Boston: 1971), p. 71-103.

[46]Ibid., 82-83.

professional development. Self-directed professional development is based on the assumption that teachers are self-motivated and that the motivation and direction for learning comes from within the person.[47] Most of the models for self-planned professional development require teachers to assess their own needs, formulate goals, select and participate in educational activities, and assess their own growth.

John Dopyera and others at Cornell University developed a pilot program whereby occupational teachers in community colleges engaged in a totally self-managed program for professional development.[48] Among the educational activities listed in which they were encouraged to engage were a wide variety of informal activities, from visiting other schools and businesses to setting up a school service or attending a community or cultural event.[49] The self-directed models proposed by Karnes[50] and Horstrand[51] also recommend participation in informal activities.

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[47]Nicholson, p. 14.

[48]John Dopyera, Eric Beamick, and Helen Verec. Professional Staff Development in Two Year Colleges Final Report.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Christine Karnes. "A Personal In-Service Program can Keep You Relevant," The Agriculture Magazine, (Vol. 59, No. 9).

[51]Horstrand, p. 25.

We have noted that teachers have identified informal activities as beneficial. Why are these experiences or activities valuable in contributing to the professional development of teachers? One reason may be the flexibility of informal activities. Arends, Hersch and Turner[52] observe that inservice teachers are not like pre-service teachers; that they seek a broader array of experience and look for ways to integrate work, education and leisure.

Informal activites may also be of value because teachers can select those that are relevant to them. Holly suggests that when the teacher is self-directed and acts on choice the consequences are likely to be participation and practicality.[53]

Teachers may, in fact, seek out relevant informal activites which are meaningful to them because of their developmental or life stages. Norbert observes that the extent to which variant perspectives and behavior are associated with different life-stages would appear to have considerable implications for the types of inservice activities which are appropriate for individual teachers. He suggests further that since developmental patterns vary, so will the types of inservice approaches perceived as helpful or effective by the teachers.[54]

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[52]RichardArends, Richard Hersch, and Jack Turner. "Inservice Education and the Six O'Clock News." Theory Into Practice, (Vol. XVII, No. 3), pp. 196-200.

[53]Holly, "A Conceptual Framework," p. 66.

[54]Ralph Norbert. "Stages of Faculty Development." New Directions for Higher Education, (Spring 1973), pp. 61-68.

Other researchers have suggested that teachers progress through predictable stages in their career development, and that these stages imply certain professional needs, interests and concerns. Fuller[55] identifies three stages through which teachers progress in their teaching careers. The first stage may be labeled the "survival stage" where the teacher's primary concern is about his or her own adequacy. Stage two is the "mastery stage," where the teacher focuses on developing teaching methods and skills and mastering content. The "impact stage" is the last of the identified phases where the teacher becomes concerned with his or her impact on the student. Fuller suggests that efforts to assist teacher growth should reflect these teacher interests.

Yarger and Mertens[56] describe six career stages ("professional age" variables), four of which occur after pre-service education. The third stage is a transitional one in which the beginning teacher moves from the supportive environment of the teacher education into the complex school environment. These teachers are primarily concerned with teaching skills, content knowledge and discipline, and many come to realize that the teacher education program did not fully prepare them for all that they find in the classroom. Teachers with three to eight years of experience have

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[55]Fuller, pp. 207-226.

[56]Yarger and Mertens, "Testing the Waters."

mastered the "survival skills" and become interested in branching out in new professional roles and mastering further content. Mertens and Yarger describe the final stage as one in which experienced teachers really need to be involved in inservice education, which will allow them to draw upon their experience so that it becomes a productive experience for them and for the rest of the staff.

Summary

The terms inservice education and professional development are often used synonymously. This interchange is viewed by many as incorrect since inservice education generally refers to programs or events while professional development is a personal process. Professional development may be the interactive effect of both formal and informal experiences. Informal experiences are those activites voluntarily engaged in by teachers which foster learning and professional growth, but are not necessarily designed for that purpose.

Informal activites may be of value to teachers as professional development experiences because they offer opportunities to integrate work, leisure and education. They can be seleted for their personal relevance as is appropriate at the developmental stage of the teacher in his or her career.

The Teacher as Adult Learner

Any discussion of the role of informal learning activities in the professional development of teachers must also include consideration of the teacher as an adult learner. There is a considerable body of knowledge on the adult learner. The uniqueness of the adult as a learner has been discussed, described, and researched for many years. This section will review selected relevant works related to informal learning experiences for adults.

A variety of aspects of adult development appear to support the appropriateness of informal activities for adults. For example, most writers, including Knowles, note the number of differences between adults. He observes that they vary in their endowments, in their opportunities and in the speed and direction of their growth.[57] Hiemstra notes that each adult comes to any learning situation with an often rich, and very unique bag of experiences.[58]

Knowles describes the changing motivational picture throughout adult development.[59] He suggests that over time certain needs arise and perhaps cause tension, prompting adults to act. This action is sometimes a learning effort. He identifies several types of motivations which may result

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[57]Malcolm Knowles. Informal Adult Education (New York: Association Press, 1950).

[58]Roger Heimstra. Lifelong Learning (Nebraska: Professional Educators Pub., Inc., 1976), p. 29.

[59]Knowles, p. 12.

in learning efforts, including a need or desire for security, recognition, new experiences and growth.[60]

From these observations of adulthood one might conclude that any generalizations about adults and their learning needs or preferences are risky because of the idiosyncratic nature of adult development. Some researchers, however, have attempted to describe adult development in terms of stages. One approach is to use chronological age as a vehicle in describing "general orientations, problems, developmental tasks, personal concerns, or other characteristics."[61] Levinson et al. presents developmental characteristics of adults as age related. They describe the changes in adults in the context of age blocks.[62] A second approach is to view development in stages which are hierarchically organized and through which one progresses in sequence. Knox describes development as it relates to a sequence of events.[63] Other stage theorists present variations on this theme. In Passages, Sheehy brings together a number of studies in adult development as she

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[60] Ibid.

[61] A.K. Chickering. "The Educational Needs of New Learners: Implications for Liberal Arts Colleges." (Paper presented at the East Central Colleges Consortium Conference on the New Learners, December 1974).

[62] D.J. Levinsin, C. Darron, C. Klein, M. Levinsin, and B. McKee. The Seasons of a Man's Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).

[63] A.B. Knox. Adult Development and Learning. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977).

presents predictable crisis in adult lives up to age 50.[64] Erikson also views human development as a series of crisis stages, three of which occur during adulthood.[65] Each of these approaches is useful in providing some clues as to the life changes of adults and thus, clues to the learning needs and interests of the individual.

Krupp, in her book Adult Development: Implications for Staff Development, builds upon the work of Levinson by suggesting staff development concepts appropriate for each age.[66] One of the more useful observations she makes is the difference in staff development needs of men and women. She recommends that staff development specialists be flexible with teachers in the 30-transition, who have a career-family conflict, and notes that "at this transition women are more likely to express such conflict."[67]

While those concerned with the education of adults acknowledge the wide range of individual differences in adult learners, they note some characteristics of adulthood which may influence how and why most adults learn. Hiemstra says, "to be an adult means to be independent, to possess a

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[64]Gail Sheehy. Passages: Predictable Crisis in Adult Life. (New York: Bantam Books, 1977).

[65]E.H. Erikson. Identy and the Life Cycle. (New York: International Universities Press, 1959).

[66]Judy Arin Krupp. Adult Development: Applications for Staff Development (Adult Development Center, Project RISE, Connecticut, 1981).

[67]Ibid.

certain amount of self motivation and to be capable of making decisions."[68] This is the assumption on which Knowles' process of androgogy is predicated.[69] Androgogy is the name given a teaching and learning process designed for the adult learner and adult education teacher. The process implies mutual needs assessment and planning. The learner is a resource in the learning activities, and the teacher serves as a facilitator.[70]

Knowles' process is supported by the research on the success of student-centered education and the value of student involvement in planning learning activities. Although Knowles' process involves a formal relationship between a learner and teacher, its philosophy seems generally compatable with self-selected informal learning experiences.

The literature related to adult learners and adult education makes frequent reference to the circumstances that may hinder participation in formal adult education. These circumstances may, in fact, result in informal activities being more likely alternatives. Knowles observes that adult life involves many responsibilities and competing interests so that individuals question whether they can spare the time

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[68]Hiemstra, p. 12.

[69]Malcolm Knowles. The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species, (Gulf Publishing Company, Houston: 1973).

[70]Ibid.

and energy for continuing education.[71] Home and job responsibilities, problems securing child care, and just not enough time are regularly cited reasons for failure to engage in continuing education by adults.[72] These comments generally refer to formal adult education programs. A Canadian researcher, however, discovered that adults were much more involved in continuing eduction than previous research had indicated.

Tough studied the adult learning projects of individuals which took place outside formal classes or organized groups. Tough estimates that as high as 70 percent of all adult learning is informal and self-directed.[73] In his initial study, Tough describes the learning project as a sustained effort of adult learners to learn something that is fairly clear to the learner. He examined the projects of adults and noted that those in his study invested approximately 700-800 hours yearly to these independent pursuits.[74] His study was followed by several fellow researchers who, in related research, looked

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[71]Knowles, Informal Adult Education, p. 4.

[72]Hiemstra, p. 85.

[73]Allen Tough. The Adult's Learning Projects: A Fresh Approach to Theory and Practice in Adult Learning (Ontario: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Second Edition, 1979).

[74]Ibid., p. 196.

specifically at teachers as learners.

In 1976, Kelly studied the self-planned learning projects of both beginning secondary teachers and those who had taught 10 to 15 years.[75] One year later, Miller interviewed teachers in non-urban up-state New York.[76] McCatty surveyed Canadian health and physical education teachers.[77] These studies concluded that the major learning efforts of teachers were largely self-planned and non-credit. A number of the learning projects described could be classified as professional development projects, although this was not the context of any of the cited studies.[78]

In the studies of Tough and those that followed, the purpose of the learning project was the focus of study, not the activities in which they engaged to meet their learning goals. As might be expected, however, many of the learning activites in which the adults engaged could be classified as informal.

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[75]Nancy E. Kelley. "A Comparative Study of Professionally Related Learning Projects of Secondary School Teachers." (Unpublished master's thesis, Cornell University, 1976).

[76]Nancy L. Miller. "Teachers and Non-Teaching Professionals as Self-directed Learners.")Unpublished master's thesis, Cornell University, 1977).

[77]Crissy McCatty. "Patterns of Learning Projects Among Physical and Health Education Teachers." Reporting Classroom Research (Ontario Educational Research Council, 1976, 5(2)) pp. 7-8.

[78]Allen Tough. "Major Learning Efforts: Recent Research and Future Directions." Adult Learning, (Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, 1978), p. 256-257.

Tough's study, like most of those in the area of adult education, dealt only with intentional learning. Very little attention has been given to the incidental learning that results from experience. Rubin notes specifically the incidental learning of teachers: "teachers do learn intuitively through their day-to-day experiences.[79]

Jackson points out, however, that it is not enough to just have the experience, one must benefit from it.[80] "This means," says Jackson, "we must reflect on what happens to us, ponder it, and make sense of it."[81]

Processing Information

This reflection step is part of a larger information processing system. The complex phenomenon of information processing may be simplified by viewing the process in three stages. The first stage involves perception of cues. The individual perceives some range of stimuli, both verbal and nonverbal.[82] The perception of available cues by humans is limited, however, and Garner[83] suggests that this perception

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[79]Rubin, p. 8.

[80]Jackson, p. 28.

[81]Ibid.

[82]Bruce Joyce. "Toward a Theory of Information Processing in Teaching," (Research Series No. 76: Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University, 1980).

[83]W.R. Garner. The Processing of Information and Structure (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1974).

is in part limited by what one has been taught or chooses to attend to. In terms of informal experiences, then, this may mean that professional growth producing opportunities or experiences go unnoticed because the teacher does not perceive the experience as one with potential for learning.

The second stage of this phenomenon involves processing the stimuli. Once perceived the stimuli must first pass a "test" for relevance.[84] Joyce suggests that within the teaching context the stimuli must be judged to be relevant to the teachers' "field of concern."[85] If the cue is determined to be relevant, it may be processed for understanding or comprehension, and finally for action. Action or response is the last stage in the information processing chain. The individual may react overtly or covertly; the action may be immediate or delayed.[86]

Joyce and others studied information processing in teaching within the context of the classroom. Their observations, part of the larger South Bay Study, advanced a set of propositions about the relationship between thought and action in the classroom. They particularly focused on the effect of the activity flow within the classroom on the kind of information or stimuli teachers received.[87]

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[84] Joyce, p. 5.

[85] Ibid., p. 8.

[86] Ibid., p. 6.

[87] Ibid.

The information processing system clearly becomes more complex for teachers outside the walls of a classroom. The first two stages have particular relevance to the role of informal activity in professional development. The stimuli outside formal experience must first be perceived as potentially professionally related, then processed for relevance and comprehension. Sheffrin emphasizes again that the individual is able to mask or block out stimuli not relevant, or not in the perceiver's "problem frame."[88] This suggests that the teacher who is not sensitive to the potential value of informal experience or activity for professional growth may be less likely to perceive these experiences as such. The authors of Conceptual System and Information Processing (Harvey, Hunt and Schroder) describe individual differences in ones capacity to process information.[89] They suggest a theory which links the individual ability to differentiate or "sort" stimuli to the capability to integrate information. They see these capabilities as a possible function of personality.[90] Knox suggests that there are also some age-related differences in some aspects of the information processing system.[91]

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[88]R.M. Shiffrin. "Capacity Limitations in Information Processing, Attention and Memory," in W.K. Estes (Ed.) Handbook of Learning and Cognitive Processes, (Vol. 4, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1976).

[89]Havey, O.J., D.E. Hung and M. Shroder. Conceptual Systems and Information Processing. (New York: Wiley, 1963).

[90]Ibid.

[91]Knox, p. 432.

The work of Holly in her most recent study, builds on this theory of information processing.[92] In her research Holly has explored with teachers the use of their own classroom experiences as learning experiences. Through group discussion and journal entries the teachers have explored the stimulus field of their classrooms and interpreted both the stimuli and their responses. They have, in effect, made a conscious effort to understand and comprehend the meaning of what goes in their classrooms and its relevance to them.

Summary

Adults as learners vary greatly in their abilities, their interests, and their reasons for engaging in continuing education. There is a growing body of research to indicate that adults are extensively involved in self-planned, independent learning efforts. Adults also learn from non-deliberate learing efforts, by perceiving relevance in daily living experiences. The theories of information processing as they relate to incidental or non-deliberate learning may be of particular relevance to this study. The adult's alertness or attention to an experience, the adult's perception of the experiences's relevance, and the adult's response to experiences is effected by the unique way information is processed by that individual.

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[92]Holly. "Teacher Reflections on Classroom Life."

Professional Development and the Home Economics Teacher

Although there have been relatively few studies which have looked specifically at home economics teachers and professional development, there has been some research which examined characteristics and attitudes of both preservice and inservice home economics teachers.

Several descriptive studies have been conducted to identify characteristics of practicing home economics teachers. A 1960 study of home economics teachers in 26 states showed that these teachers seemed to fall into two distinct groups; one group interested in people and interpersonal relationships and the other concerned with non-human resources and abstract concepts.[93] Other studies looked at the values of home economics teachers. A 1962 study of vocational home economics teachers revealed that they valued, in order: health, thrift, relationships, efficiency, recreation and beauty.[94] Home Economist, Dr. Marjorie East, in "A Portrait of Todays Home Economist," summarizes the findings from over 30 studies:

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[93]Roxanna R. Ford and Hoyt, Cyril J. The Identification and Measurement of Secondary School Homemaking Teachers' Attitudes and Other Characteristics Associated with their Ability to Maintain Desirable Learning Situations, (St. Paul: School of Home Economics, College of Education, University of Minnesota, 1960).

[94]Keenan, Dorothy Marie. "An Exploration of Value Patterns." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1962).

> ". . . most of us are friendly, expressive, sociable. We are family centered . . . while we like our work, most of us evidently are not ambitious."
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> "Home economics is practical. We value order, convenience, and efficiency. We value prudence and planning as ways to achieve goals without waste of time, effort or money."[95]

Other studies have focused on inservice home economics teachers and their attitudes toward inservice education. In a survey of over 400 Illinois consumer homemaking teachers, most stated that they found themselves teaching less effectively than they felt capable.[96] Over one-fourth of the respondents cited lack of time as a major obstacle to involvement in formal professional development activities.[97] Teachers stated they had limited time for preparation and additional study.[98]

An earlier study of home economics teachers in Massachusettes yielded similar findings. Over 40 percent of the 956 persons responding indicated that formal continuing study was not possible due to, among other reasons, family responsibilitites.[99] While teachers in this study did not

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[95]East, p. 132.

[96]Spitze, Hazel and Robert Minish. Illinois Teacher, (Vol. XXI, No. 1), p. 3-5.

[97]Ibid.

[98]Ibid.

[99]Marion Wilson. A Study of Home Economics Programs and the Expressed Educational Needs of Home Economics Teachers in Massachusetts. Massachusetts Department of Education, 1974.

rank evening courses or workshops as highly desirable forms of inservice education, they did rank some informal activities like observing programs in other schools and borrowing instructional materials as highly desirable.[100]

No attempt has been made to learn about the attitudes of Michigan home economics teachers toward inservice education, although the Michigan State Department of Eduction does survey periodically the inservice needs of teachers. There is, however, some information available that has implications for the professional development of teachers. First, approximately 62 percent of the 861 reporting teachers in 1981 had earned their continuing or permanent teaching certification; 43 percent of these teachers hold at least a master's degree.[101]

Summary

Like other teachers, home economics teachers have expressed a need and interest in professional growth. Members of this largely female population, however, have also identified some constraints on their participation in formal professional development activities. Lack of time and home and family responsibilities are regularly cited reasons for not participating more fully in formal

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Sherry Anderson, of the Vocational-Technical Education Service, Michigan Department of Education in a presentation to the Michigan Home Economics Teacher Educators, East Lansing, Michigan, October 15, 1982.

continuing education activities. Teachers do report, however, an interest in some types of informal activities. This may in part be accounted for by the "personality" of the home economics teacher, who has been found to be highly efficient and practical.

The role of informal activities in the professional development of Michigan home economics teachers may be increasingly significant because of the absence of extrinsic motivators for formal continuing education. The majority of Michigan teachers have earned their continuing teacher certification, and almost half have earned a degree beyond the undergraduate degree.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the design and procedures of this study. Included in this chapter are a description of the population, sample selection, instrumentation, data collection procedures and the plan for the analysis of the data.

Population and Sample Selection

The sample for this study was drawn from the 861 home economics teachers teaching in programs which received vocational reimbursement funding for the 1981-1982 school year. Teachers within these programs are reported to the State Department of Education by Career Education Planning Districts (CEPD).

The sample selection procedure was designed to draw a sample from the population representing a cross-section of home economics teachers. For that reason, the CEPDs reporting for vocational reimbursement were demographically stratified. CEPDs were classified as being made up of 1) primarily urban schools, 2) primarily suburban schools, or

3) primarily rural schools. One CEPD from each strata was randomly selected.

Initial contact was made with the home economics coordinator in each CEPD. The researcher solicited her help by telephone, briefly explaining the purpose of the project and the data collection procedure.

Each secondary teacher in the CEPD was contacted jointly by the researcher and CEPD home economics coordinator and invited to attend a one-hour meeting. Interested teachers from the randomly selected CEPDs who attended the initial meeting and were found to be currently teaching in vocationally reimbursed programs served as the sample for the study. Table 3-1 displays the respondents in each CEPD.

As indicated in Table 3-1, 20 teachers served as the sample for this study. They ranged from 3 to 25 years of teaching experience. All subjects were female. The highest educational degree held by eight of the teachers was the Bachelor of Science. Eleven teachers had a Master's Degree, and one the degree of Specialist. Table 3-2 displays the sample by years of teaching experience, location and degree held.

The schools in which the subjects taught ranged in size from 320 students enrolled to 1975 students enrolled. Seven teachers reported teaching in one person (self) home economics departments.

TABLE 3.1

RESPONDENT'S TEACHING LOCATION

CEPD Classification	Number
Urban Area	8
Suburban Area	7
Rural Area	5

TABLE 3.2

SAMPLE BY YEARS TEACHING EXPERIENCE, DEGREE HELD AND TEACHING LOCATION

Years of Teaching Experience	Degree Held	Teaching Site
3	B.S.	Suburban
3	B.S.	Urban
5	B.S.	Rural
5	B.S.	Rural
5	M.A.	Urban
8	M.A.	Urban
9	M.A.	Suburban
10	M.A.	Suburban
10	M.A.	Urban
11	Ed Spec.	Urban
12	M.A.	Urban
12	M.A.	Suburban
12	M.A.	Suburban
12	B.S.	Urban
12	M.A.	Rural
17	M.A.	Suburban
17	B.S.	Rural
18	B.S.	Rural
21	M.A.	Suburban
22	B.S.	Urban
25	B.S.	Suburban

Seven of the 20 teachers came from schools that might be classified as having few resources to support participation in formal professional development activities. Thirteen teachers reported that time and funds were available so that they could attend off-campus activities. Three of the 13 indicated, however, that these resources were limited. Table 3-3 displays the sample in relationship to their school size and available resources to support participation in formal professional development activities.

As acknowledged in a discussion of the limitations of the study in Chapter I, this study is limited to a relatively small number of teachers and may not be representative of teachers beyond this population. A small sample was desirable and appropriate, however, for the design and objectives of this study. The purpose of this study was to gain indepth understanding and insight into the types of activities that teachers found meaningful and how these choices were meaningful. The small number of subjects allowed for more personal contact during both phases of data collection. The results of the statistical analysis of the data from this study should be interpreted as indicators and may be followed up and validated at a later time with a larger and broader sample.

The sample was comprised of teachers who attended the group meetings voluntarily; thus, those teachers not inclined to volunteer or who were unable to attend an after school meeting may not be represented. The sample as

TABLE 3-3

SAMPLE IN RELATIONSHIP TO SCHOOL SIZE AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION IN FORMAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Subject	School Size**	Available Resources
1	1600	Few
2	600	Adequate
3	1600	Few
4	1900	Few
5	1400	Few
6	975	Adequate
7	1200	Few
8	600	Adequate
9	1800	Adequate
10	320	Adequate
11	1800	Few
12	1300	Adequate
13	1600	Adequate
14	1900	Adequate
15	1500	Adequate
16	1500	Few
17	1400	Adequate
18	900	Adequate
19	1975	Adequate
20	1900	Adequate

*Listed in random order

**Indicates student enrollment

selected had the following strengths:

Range of experience: Teachers with 3-25 years teaching experiences responded, providing a range of teachers at various stages of their career development.

Diversity of representation: Teachers from rural, suburban and urban settings responded. A broad range of professional settings are represented within each of these sectors from very small schools to schools with almost 2,000 students.

Diversity in available resources: Resources in these schools varied, including professional libraries, vocational directors, professional development advisory committees, "inservice calendars" and home economics department offices and resource centers.

Data Collection

The Group Meeting. A one hour group meeting was arranged in each CEPD. Two of these meetings were held at school district facilities. One was held at a local restaurant.

The primary objective of the group meeting was to develop among teachers a common understanding necessary to respond to the written questionnaire. By way of brain-storming and discussion the concepts of informal professional development activities and information processing were explored. The teachers attending each meeting generated specific examples which were returned to

them with the written questionnaire in the form of a summary sheet.

Each of the three meetings opened with a brief introduction to the task, which was followed by three questions. Additional probing questions were used as needed. The questions were designed to gradually evoke a broader range of answers. In each meeting they had the intended effect.

1. "Can you describe for me any activities or events in which you've participated that you feel have been beneficial to you in your teaching? Think of those things you have occasionally done or regularly do to improve or enhance your teaching."

In response to the first question subjects generally began by identifying formal activities. Among those mentioned were university courses, State Department of Education inservice programs, professional conferences (particularly the Michigan Home Economics Association's Annual Meeting) and school inservice days. Teachers tended to recollect those that were especially helpful, even though they may have been several years before. Some informal activities and experiences were also mentioned in response to this question. The most typical included reading the "Foods" section of the local paper, watching certain television programs on the Public Broadcasting System ("Footsteps") and an occasional workshop or class sponsored by a church or department store.

2. "Let's think now of only those informal activities or events like reading the paper or attending the stress workshop that were mentioned. Apart from formal inservice activities, can you describe to me other activities or experiences you've had that have influenced your teaching of home economics?"

    a. "Can you think of any community-based experiences?"

    b. "Do any personal projects come to mind?"

    c. "Are there any contacts with businesses, organizations, or professional groups that have been helpful?"

The sub-questions to question two were generally asked one-at-a-time, and each evoked a set of responses. In general, there were few responses specifically to the question about community-based experiences. Some examples were offered of participation in church activities and programs, such as leading youth groups and attending church sponsored seminars. Examples of volunteer work in the community included working in a hospital for the mentally handicapped and working for the Girl Scouts and 4-H. Personal projects (sub-question "b") included collecting antiques, travel and "menu collecting," home canning and shopping. Teachers were able to contribute the most examples in response to the sub-question about helpful contacts with businesses, organizations and professional groups. Interaction with the county extension agent, other teachers, a physician, and the school custodian are examples of the kinds of individuals and groups teachers identified. Finally, teachers were asked:

3. "Are there any other personal experiences you've had that have influenced what or how you teach?"

In response to this question teachers most frequently shared examples of family-related experiences, including the rearing of children, relating to in-laws and husbands, and purchasing and maintaining their homes. Most of the examples involved interpersonal relationships and involvement with "human" rather than "non-human" resources.

In responding to the second and third questions, subjects frequently prefaced their answers with, "I'm not sure this is right," or "I'm not sure this is what you want." Each group had to be assured repeatedly that there were no wrong answers.

In summary, the activities and experiences identified grew increasingly informal with some very personal experiences cited in response to question three.

In almost all cases, subjects voluntarily followed their specific responses with an explanation of <u>how</u> the activity or experience had been helpful to them in their classroom teaching. For example, a teacher who indicated that she regularly read the foods section of the local newspaper followed that by explaining that she did so to learn about new products, new recipes, and to obtain updated information on nutrition and food handling. In other instances, teachers took this one step further by identifying exactly how this information was used in the classroom. A teacher who had viewed a fashion show in an

elite New York shop explained how she incorporated the information she obtained from this into a lecture on fads and fashions.

After teachers had had sufficient time to share examples of informal experiences and activities, the researcher introduced the group to the concept of information processing. The researcher did so by explaining that in order for an experience to have a specific impact on their professional practice, some steps had occured to transfer the learning to action. The researcher explained that in each case cited, teachers had consciously or unconsciously moved through three phases: first, the teacher had recognized that the activity or experience had some relevance to her in her role as teacher. Second, she comprehended or came to understand how this was useful to her. Finally, she took some action in response. In each case, one of the activities or experiences the group had suggested was used as a context for explanation.

For example, in one group a teacher reported that the pregnancy of her teenage sister had an impact on her teaching. The researcher asked her to identify how or why she perceived that experience to be relevant to her teaching. Then she was asked to describe how she came to understand or comprehend <u>how</u> it was relevant to her in her role as teacher, and finally, how the experience had influenced what she did as a classroom teacher.

In the above example the teacher indicated that the incident seemed relevant because her sister was the same age as her students and because at least one of her courses dealt with family planning, pregnancy, and parenting. She indicated that she spent a considerable amount of time discussing the situation with her sister, exploring her feelings, and trying to understand the situation from the perspective of the teenager.

In response to the experience, the teacher reported that she changed her approach to teaching about teenage pregnancy. She indicated that her focus now in discussions of teenage sexuality is on decision making and the consequences of decisions, rather than just dissemination of information.

This example was perhaps the clearest of those presented during the group discussion phase of data collection. While teachers were quite clear on their responses to a particular experience, they rarely identified that phase of processing which brought about the understanding--the "aha!" phase. The "aha" or "light clicking on" analogies were often used by the researcher to help probe for responses. Although it appeared to help clarify the concept, teachers were seldom able to identify how they came to understand how the experience "fit."

After each small group session the examples of informal activities or experiences contributed by that group were loosely categorized and summarized based on similarity of

response. For instance, typical categories invcluded travel, interactions with family, interactions with resource people, interactions with youth, dealing with personal crisis and professional workshops. Under the heading "travel" would be all the specific examples mentioned, like field trips, factory tours, vacations. An example is included in the Appendix. This summary sheet was mailed to each subject with the questionnaire. Teachers were asked to review the sheet as a reference, but were invited to describe any additional experiences or activities that had come to mind since the group meeting.

The Questionnaire. The second phase of the data collection process utilized the three-part questionnaire. The first research question, "What types of informal activities do teachers identify as contributing to their professional development?" was addressed in part three of the questionnaire. Teachers were asked to describe these activities or experiences.

> (III) 1. In column 1 describe specific informal experiences you've had or activities in which you've participated in the last two years that have positively influenced your classroom teaching.

The second research question is addressed in the same section of the questionnaire: "In what ways does learning from informal experiences spcifically influence the teacher in her role as classrooom teacher?" Subjects were asked to

respond to this question in the second column of Part III.

> (III) 2. In column 2, describe how the activity influenced how or what you do within your home economics classroom.

Research question three dealt with the perceived value of the activity or experience to the teacher. "How valuable do teachers rate each activity?" In the fourth column of Part III respondents were instructed to (III)4. . . "rate the activity or experience according to its value to you as a professional development experience."

Research questions four and five address how learning occurs as a result of informal experience, and the subject's awareness of that process. Question four asks, "How do teachers process the information from informal activities?" Subjects were asked to identify purposeful ways in which they processed the information in Column III of the questionnaire.

(III)3. In column three describe (if appropriate) how you processed the information from the experience or activity for use in your teaching.

Research question five asks, Is there a relationship between the perceived value of the activity and whether or not a conscious attempt was made to process the information from the activity? The responses in columns 3 and 4 of the questionnaire were used to answer this question.

Research question six, "Are there differences in the types of activities ranked as valuable by teachers with more than six years teaching experience and those with six or

less?" is addressed through Parts I and III of the questionnaire. Questions in Part I ask for some personal and demographic data, including:

1. How many years have you taught home economics?
2. What is the last educational degree you've earned?
3. Are you currently enrolled in a degree program?
4. Approximately how many students are enrolled in the school where you teach?

Part II of the questionnaire lists five questions which solicit information about the human and financial resources available to support formal professional development activities.

5. Is there a person in your school or school district who regularly passes along information to you about home economics related inservice opportunities?
6. Is there someone with whom you regularly discuss the kinds of things you do in your classroom?
   If so, whom?
7. Are funds available for you to attend off-campus inservice events?
8. Are you given time off to attend off-campus inservice events?
9. Besides yourself, how many home economics teachers are there in your building?

Schools were classified as having "few resources available to support participation in formal professional development activities" on the basis of negative responses to two of the three questions five, seven or eight. A negative response to question five could indicate that the teacher was unaware of formal professional development opportunities and thus lacked information on which to act. A negative response to question seven would indicate lack of financial resources which might prohibit participation. A "no" to question eight might indicate that the teacher was unable to leave school responsibilities because of lack of release time from school. Based on this, the researcher determined that lack of at least two of the three resources (information, money, or release time) would constitute "few resources."

Data Analysis Techniques

The primary analysis technique employed was content analysis. Categories which serve as indicators were developed from the responses given of types of activities and from the ways in which the learning from these activities was identified as beneficial to subjects in their teaching. Frequency tables were constructed for each category. A mean value was calculated for each category of activity and comparisons were made between categories for the purpose of indicating which categories appeared to be most valuable.

In order to address the questions related to processing, similar techniques were used. Comparisons were made between activities where teachers indicated some intentional processing had occured and those activities where it had not.

Comparisons of the responses of subjects with more than six and six or less years teaching experience were made. The responses of teachers from school districts having fewer resources and greater resources available for formal professional development were also compared.

Finally, the data were analyzed for trends of responses. From this, themes suggested from the data were identified. Implications drawn from these trends and themes are included in chapter five of this report.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Home economics teachers are involved in informal activities and experiences which contribute to their professional development. What types of informal activities do teachers identify as contributing to their professional development? What effect does participation in these activities have on their teaching of home economics and on the professional development of the teachers? Are some informal activities and experiences valued more by some home economics teachers than by others? This chapter contains a detailed presentation of the data from the questionnaire as it pertains to these and other questions. Each research question is stated, followed by a presentation of summary statistics derived from the responses from the questionnaire. A description of responses by category follows, with selected examples included.

"What types of informal activities do teachers identify as contributing to their professional development?" This question was addressed in Part III, (1) of the questionnaire. Responses from this section were placed into

14 categories based on similarity of response as presented in Table 4-1.

The experiences or activities most frequently cited as helpful were related to home and family living. This category represents quite a variety of activity, all of which are highly informal and take place in the personal lives of teachers. Specific responses included shopping, dealing with family crisis, and observing the growth and development of their own children. Seventy percent of the respondents cited at least one home and family living experience as having had a specific impact on their teaching. The following represents the range of respnses within this category:

> "My home refrigerator lost its motor one month after the warranty ran out. Retailer was unable to do anything about it but suggested we contact the manufacturer. Pursued the redress system until we received satisfaction."
>
> "Comparison and window shopping."
>
> "A friend and myself experimented with home canning." (sic)

Courses and workshops were also frequently mentioned as experiences which contributed to the teachers' professional development. These courses and workshops, however, occurred outside formal education settings and included those offered by churches, community education, and commerical establishments. A class in microwave cooking, a workshop on stress, and computer courses were some of the specific examples from this category.

TABLE 4.1

INFORMAL ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED BY TEACHERS AS CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, RANKED ACCORDING TO FREQUENCY

Home and Family Living Experiences	22
Courses and Workshops	14
Popular Media	13
Interaction with Colleagues	9
Travel/Vacations/Tours	7
Curriculum Development/Program Planning	5
Interaction with Resource People	5
Interaction with Youth, other than Students	3
Extra-curricular Activities	3
School-related responsibilities	2
Involvement in Professional Associations	2
Social Interaction	2
Teaching	2
Non-professional work experience	2

Use of popular media received equal recognition with workshops and courses. Teachers listed examples of television programs, movies, and popular magazines which had influenced how or what they taught. Several teachers mentioned regulary reading the "foods section" of local newspapers.

Talking with colleagues ranked fourth in terms of the frequency with which it was mentioned. Most often mentioned were other home economics teachers. Respondents also mentioned elementary teachers and counselors.

Travel, vacations, and tours were also cited frequently. Here again, the category represents a wide range of individual experience. For example:

> "When traveling I toured hotel kitchens, dined in their facilities, collected menus."

and

> "Travel to the Rockies and Northwest Territories."

Curriculum development and program planning were also cited as benefitial. In this category were specific examples of developing new courses for their home economics programs and working on a State Department of Education curriculum project.

Interacting with resource people was also indicated to be a learning experience. In this category, teachers identified resource people from custodians to a produce manager at a food store. In some cases the respondents

indicated that these resource people had served as guest speakers in particular classes.

Three respondents mentioned that their interaction with youths was a growth producing experience. In these three cases, no context was mentioned, so it was necessary to categorize these separately from other responses like "extra-curricular activities" or "teaching" where students were specifically mentioned. In fact, extra-curricular activities was mentioned with the same frequency as interacting with students. Teachers mentioned participation in coaching and in sponsoring student clubs as being helpful to them in their teaching.

Other staff responsibilities were also perceived to have an impact on the teaching role. One teacher cited her participation on a North Central Evaluation team as making her more aware of the standards she should be applying to her own teaching of home economics.

Two teachers indicated that their participation in a professional organization had been a growth-producing experience. Both were members of the Michigan Home Economics Educators Association.

Social interaction was cited as being helpful to two teachers. One teacher indicated that casual conversations with commuity members was an important source of information to her, while another teacher mentioned conversations with non-teaching professional friends.

Teaching itself was mentioned as a professional growth producing activity. One teacher explained that teaching an adult education class had been helpful to her in planning and preparing for her secondary home economics courses. Another teacher mentioned learning from the daily activity of teaching. She indicated that she systematically assessed her performance in the classroom, and learned from her successes and failures.

Work experience was mentioned by two teachers. Both were referring to non-professional work experience which related to home economics content areas. One respndent cited her work in a day care center, while another mentioned her employment as a cook in a restaurant.

In summary, the 20 respondents cited 91 informal activities or experiences which they indicated had a positive impact on their teaching performance, resulting in professional growth. These 91 items were collapsed into 14 cxategories. The most frequently cited activities and experiences were those related to home and family which took place in the personal lives of the teachers.

"In what ways do teachers identify informal activities or experiences as helpful to them in their roles as classroom teachers?" To address this question, teachers were asked to indicate the specific effect of the activity or experience on their teaching. It is important to examine these responses from Part III (2) of the questionnaire apart from the activity to which they relate because of the

individual relevance teachers found in similar activities. For example, two respondents indicated that coping with divorce had influenced their teaching. As a result of this experience, one teacher stated that she now included a unit on family trauma in her family life class and had eliminated the wedding planning unit. The other teacher stated that she was now more empathetic with students in this situation. While both teachers had had a similar experience, they applied the learning from the experience to their classrooms in distinctively different ways.

The responses from Part III (2) of the written questionnaire were carefully analyzed to determine the primary impact or influence of the cited activity or experience. Upon completion of the analysis, four general areas were observed. One area of influence was the teacher's knowledge of the content taught. Teachers frequently indicated that a particular experience expanded their knowledge of what they taught, updated them in a certain content area, or gave them new information about something they were teaching. For example, a teacher indicated that travel to Europe expanded her knowledge of foreign cooking.

A second area of impact was teaching methods and materials. A variety of experiences and activities were cited as influencing the materials or resources teachers used in their classroom, or techniques or methods used in the classroom. One teacher, who also cited travel as a

growth-producing experience, indicated that she used in slides of different housing styles taken while on her vacations.

A third area influenced by informal activities and experiences was the teacher's attitude or view of students. Some of the activities and experiences described by teachers were credited for altering the way they felt or reacted to the students they taught. One teacher indicated that rearing her own children had been particularly helpful in teaching growth and development, but the real benefit had been the increased "tolerance" she had for junior high school age youth when her own children reached junior high school age.

Finally, some activities and experiences influenced the teacher's attitude or view of self as a teacher. These informal professional development experiences caused teachers to feel more confident, more competent, more determined, more enthusiastic, or more committed to teaching home economics. One teacher described the personal benefits of a stress management course, and how it helped her feel more in control in her own teaching.

While some of the individual responses may have suggested more than one area of impact, careful attention was given to categorize the response according to its primary intent. An additional example of a response within each of these categories is displayed in Table 4-2.

TABLE 4.2

EXAMPLE OF A RESPONSE IN EACH OF THE CATEGORIES OF INFLUENCE OF PARTICIPATION IN INFORMAL ACTIVITIES ON TEACHING

The activity or experience influenced the teachers' knowledge of teaching content.	"I designed a lesson on tracing one's family history based entirely on information from this workshop. I used the information and data collection methods I learned."
The activity or experience influenced the teachers' selection of methods or materials used in teaching.	(As a result of teenage pregnancy of sister)..."I give students more opportunities for decision making."
The activity or experience influenced the teachers' attitude or view of students.	"Through coaching I learned about students' families and their personal likes and dislikes which enabled me to better understand those kids in class."
The activity or experience influenced the teachers' attitude or view of self as teacher.	"Since I've had a leadership role in MHEE I've been encouraged to keep growing, to keep updated. I'm happier as a result."

Teachers most frequently indicated that participation in the informal experience or activity influenced their knowledge of the content they taught. Thirty-seven percent of the describeed informal experiences and activities provided teachers with opportunities to keep abreast of new developments within subject matter areas, to become aware of current trends and to acquire new information. For example, teachers specifically identified acquiring new knowledge about foreign foods, surrogate parenting, geneology, anorexia nervosa, and child birth. The vehicles for updating in content areas ranged from travel to popular media to courses and workshops.

Twenty-five percent of the activities mentioned were cited as beneficial because they provided new ideas for teaching methods or materials. These activities influenced the selection or creation of particular methods or materials used in teaching. For example, one teacher with 22 years of experience noted that tours through bakeries had been helpful to her and that she had "adopted the use of time-saving techniques and use of equipment in demonstrations."

Twenty-three percent of the experiences or activities cited by teachers were identified as contributing to the professional development of the teacher by way of influencing the teacher's view of self as teacher. One ten-year veteran indicated recent participation in a curriculum development project. She stated that that involvement "increased my condfidence that peers felt I could make a

positive impact on my profession."

Another teacher indicated that involvement in a workshop overwhelmingly "rejuvinated" her. One experienced teacher working in a one-person department claimed that her participation in a county wide curriculum development project caused her to re-think her overall philosophy of home economics.

Informal activities least often affected the teacher's attitude toward or views of students. Only 15 percent of the cited activities were credited with having this type of impact. One teacher employed in an urban school did indicate that a personal tragedy (home and family living experience) had impresseed her with an "overwhelming desire to instill students with a sense of responsibility, good citizenship, and respect for others."

Another teacher with 18 years teaching experience described her work with youth in 4-H Clubs. She indicated that this involvement helped give her a "broader perspective of teens today. It gives me encouragement."

"How valuable do tachers rate each activity?" Teachers were asked to rate each activity or experience they described on a three point scale, 3 indicating very valuable, 2 somewhat valuable, and 1 not too valuable (Part III-4 of the questionnaire). Although 90 of the 91 reported responses were rated according to that scale, meaningful analysis of the data appears difficult.

First of all, meaningful comparisons between categories is made difficult due to a large number of categories (14) and the unequal number of responses within categories (from 22 to 2). Weighted averaging in this case is not particularly helpful because of the narrow range of differentiation available on a three-point scale.

Means were calculated for each category, however, and a comparison between categories does yield some interesting indicators. The means ranged from 3.0 to 2.5 (very valuable to somewhat valuable plus). Eight categories yielded means of a perfect three, including involvement in professional organizations, non-professional work experience, school-related responsibilities, extra-curricular activities, teaching, social interaction, interaction with youths, and interactions with resource people. Five of these seven, however, were cited only twice by respondents, therefore there were only two ratings in each of these categories to average. The other two were mentioned three times.

Travel/vacation/tours earned the lowest mean (2.5) and the most frequently mentioned category, home and family living experiences, had a mean of 2.76. It is interesting to note that of the 90 examples that were rated, only two were assigned a rating of one.

This initial analysis of the value of types of activity was in fact just that--by type or category of activity. All categories were valuable. A second look at the assignment of the rating by respondents suggests an alternate way of

examining the value of cited experiences. Teachers were asked to "rate the activity or experience according to its value as a professional development experience." This in fact may be interpreted to mean not the value of participation in the activity, but the value of its effect. It may, therefore, be more appropriate to compare the mean values of the four categories developed to represent the impact or influence of the experiences, rather than the mean values of the categories representing types of activities.

The mean value of each of the four "impact" categories was calculated using the rating assigned to each activity within the category. These means are displayed in Table 4-3. As indicated there, activites or experiences which influenced the teacher's attitudes or view of self as teacher were most highly rated (2.8). Following, in order, are those activities which influenced the teacher's knowledge of the content area (2.78), those which influenced the teacher's attitude toward or views of students (2.66), and finally, those activities or experiences which influenced the teacher's selection of methods and materials used in teaching (2.42).

"How do teachers process the information from informal activites?" "Is there a relationship between the perceived value of the activity and whether or not a conscious attempt was made to process the information from the activity?" In considering the ways in which teachers processed learning from the activities in which they were engaged it was first

TABLE 4.3

MEAN VALUES OF INFORMAL ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES GROUPED ACCORDING TO THEIR EFFECT

Activity	Mean Value on 3 Point Scale
Activities or experiences which influenced the teacher's ability or view of self as teacher	2.83
Activities or experiences which influenced teacher's knowledge of home economics content areas	2.78
Activities or experiences which influenced the teacher's attitudes toward or view of students	2.66
Activities or experiences which influenced the teacher's selection of methods or materials used in teaching	2.42

*3-Very Valuable
2-Somewhat Valuable
1-Not too Valuable

helpful to distinguish between those activities or experiences in which they engaged for the purpose of learning or in anticipation of learning (intentional) and those in which learning occurred as incidental to the experience (unintentional). The reason for attempting to distinguish between deliberate and nondeliberate learning experiences and activities is perhaps obvious. If teachers deliberately engaged in an activity or experience in order to learn something that would be helpful to them as teachers, they have already begun information processing. They have, in fact, already determined that the experience will be of relevance to them, and thus may have prepared themselves in some way to understand or comprehend the specific relevance to them. In nondeliberate learning activities or experiences the first two steps may take place unconsciously. The teacher may not perceive the relevance until after the activity or experience. Thus, it may be helpful to examine the experiences and activities described by teachers and try to determine which of these were clearly entered into with some anticipation of learning, and which produced learning as incidental to the actual experience or activity.

Typical examples of the types of intentional and unintentional learning experiences and activities described in the data may make this distinction more clear. Reading the foods section of the newspaper, enrolling in a cooking course, taking a bakery tour, and talking with the County

Cooperative Extension agent are all examples of activities or experiences deliberately engaged in to learn, probably in anticipation of using the knowledge in the home economics classroom.

Other described incidents were clearly not engaged in to enhance classroom performance. These included the death of a parent, having and rearing children, coaching, and home maintainance.

Unfortunately, respondents were not asked to indicate whether or not the growth producing experiences they described were deliberate or nondeliberate, so this type of secondary analysis of the data is certainly subject to error. Only a few activities or experiences could not be clearly categorized. These included some examples of travel and some home projects. Based on the written descriptions of the activities and experiences and the recorded comments from the group meetings, the researcher did determine that approximately 63 percent of the activities or experiences were deliberately engaged in to produce learning, and about 37 percent of the incidents might be classified as having produced learning as incidental to the experience.

In those cases where learning was anticipated or planned teachers generally prepared to transfer the information from the activity to their teaching. Forty percent indicated that they engaged in some purposeful way to collect information from the experience by note-taking, video-taping, taking slides or pictures, picking up

materials, etc. In the rest of the cases teachers were able to give specific examples of how they used the learning from these experiences (their response), but they were unable to identify specifically what steps or activities occurred between the time they attended the workshop or consulted another home economics teacher and the time it "appeared" as a new unit in a course or a new handout for student use. Although no other written responses were given on the questionnaire, some other examples may be cited from those recorded at the group meetings.

During this discussion at the group meeting most teachers said, "It just comes to you," or "Suddenly you just get a good idea," or "You just see how it fits." During one group discussion, however, a teacher with 25 years of experience tried to explain to the group how watching her own children grow had influenced her teaching. She explained that she had become more aware of the problems of children, and more tolerant of their behavior as it related to their developmental stage. But when trying to explain just <u>how</u> or when she had processed her personal experience for relevance and comprehension, she responded:

> "I'm not sure--it just happens as you gain insight. I guess I thought about it, re-examined my positions."

Another teacher who reported interacting frequently with colleagues said she came up with many of her good ideas in the shower. She indicated that this was the time each morning that she thought about and planned what she would do

for the day. During another group meeting a teacher described a creative relationship she had with another home economics teacher. She reported that by talking and exchanging ideas they always seemed to come up with "other good, new ideas" for teaching.

Of the activites or experiences where teachers had made some purposeful attempt to transfer the information or learning from the experience to their classroom teaching, all but two (55 of 57) were ranked as "very valuable experiences" (rated as "3" on the questionnaire). Two of the 57 were rated as valuable, indicated by "2". The mean for these experiences (2.9) is somewhat higher than the mean for those activities or experiences where teachers were unable to identify any conscious attempt to process the information from the experience (2.69).

"Are there differences in the types of activities ranked as valuable by teachers with more than six years of teaching experience as those with less than six?" Teachers were asked to indicate the number of years of teaching experience in Part I of the questionnaire. That information and the responses in Part III (1) of the questionnaire were analyzed in addressing this question.

Only five of the teachers in the sample had six or fewer years of teaching experience. Two teachers in this group reported having taught three years, and each of the other three reported five years of teaching experience. In contrast, the "over years of teaching experience" group

ranged from seven to 25 years of teaching experience. Table 4-4 presents the sample according to years of teaching experience.

The five teachers with six or less years teaching experience (25% of the sample) cited 21 specific examples of informal activities or experiences (23% of the total described) which had been beneficial to them in their teaching. Seventy-five percent of the sample, the teachers with more than six years teaching experience, contributed 70 specific examples, or 77 percent of the total described. The activities or experiences cited by each group were ranked according to the frequency with which they were mentioned. These are displayed in Table 4-5. Although the small size of the "six years or less" group may have hindered the range of activities and experiences described, some observations can be made.

By far the most often cited activity or experience by the less experienced teachers were courses and workshops. Thirty-three percent of their responses were in this category. As previously noted, these courses and workshops ranged from adult enrichment/community education offerings to those sponsored by manufacturers and retail merchants. Only seven percent of the more experienced teachers' responses were in this category.

In contrast, the most frequently cited category of activities and experiences by the more experienced group was home and family living experiences. Twenty percent of their

TABLE 4.4

SAMPLE BY YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Number of Teachers	Years of Experience
2	3
3	5
1	8
1	9
2	10
1	11
4	12
2	17
1	18
1	21
1	22
1	25

TABLE 4-5

ACTIVITIES CITED BY TEACHERS WITH SIX-OR-LESS AND MORE-THAN-SIX YEARS TEACHING EXPERIENCE, IN RANK ORDER BY FREQUENCY OF MENTION

Responses of teachers with less than six years teaching experience	Responses of teachers with six or more years teaching experience
Courses and workshops	Home and family living experiences
Home and family living experiences	Use of popular media
Interaction with colleagues	Courses and workshops
Travel/tours/vacations	Interaction with colleagues
School-related responsibilities	Curriculum development/Program planning
Interaction with Resource People	Interaction with resource people
Non-professional work experience	Travel/vactions/tours
	Extra-curricular activities
	Interaction with students
	Involvement in professional organizations
	Social interaction
	Teaching
	Non-Professional work experience

responses were in this category. This category ranked second among less experienced teachers with only 14 percent of the responses. The second most frequently mentioned activities from teachers with more than six years experience was use of media.

Ranked third by less experienced teachers was interaction with colleagues, contrasted with courses and workshops by more experienced teachers. Travel/vacation/tours ranked fourth by teachers with six or less years teaching experience, with interaction with colleagues ranked fourth for teachers with more than six years experience. Further comparisons of the rankings of activities and experiences based upon the frequency of which they were mentioned can be made by examining Table 4-5. Table 4-5 lists the activities in declining order for both groups by the frequency with which they were mentioned.

Although the rank order is different between the two groups, it is interesting to note that the two groups share in common three of the four most frequently mentioned categories: home and family living experiences, interaction with colleagues and courses and workshops. While the more experienced group cited a wider range of activities (13 categories contrasted with seven categories mentioned by the less experienced group), this might be partially explained by the unequal group sizes and the small number of teachers in the less experienced group.

The absence of certain categories from each group may also be worth noting. While use of the popular media was second in the number of times mentioned by teachers with more than six years of teaching experience, comprising 13 percent of their responses, it was not mentioned at all by the teachers with six or less years experience. Noticeably absent as well from mention by the less experienced teachers are involvement in professional organizations, extra-curricular activities and curriculum development/program planning efforts. Although these were not prominently mentioned categories among experienced teachers, their absence of mention by less experienced teachers may be attributable to more than just the small number of responses from the sub-sample of five teachers. Possible explanations for the presence and absence of these categories will be explored in Chapter V.

To add another dimension to this exploration of differences of types of activities cited by the contrasting groups, the groups were compared according to the degree of informality of the categories of activities in which they engaged. Within the parameters of informal experience or activity, variation may be observed in the degree of structure of the experience and in the degree of obvious or direct relationship to the teaching of home economics. For example, a microwave cooking class offered by a retail store is an informal activity, but this activity is highly structured and has obvious relationship to the teaching of

food preparation in home economics. By contrast, a family vacation would most likely not be viewed as a structured learning experience, and might have little obvious relationship to what is taught as home economics.

For this comparison between groups, each category of activities and experiences was rated according to its degree of informality. Ratings were made on the basis of the two criteria previously mentioned; first, according to the degree of structure of the activity. The closer the activity or experience resembled formal professional development activities, the more highly structured it was rated. Second, each category of activity or experience was rated according to its obvious or direct relationship to home economics content areas. The researcher rated each category 3, 2, or 1 on each of the two criteria. A "3" represented highly structure or highly obvious relationship; a "2" moderate structure or moderate relationship; and a "1" little structure or little direct relationship. The numerical criteria ratings for each activity were summed, yielding the "degree of informality" score. A breakdown of the scoring is displayed in Table 4-6.

Although this system does require personal judgment, many of the categories are clear cut. To increase the validity of the rating by category, the researcher rated each specific activity or experience within the category and averaged that, and compared that score to the overall score assigned to the category. One of the smaller categories,

TABLE 4-6

RATING SHEET - DEGREE OF INFORMALITY

Activity	Degree of Structure*	Degree of Obvious Relationship**	Score
Courses and Workshops	3	3	6
Curriculum Development/Program Planning	2	3	5
Involvement of Professional Organizations	2	3	5
Teaching	1	3	4
School-related responsibilities	2	2	4
Interaction with colleagues	1	3	4
Use of popular media	1	3	4
Home and family living experiences	1	3	4

*3-highly structured
2-moderate structure
1-little structure

*3-direct relationship
2-moderate relationship
1-little direct relationship

TABLE 4.6, CONTINUED

Activity	Degree of Structure	Degree of Obvious Relationship**	Score
Non-Professional work experience	1	2	3
Interaction with Resource People	1	2	3
Interaction with Students	1	2	3
Trave/Vacation/Tours	1	1	2
Social Interaction	1	1	2
Extra-curricular Activities	1	1	2

*3-highly structured
2-moderate structure
1-little structure

**3-direct relationship
2-moderate relationship
1-little direct relationship

"non-professional work experience" may serve as an example. The researcher judged that overall work experience would have very little structure as compared to a formal professional development activity, using as a "standard" a university course or school inservice workshop. That is, engaging in a typical day of physical labor would have very little resemblence to participating in a university ocurse or an inservice workshop or progam in terms of objectives, strategies and expected outcomes. Thus, nonprofessional work experience was rated "1--little structure", or very informal. Then both examples were examined. They included working in a day care center and working for a bakery. Each incident was evaluated to have little in common with a formal professional development experience, thus each was also rated "1--little structure." Next nonprofessional work experience was examined in terms of its relationship to what is taught within home economics. The work experiences cited both relate to what is taught within home economics. It could not be assumed that the experiences described were entirely relevant to what is taught in home economics. Thus, the category was rated "2--moderate obvious relationship." A cross-check of each of the examples verified this assessment. Both teachers had been able to apply some of the learning from the work experience, but the transfer was not a direct one. One teacher indicated that she had learned the importance of time management, and now attempted to teach that in her classes. The other teacher

indicated that she was now aware of the "technical revolution" in equipment, and now tried to keep up with new appliances and equipment.

The scores were plotted on a continuum and are displayed in Figure 4-1. Activities or experiences become increasingly informal the further right they are plotted on the continuum.

The activities most frequently cited as helpful by the less experienced group of teachers (courses and workshops) appears at the farthest point left on the continuum. This point represents the most highly structured/highly related experiences. The home and family living experiences mentioned most often by more experienced teachers appears further down the continuum, indicating less structure and less obvious relationship. As earlier stated, this category was the second most frequently cited by the less experienced teachers.

The more experienced teachers second most frequently mentioned activity, use of the popular media, holds the same point on the continuum as their most often mentioned home and family living experiences. This is also true of the six or less group's third entry, interaction with colleagues. The more than six year group's third entry courses and workshops is found at the extreme left of the continuum.

The degree of informality is merely another way to compare the preferences of the two groups. No concrete generalizations should be based on this method of

FIGURE 4-1

PLOTTING OF THE CATEGORIES OF ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES BY "DEGREE OF INFORMALITY" SCORE

Courses and Workshops

Involvement in Professional Organizations

Curriculum Development/Program Planning

Use of Popular Media
Interaction with Colleagues
Teaching
School Related Responsibilities
Home and Family Living Experiences

Non-professional Work Experiences
Interaction with Resource People
Interaction with Students

Extra-curricular Activities
Travel/Vacation/Tours
Social Interaction

Highly Structured/
Highly obvious relationship
to home economics content

Little Structure/
Little obvious relationship
to home econimics content

comparison, although some speculations will be included in Chapter V.

"Do teachers from schools with fewer resources available to support participation in formal professional development activities value informal activities more than teachers from schools with greater resources?" Based upon their answers to the five questions in Part II of the questionnaire, seven of the 20 teachers responding were determined to be from schools with few resources to support participation in formal professional development activities. Recognizing the limitations previously stated in Chapter II regarding sample size, a sophisticated analysis using nonparametric statistical tests would not provide meaningful information for use in comparing the two groups. Further, the three point rating scale allowed for very little differentiation.

Some characteristics of the two groups can, however, be contrasted via analysis of the content of the questionnaire responses and a simple comparison of means.

There is virtually no difference in the number of experiences or activities cited by the respndents in each group. The teachers from schools with fewer reosurces averaged 4.42 examples per respondent; the teachers from schools with greater resources averaged 4.41 examples per respondent.

The mean value of all activities and experiences for each group was calculated. Again, there was very little variation. The group with fewer resources' mean value was 2.77 contrasted with a mean of 2.79 of the values of the activities cited by teachers with greater resources.

Some differences do become evident, however, when comparing the influences of the activities or experiences on teaching. The teachers from schools with fewer resources available to support participation in formal professional development activities most frequently described informal activities as professional development experiences which influenced their knowledge of home economics content area. Activities with this result were cited almost three times as often (16 examples) as those which influenced their attitude or view of self (6 examples), their second most frequently cited. Participation in activities or experiences that influenced selection of teaching methods and materials (5 examples) and those that influenced attitudes toward or views of students (3 examples) ranked third and fourth based on the frequency with which they were mentioned.

Teachers from schools with greater resources to support participation in formal professional development activities most often cited participation in experiences or activities that influenced their knowledge of the home economics content areas (18 examples). Next by frequency were activities which influenced selection of teaching methods and/or materials, describing 17 examples, view of self as

teacher (15 examples), and 11 examples of activities or experiences which influenced their attitudes toward or view of students.

The types of activities in which both groups engaged generally follow the frequency pattern of the larger sample. There is, however, one notable exception. Not one of the seven teachers from schools with fewer resources available to support formal professional development activities cited interaction with colleagues as a valued growth-producing experience.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Introduction

This study was developed on the premise that participation in informal activities contributes to the professional development of home economics teachers. Informal activities include not only events that occur outside the arena of formal education, but also those experiences which occur in the personal lives of teachers and produce unintentional or incidental learning.

In Chapter II it was established that professional development is more than just a function or result of inservice education, and that informal activities affect the professional growth of teachers. Informal activities were shown to be appropriate learning activities for the teacher as adult learner. Further evidence was cited to establish home economics teachers' needs and interests in continuing professional education, along with their expressed preference for some types of informal learning activities.

In order to gain insight into the influence of informal activities on the professional growth of teachers, teachers were questioned in person, then asked to respond to a written questionnaire about the types, value and effect of specific informal activities. The responses from the questionnaire were content analyzed, categorized and summarized.

This chapter summarizes the findings from the study. Also included in this chapter are conclusions and implications from this study, personal reflections of the researcher, and suggestions for further research.

Summary of Findings

Home economics teachers are involved in a wide range of informal activities that contribute to their professional development. Teachers indicate that many day-to-day experiences in their personal lives influence their performance in their professional role. The types of activities in which teachers engage and/or find most beneficial and the impact of these experiences or activities appears to be related to stages in the teaching career and the availability of formal professional development activities.

Home and family living experiences were found to be a rich resource to the teachers in this study. The home serves as a laboratory where skills are practiced, research is conducted, and new information is gathered. This finding

supports the research of Bobbitt and Paolucci who found that the home was utilized as a vital learning center for women from a variety of professional and nonprofessional backgrounds.[102] Teachers often integrate home and family living experiences into their teaching by the examples they use. In turn, information or techniques that are acquired for use in the classroom are reported to be helpful in the home.

Experiences that strongly touch the personal lives of teachers like death and divorce influence not only how they teach, but what they teach. The home economics teacher's life becomes a curriculum divining rod; where her life takes her is quite often where she leads her students. The content within home economics affords her this opportunity.

Home economics teachers learn from both purposeful participation in informal activities and from their day-to-day experiences. Teachers actively seek out some experiences like community education courses or consulting with resource people. In these cases where learning is anticipated they prepare to transfer the learning through note-taking, video-taping and other means. Other experiences, however, become professional growth experiences in retrospect. To learn from these experiences requires some reflection, some distancing from the experience itself. When processing does occur and the experience does have an

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[102]N. Bobbittand B. Paolucci. Home as a Learning Center (Final Report, Contract No. 300748735, East Lansing, Michigan, College of Human Ecology, October 1975).

overt influence on the professional growth of the teacher, it appears to happen quite by chance. As in Holly's study teachers indicated few opportunities for reflective activities like writing, collegial discussions or critical thinking.[103] When conversations with colleagues was cited it was described as exchanging "ideas that worked." This finding confirmed the work of Holly who discovered that teachers valued exchange with other teachers for 1) new ideas, 2) help with problems, and 3) help with personal assessment. Other teachers were described as experienced and knowledgeable resources.[104]

As the earlier study of Keenan[105] had suggested, home economics teachers were found to be social creatures. Of the eight categories of informal activities that had a mean rating of three (very valuable), seven involved interaction with others. The activities or experiences which were most valued by home economics teachers were those that allowed them an opportunity to interact with others.

Teachers particularly valued interaction with colleagues. In all but one case, however, the term colleague was used to designate another home economics teacher. Most of the teachers who indicated that they regularly talked with someone else about what went on in

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[103]M.L. Holly. A Conceptual Framework for Personal Professional Growth, p. 207.

[104]Ibid., p. 210.

[105]Dorothy Marie Keenan. "An Exploration of Value Patterns."

their classroom indicated that the someone else was another home economics teacher.

It is interesting to note here one of the findings from the group of teachers that had few resources to support participation in formal professional development activities. These seven teachers reported that their schools could not provide money for activities or substitute teachers, so they were not permitted to attend off-campus professional development activities. None of these teachers indicated interaction with colleagues as a growth-producing experience, although this category was mentioned nine times by the sample.

The types of activities in which teachers are engaged appears to vary somewhat with the stage of the teacher's career development. This seems to concur with the work of Fuller[106] and Yarger and Martens[107] who suggest that teachers' interests and needs change as they become more experienced and progress through stages in their teaching careers. In this study, less experienced teachers more frequently participated in courses and workshops than did more experienced teachers. More experienced teachers (and in this case, older teachers) rely more often on home and family living experiences. Generally speaking, more experienced teachers report valuing experiences that are

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[106]Fuller, F.F. "Concers of Teachers."

[107]S.J. Yarger. and S.K. Mertens. "Testing the Waters of School-Based Teacher Education.

less structured and less directed than do teachers with less experience.

The teachers in the study with six or less years teaching experience failed to report any involvement in some activities which were rated highly by more experienced teachers. These included participation in professional organizations, curriculum development/program planning efforts, and extra-curricular activities. These activities were highly valued by respondents, but were only reported by teachers in the 8-14 years of experience range.

Some types of experiences were cited only in certain demographic regions. Only teahers in rural schools reported involvement with either the county Cooperative Extension home economist or the FHA-HERO student organization. Both of these have been seen traditionallly as particularly valuable resources for the home economics teacher.

It appears that teachers are arriving at some pretty traditional outcomes in some sometimes pretty nontraditional ways. Informal activities and experiences are providing opportunities for teachers to develop or enhance their instructional skills. This was the most frequently mentioned result of participation in informal activities. Teachers find ways to keep updated in content areas and to learn about and develop new teaching methods and materials. Teachers gather relevant information from their doctors, the grocery store produce manager and the school custodian. They adapt and adopt teaching methods from store

demonstrations and bakeries. They create their own instructional materials by taking slides, videotaping, and writing computer programs.

Teachers also find ways to enhance their personal-professional growth which in turn influences their concept of self as teacher. They are involved in activities outside their classrooms where their professional contributions can be appreciated and applauded by colleagues. These activities include curriculum development projects and involvement in professional organizations.

Other activities influence the teachers' attitudes and feelings about the students they teach. Coaching, involvement in 4-H clubs and weathering their own children through the teens affect not only how these teachers feel about their students, but how they feel about teaching these students.

Similar experiences and activities were found to affect teachers very differently, and in turn, affected the professional growth of teachers differently. Two teachers who experienced the same type of family crisis responded to it through their teaching as differently as they may have responded to it personally. Holly's study also found that similar experiences had different benefits for different teachers. College courses, for example, were identified by some as being beneficial for their content, while others

benefited from the opportunity to share with other teachers.[108]

In identifying the types of experiences and activities that contribute to the professional development of home economics teachers, it would appear that the activity is not valued so much for what it is as what it does. While teachers most often indicated that informal activities or experiences influenced their instructional skills, they rated as most valuable those activities or experiences which influenced their view of themselves as teachers.

Finally, the informal activites and experiences teachers did cite were rated as quite beneficial. Here again, this concurs with the work of Holly. In her study of professional growth producing activities she asked teachers to describe the circumstances under which these activities and experiences occurred. The most frequently mentioned activites most often took place informally, were voluntary and were self-directed.[109] In this study small differences were discovered between the value teachers placed on different types of activities or the value of the types of outcomes resulting from the activities or experiences.

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[108] M.L. Holly. A Conceptual Framework, p. 211.

[109] Ibid., pp. 198-201.

Review of Significant Findings

Although findings of this study were reviewed in the previous section, several deserve further discussion due to their significance.

First, informal activities and experiences influence not only how home economics teachers teach, but what they teach. Several specific incidents were cited where teachers inserted or deleted curriculum content based on personal experiences. Teachers usually described these experiences as highly personal and emotional. In each case the experience was related to home and family, and in each the teacher modified what she taught based on her reaction to the experience. This raises questions that cannot be answered due to the scope of this study. Due to the nature of the content they teach, are home economics teachers more likely to repond to informal activities and experiences with curriculum change? On what basis are curriculum decisions usually made?

Another finding of some significance is the value placed on activities and experiences that involve interaction with others. The activities and experiences rated as most valuable were those that involved sharing. Interaction with colleagues was mentioned specifically and in fact, accounted for nearly 10 percent of the examples cited. It is thus particularly interesting that none of the teachers from schools with few resources to support participation in formal professional development identified

"interaction with colleagues" as a growth-producing activity. One might speculate that the absence of opportunities to participate in off-campus workshops, conferences, and seminars has also eliminated opportunities for valuable interaction among those attending these inservice events. Teachers who are unable to attend off-campus events may also be prohibited from developing a network of colleagues with which to share.

As an outcome of this study, there is some evidence to suggest that teachers at different stages in their career developmet voluntarily engage in different types of informal activities. Less experienced teachers, for example, tended to more frequently participate in courses and workshops. The scope of this study, however, does not permit any conclusions as to why. While one could speculate that less experienced teachers favor more structured learning experiences, it might also be attributed to their link with formal, structured education. This apparent preference may be an expression of years of almost exclusive involvement in structured, formal education programs. In fact, the beginning teacher is likely to still be involved in some type of structured continuing secondary teaching certification program.

Finally, there was a strong indication that the informal activities and experiences that were most valued by teachers were those that enhanced their view of themselves as teachers; experiences that motivated them, encouraged

them, and affirmed the value of their role. The activities and examples teachers described and rated as most valuable were not those which increased their knowledge of content or teaching strategies, but those that had some personal significance. These activities were generally of two types. Some were activities that required some professional contribution beyond their classrooms; others were activities or experiences that enhanced or improved some personal skills or competencies (not related to teaching skills) which resulted in the teacher feeling better about herself. More experienced teachers not only rated those experiences highly, but listed them frequently. Earlier research has established the significance of self-concept to teaching ability. Maslow's hierarchy of needs also comes to mind in discussing these findings.[110] Assuming that teachers, particularly the more experienced teachers, have acquired the security and safety provided by possessing basic teaching skills, they strive for higher self-actualization experiences.

Conclusions and Implications

Implications for the Development of Formal Professional Development Activities

It is clear that home economics teachers draw from a wide array of experiences and activities for their professional development. Home and family living

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[110] O.H. Maslow. Toward a Psychology of Being (2nd ed.), Princeton, N.J., D. Van Nostrand, 1968.

experiences, however, clearly dominate the field. This is not too surprising given the nature of the subject matter they teach. It would appear that many teachers lead highly integrated personal/professional lives. As Thelen suggested, teaching becomes just another part of living.[111] There is no distinct line between information and skills used in home and famiy living and for teaching home economics for many of these teachers. This suggests that formal professional development activities may be more appropriate if this dual role is considered. In practical terms this might mean providing content information that would have practical application in the context of both home and classroom. It might also be useful to provide opportunties to teachers to build the skills needed to manage and integrate both roles successfully.

The scheduling of formal activities should also be considered. The teachers in this almost totally female group indicate a strong commitment to home and family and may be hesitant to choose outside activities that significantly interfere with their responsibilities in the home.

Home economics teachers report frequent voluntary involvement in various types of non-credit courses and workshops. This appears to be a learning structure with which they are comfortable. It also indicates that teachers

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[111]Thelen, "A Cultural Approach."

are willing to invest time and money to learn something they perceive to be of interest and relevance. This again has implications for colleges and universities and other organizations which provide inservice/continuing education for home edconomics teachers. Experimentation with more flexible arrangements is called for. The three hour per week, 10 week, three credit graduate course is not the most appropriate model in all cases. The university should explore what kinds of variations in credit, time, and location which might best suit this particular population.

Any formal professional development activity is likely to be perceived as more valuable by home economics teachers if there are opportunities for some interaction. Based on the responses in the sample, it would appear that teachers would benefit most from opportunities to interact with peers, particularly other home economics teachers and with resource people. A workshop or seminar which allowed time for sharing with other teachers and a chance to interact with the workshop leader as consultant might be particularly appropriate.

The value home economics teachers place on personal-professional growth-producing activities is especially interesting in view of the types of formal activities and events that are usually offered to them. The courses, workshops and seminars most often planned for home economics teachers relate directly to the instructional responsibilities of the teacher. In this study, however,

teachers most highly valued those activities or experiences which produced personal growth that in turn influenced their professional growth and performance. Several questions are raised in light of this finding. Are informal activities especially appropriate for this particular dimension of professional development? Is this dimension of professional development not being addressed through formal activities? Does the value assigned to the activities which result in personal-professional growth indicate a particular need among home economics teachers? It is not possible to answer these questions with the data available. This does lead, though, to another implication for formal professional development. Activities which promote the personal-professional growth of teachers are likely to be highly valued by teachers.

Although the findings from this study are far from conclusive in this area, it would appear that teachers are able to benefit from more informal, perhaps less structured, experiences as they mature professionally. As teachers grow through experience they may better be able to see and benefit from the relationship between the information and experience beyond the parameters of home economics and what they teach. Some researchers suggest that this may be related to increasingly more complex cognitive development. Other studies suggest that it is a function of personality. If, however, this is a characteristic of the maturing teacher it would have important implications for the types

of programs and events offered to inservice teachers. The "make-and-take" workshop appreciated by the beginning teachers might be much less appropriate for the experienced teacher who is capable of benefiting from less structured, less directed activities.

The primary outcome of participation in informal activities and experiences for teachers in schools with few resources to support participation in formal professional development activities was acquiring new/updated information in home economics content areas. These teachers who are unable to travel to off-campus inservice events look to informal activities and experiences to keep current. This suggests that these teachers feel a need for updating, but do not have access to it via formal means. In this case, the solution is obviously not the development of a new and better workshop they cannot attend. Instead, alternate ways of reaching these teachers must be explored. Newsletters, media/materials lending libraries and teacher networks are types of informal channels the university or professional organizations might facilitate.

Implications for the Pre-Service Education of Home Economics Teachers

Although the teachers in this study were able to cite a wide array of activities and experiences in which they participated, their experiences seem relatively few in light

of some related research. From Tough's study[112] he estimates that as high as 700 hours may be spent yearly by some adults in pursuing individual learning projects. The quantities of time he describes would suggest that teachers are involved in many more informal learning activities than they report. It appears that for this study teachers only mentioned those experiences or activities that had a significant and highly obvious impact on their teaching. In effect, they reported only the most obvious experiences. What about the more subtle effects and the experiences which precipitated these? It would appear that teachers need to be sensitized to the types of opportunities around them and that they need to have the skills to reflect upon the experiences they have. These types of skills could begin to be developed in the pre-service preparation of teachers.

First, futureteachers must develop a broader perspective or conceptualization of professional development. It must be presented to pre-service teachers as more than mandatory participation in staff inservice days and continuing teacher certification requirements. Pre-service teachers need opportunities to observe and interact with teachers who are growing and who are committed to professional development.

Pre-service teachers also need opportunities to learn and practice reflective skills. This may include writing, discourse, and critical thinking. Teacher preparation

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[112]Tough, The Adults Learning Project.

programs can provide opportunities for students to practice by having them reflect on their own school experiences; by allowing them to observe and participate in the collegial discussions of professional educators; by challenging them to examine critically their own practice teaching experiences and the teaching of those they observe.

The need to be able to reflect and learn from one's own work was demonstrated somewhat by the findings of this study. Only two teachers mentioned learning from their own teaching. Several examples were mentioned, however, that indicated the value of learning from the successful teaching of others.

One other area which has significance for the preparation of home economics teachers relates to the teacher's view of self as a staff member. The teachers in this study consistently used the term colleague to refer only to other home economics teachers. When asked if there was someone with whom they regularly discussed what went on in their classroom, the majority said no. Over one-half of those who indicated yes cited another home economics teacher. While it is not surprising that these teachers valued their exchange with other home economics teachers, this "tunnel vision" may suggest that they lack relationships with other teachers which in turn affects their ability to function as effective staff members of the schools in which they teach.

These teachers may in fact see themselves somewhat apart from the rest of the school. Most taught in single-person departments which may foster isolation. It may be expected that the home economics program has some specific goals in addition to the general education goals of the school. Home economics classrooms may be geographically separated from the mainstream of the school in a back hallway (the typical location for the home economics room). A teacher may have an identity more strongly aligned with "home economist" than "teacher." For whatever reasons, there was no real indication by these teachers of staff membership and the growth-producing effect of this relationship.

Home economics teachers must see the relationship of what they teach to what goes on in the rest of the school. They need to identify their contributions to the overall educational goals for students within their particular school. They need to develop collegial relationships with other teachers which will be mutually beneficial and growth-producing.

The responsibility for developing a sense of the importance of these relationships to the home economics program should fall to the home economics education program. Pre-service teachers can be given opportunities to observe active home economics programs that are an integral part of the secondary school curriculum. Courses in curriculum development and teaching methods can encourage interaction

between the home economics program and other departments. This should be a signifcant thrust of the preparatory program for home economics teachers.

Reflections

Throughout the process of this research project, certain aspects of the study caused the researcher to draw some conclusions, to make some speculations, and to pose some questions beyond the defined scope of this study. These thought are shared here.

Methodology

The two phase data collection process proved to be highly appropriate for this study. The group meeting phase yielded not only valuable data, but developed a commitment on the part of the teacher to the study. The personal contact with the researcher seemed to reassure the teachers that their contributions were valued. The teachers' responses to the written questionnaire were candid and detailed. Some very personal information was shared. Questionnaires were returned promptly, and no follow-up mailing was necessary. Generally responses were highly relevant, probably due to teacher orientation to the problem at the group meetings.

One area of the questionnaire which did not yield very helpful data was the question about the value of each of the experiences or activities described. Teachers were asked to

rate each experience on a three-point scale according to its value. Only a few of the examples were rated other than "3", suggesting that teachers only described very valuable experiences. It would have been more appropriate to ask teachers to explain why the activity or experience was of value, rather than asking them to rate numerically each incident.

Findings

One very strong impression formed by the researcher as a result of this study is that the teachers in the sample were commited to teaching and improving their teaching. Every teacher was able to identify a variety of activities or experiences independently pursued to improve or enhance her classroom performance. Many of these required significant investments of time or money. For example, two teachers had privately purchased video-taping equipment, primarily for the purpose of recording appropriate programs for classroom use.

As industrious as they are, teachers believe they should be doing more. Teachers regularly apologized for not being involved in degree programs, professional organizations and other professional development activities. Further, teachers perceived that the informal activities in which they are involved have less status or value than formal professional development activities. Clearly, they perceived professional development activities as formal activities.

Recommendations for Further Research

The discussion of the findings and conclusions and implications generate additional questions for study.

1. This study looked only at the types of informal experiences and activities in which teachers participated and the types of contributions this participation made to the professional development of teachers. What is the relationship of informal activities to formal activities? Does one compensate for the absence of the other? Do teachers meet some types of professional development needs through informal activity and other types through formal activity? One might study these relationships within the context of the learning project. When teachers work toward a specific professional goal, in what types of formal and informal learning activities do they participate?

2. Some questions were raised about the home economics teacher and her perception of self as a staff member. Do home economics teachers suffer from a conflicting identity (home economist or teacher)? Is this identity affected by the location of the teacher preparation program, i.e., College of Education as opposed to a College of Home Economics/Human Ecology? What characterizes affiliation with one identity over the other? Is there a difference in the secondary program of the home economist vs. the teacher or in the role the home economics program plays in the secondary school?

3. Additional study could be conducted to explore whether the type of informal activities valued is correlated with career development. Do maturing teachers prefer to learn from less structured, less directed activities? What types of activities are preferred by more experienced teachers? What aspect or dimension of professional development is the focus of the maturing teacher?

APPENDIX

Professional Development Activities Questionnaire and Summary Sheet

Summary Sheet
of
Identified Activities

I have listed below the informal activities and experiences that were generated in our March 1 meeting. Please review the list below before proceeding.

Teaching adults
Teaching nursery school
Home visitations
Graduate courses
Hospital volunteer with handicapped

Interaction Colleagues
- through advisory groups
- through professional associations
- through school visitations
- through teachers' lounge

Shopping

Youth Activities and Organizations
- FHA - HERO
- Field trips
- Camping with students
- Coaching
- Taking students out to eat
- Advising school clubs

Dealing with Family Crisis
- Death
- Accidents
- Damage to home
- Stress
- Aging parents (disease, disablement)

Interaction with Community
- Parent calls/conferences
- Food service program
- Home visitations

Professional Service
- North Central Team
- Presentations to school board, others
- PAC/ MEA
- Writing curriculum
- State Department Projects

Interactions with the Business Community
- Co-op
- Resource persons in the classroom
- Contact with unscrupulous business

Travel and Recreation
- Buick Open
- Vacations
- Eating out

Media
- Reading newspaper, magazines
- TV, radio
- Movie

Personal Finances
- Experience with electronic transfer
- Investment, use of stock-broker

Marriage and Family Living
- Husband as a resource person
- Relations with in-laws
- Handicapped sister
- Farm background

Church Activities

Interaction with friends who are not home economists

Energy Crisis

Declining Enrollment

No._____

Professional Development Activities Questionnaire

Please respond to each of the following questions. Where appropriate, circle your answer.

Part I

1. How many years have you taught home economics? *1-6 yrs. 7+ yrs.*
2. What is the last educational degree you earned? *B.S. M.A. Other* ____
3. Are you currently enrolled in a degree program? *YES NO*
4. Approximately how many students are enrolled in the school where you teach? _____

Part II

5. Is there a person in your school or school district who regularly passes along information to you about home economics related inservice opportunities? *YES NO*
6. Is there someone with whom you regularly discuss the kinds of things you've doing in your classroom? *YES NO*

   If so, whom? _____ *(Position)*
7. Are funds available for you to attend off-campus inservice events? *YES NO*
8. Are you given time off to attend off-campus inservice events? *YES NO*
9. Besides yourself, how many home economics teachers are there in your building? _____

Part III

Directions:

On the sheets that follow please describe the informal activities and experiences you've had during your last two years of teaching which have positively influenced your classroom teaching.

1. In column 1 describe specific informal experiences you've had or activities in which you've participated in the last two years that have positively influenced your classroom teaching.
2. In column 2, please describe how the activity influenced how or what you do within your home economics class.
3. In column 3 describe (if possible) how you processed the information from the experience or activity for use in your classroom.
4. In column 4 rate the activity or experience according to its value to you as a professional development experience.

Column 1 Describe the Activity or Experience	Column 2 Describe the Impact On Your Teaching	Column 3 Describe how you "processed" the activity or experience	Column 4 Rate the Experience. 3-Very Valuable 2-Somewhat Valuable 1-Not Too Valuable

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